

Robert “Bob” Carmack – local golf tournament champion

(As published in The Oak Ridger’s Historically Speaking column on January 26, 2010)

Before I continue with more interesting details of the Oak Ridge Country Club, I must tell you how sorry I am for misspelling Dr. Crews’ name as well as that of Bill Maddux. The readers who kindly corrected my errors are most considerate in their help provided. They know I desire to be accurate and that I believe correctly spelled names are important elements to the story.

When we left Robert “Bob” Carmack last he was working as “Caddymaster” for the Oak Ridge Country Club and had introduced golf carts to the club, to the caddies’ chagrin. I learned that the caddies even went on strike! But, there is still more to Bob’s story.

He had been working at the Oak Ridge Country Club since 1957 and saw many of the visiting celebrities that came to the country club to play golf exhibitions or tournaments. Bob recalled when Mickey Mantle was here and noted that he was standing in the background of the photograph of Mickey in the golf cart.

He left the job at the country club and went to Atlanta, Georgia, during the early 1960’s to find work. However, in 1968 he was visiting back in Oak Ridge to play a tournament at the Oak Ridge Country Club.

This was an eventful tournament for Bob. Dan Stroud saw him, remembered his golfing ability and asked him to come back and work in Oak Ridge again. This made Bob feel really good as he respected Dan a lot. He did not know what was in store for him, but truly desired to come back to Oak Ridge rather than continue living in Atlanta.

Now, I knew Dan Stroud when he was a maintenance department manager at Y-12. He was responsible for the general maintenance of the entire Y-12 plant. He was also the president of the Oak Ridge Country Club board of directors at the time he offered Bob a job in Oak Ridge. Bob said he went to his wife and said, “Well, we are moving back to Oak Ridge!”

Bob went to work at the country club again until to wait on the job offer Dan had indicated would be forthcoming. Soon he was offered a job at Y-12. He worked there until retirement. He also established his amateur status and again started playing in many area golf tournaments...winning most of them.

While talking about his participation in golf tournaments, Bob then told me a story of how he got his golf clubs that he used for every tournament that he won. And he won a bunch of them – 52 titles in all! Can you imagine that? Winning 52 golf tournaments? What a great record.

Bob showed me a scrap book that his wife had created that contained newspaper articles about each winning tournament. Bob is rightfully proud of that amazing accomplishment. There are photographs of Bob with many notable golfers and in many newspaper articles giving coverage of the various tournaments that Bob won.

For example, he won the Stearns, Kentucky, and the Middlesboro, Kentucky, golf tournaments three years straight in a row! Wow, don’t you agree that is something to be proud of! He was known throughout the area surrounding Oak Ridge as the person to beat in any tournament.

Bob also won a 1956 Buick in a hole-in-one contest for the Jaycee’s. The set up was near the Oak Ridge High School and the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce. Bob said he teed off from the small rise now covered by pine trees across the turnpike from the Oak Ridge Public Library and the green was located near the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce. He said the Buick did not run and he had to haul it home.

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Bob won tournaments at every major golf course around the area in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. In each win, he would sell the championship winning prize. If he got a set of new golf clubs, he would sell them for \$150. If he won a set of woods they would go for \$75. If his winning prize was a golf bag, he would sell that bag for \$40. He did not keep any of these championship winning prizes, rather he sold them for cash.

He won all these tournaments using a special set of golf clubs. There is a great story behind those clubs. Bob showed those special golf clubs to me. He was proud of them. He showed me one of the wedges and noted how worn the edge was on the club. Through many years of regular usage, the club had a great deal of wear on the face and leading edge of the club.

The clubs he used all those years were a used set traded in by Pat Fournery who was the Human Resources director of the Union Carbide Nuclear Division. Bob said it was Pat who gave him a job at Y-12 at Dan Stroud’s suggestion. Bob’s job is likely not the only job ever obtained on the golf course.

Here is the story of those special golf clubs. I found this most amazing.

Pat Fournery traded in his set of clubs for a new set hoping to improve his game. Bob, wanting to use a good three wood, took that club from the used set in the Pro Shop and was hitting balls when Pat happened to walk by. Pat observed Bob hitting the golf ball very strongly using his old club. He remarked, “Well, the club is certainly not the problem, it is obviously capable of being a good hitting club as you are routinely making good hits with it.” Bob replied, “Yep, it sure is a really nice three wood!”

Then Pat went directly to the Pro Shop and began to write a check to the shop for the amount needed to purchase his old clubs. Bob was standing nearby and remarked, “Oh, so you are going to buy back your old clubs?” Pat responded with, “Yes, they are obviously a good set of clubs.”

He then gave the check to the Pro Shop cashier, who in turn gave him his old set of clubs. Pat turned to Bob and said, “Here you go son, these clubs are yours. Obviously, you can make them perform better than I ever could.” Bob went on to say that Pat Fournery also hired him to work at the Y-12 Plant and he was able to again qualify as an amateur golfer and go on to win 52 golf tournaments using Pat Fournery’s used golf clubs, a gift he retains to this day with pride.

Another hobby Bob has is restoring antique cars. He has just purchased a 1954 Chevrolet with powerglide automatic transmission and power steering. Did you know those routine functions on all cars today were new innovations introduced by General Motors in the early to mid 1950’s. Bob proudly showed me his new purchase when I visited his home to see his photographs and his wife’s scrap book.

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This three wood is the one Bob was hitting when Pat Fourney observed his skill and purchased the set of used clubs for Bob – the ones he used for his entire career



Bob and his latest “toy” a 1954 Chevrolet that is sharp as a tack!