

By Frank Hyde

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Awards Day Something Special This Year At Moon Brook;

Ben Bishop Memorial Trophy Is Dedicated

The Ben Bishop Memorial Trophy has been enshrined at Moon Brook Country Club honoring the memory of one of the finest gentlemen and most outstanding golfers to ever hit a tee shot at the North Main Street layout.

The permanent trophy, emblematic of the club championship, was officially presented at the annual awards day with Lucile Bishop, widow of the 12-times Club champ, taking part in the ceremonies.

Longtime friend and golfing partner, Bert Anderson, made the presentation with many of Ben's old friends on hand to make it official.

It was a day for memories. They flowed like sweet wine.

Anderson probably played more golf with Bishop, who died May 6, than any other Moon Brook member through the years. "It was an association I will never forget," Anderson said yesterday.

"I was playing with him the day he shot a 66 and set the old course record," Anderson added. "I was just a 13 or 14 handicapper, but Ben, an excellent golfer, one of the best amateurs in the state, was always glad to play with me."

The day Ben shot his 66 Anderson said he struggled in with a 99. "I used to kid him about it," he laughed. "I told him I had the same score he did only it was upside down."

Also with Bishop when he fired his six-under amateur record was George Kessler and Dr. Ansel Martin in addition to Anderson. "We played as a foursome for years," Kessler said. "I never knew Ben to practice but once and that was a day or so he played in an exhibition with Billy Casper."

Willing to Play Anyone

“Ben loved to play with anyone,” Mrs. Bishop said in answer to a question, “but I believe during his early days of membership at Moon Brook, his staunchest competition came from Chuck Davis, who plays very little now.”

One of Ben’s greatest thrills, Mrs. Bishop believes, was winning the club championship in 1950, his first of 12 and the first when the tournament was revived after a lapse of many years.

“That and the terrific chip shot he made on No. 18 during an exhibition with Arnie Palmer, Art Wall and Toby Lyons gave him great satisfaction although he never bragged about his achievements and never predicted he would win,” she continued. “But in his quiet way, I knew he was immensely pleased.”

Ben and Lucile, both warm, outgoing people, met when she was Lucile Ruland and they were attending Wooster College in Ohio. Ben was a member of the golf team at Wooster and he ran the high and low hurdles for Coach Carl Munson, the former Jamestown resident who is now retired and living in Florida.

Ben attended high school in Marysville, Ohio, where he played varsity football.

Husband-Wife Champs

One of the big golfing years for Ben and Lucy was 1956 when he won the men’s club championship at Moon Brook and she captured the ladies title.

“He was the most natural golfer I’ve ever seen,” Anderson explained, “so natural that he never had to practice. Ben got in his spring licks in Florida as some golfers do. He’s haul out his clubs in the spring and shoot par or near par round after months of winter golfing idleness and never think a thing of it.”

Anderson readily recalled Bishop’s 15-foot chip in on No. 18 during the 1959 exhibition. It gave Ben a 70. Lyons shot 71 that day, Palmer a 68 and Wall a 69.

“He (Bishop) was a great wedge player,” Anderson explained. “He used a sand wedge to pitch or chip and was a master with it.”

Anderson says Bishop’s fantastic ability to relax contributed to his play on the course. “Yet he could concentrate while carrying on a conversation. He’d tell you what score you shot on the previous holes and just how you shot it. I recall we went to Park Club of Buffalo for a wedding reception during the later stages of Ben’s illness. I remarked as I looked out of the dining room how I would like to play this beautiful course. Ben had only played it once, but he

took me over it step-by-step, with that marvelous memory of hos, describing every hole and how he fared on them.”

Reynold’s Long-Putt Victory

Bishop played them all, the high handicapper and the low – he played for fun and win or lose, that’s just what is was, fun, as many who knew him well from their association on the course will attest – Anderson, William (Riggs) Reynolds, Dr. Martin, William Grandin, Davis and Bob Fisher to name a few.

“I played him for the club championship several times,” Reynolds said. “It was always a thrill to compete against him.”

Reynolds, incidentally, won the Chautauqua County Championship in 1968 when he, Bishop, Phil Newton and Tom Kling came down to the wire all tied. Reynolds dropped a 35-foot putt on the first extra hole to close it out.

Al Short, himself a former club champ and former president of the New York State Amateur Golf Association, recalled Moon Brook won the Buffalo District Golf Association title four times. “And wouldn’t you know it,” he added, “Ben was on each of those Moon Brook teams.”

Short “Put Him Places”

Short recalled his two-ball play with ben one year. “I put him a lot of places he’d never been before,” Al laughed. “But he never said a word, not even once when I had him right in the middle of a bunch of pines off on one hole. It was 100 yards to the green and he could hardly swing the club but he knocked it two feet from the stick and we won the hole with a birdie.”

Needless to say they though a lot of the tall, smiling gentleman at Moon Brook and they do not intend to let memories of his personality and his golf die. That’s why the big trophy has been dedicated and will have a permanent place in the clubhouse, a replica to be presented to each club champ annually.