

Sixth Sense

Yesterday I gave my collection of several baseballs to a nearby practicing Little League baseball team. I collected them years ago at the outside border of Sckavone Baseball stadium at Westmoreland Park, while taking Lisa and Kerry's dog, Bryna, for her morning walk.

This baseball event reminded me of another collection—of at least two hundred golf balls. I have a logical and intuitive ability to find golf balls. It began at age fourteen when I became a golf caddy at Tiltonsville Vine Cliff Golf Club. Every Saturday and Sunday, during the summer, I served as a caddy and became familiar with the art of finding golf balls. As a caddy, I felt proud of seldom losing an erratically hit golf ball by the golfer.

Several years after moving to Cleveland, at the age of sixteen, I began playing golf with three relatives—Ricco, Frank and Bob. We played every Sunday for years. During those games I'm not sure whether I enjoyed hitting a good shot as much as finding a shiny new ball. Since I was an above-average golfer, I seldom hit balls out into the rough. I would wander into the rough to look for balls, while my three partners were preparing to hit their balls. Usually I found three or four balls per round.

At age 35 I moved to Portland. Here I acquired new partners making a foursome consisting of me, Roy, Fred, and Glenn. We played together for years. After retirement our golfing days were Tuesday and/or Thursday. We would never schedule our family events on those days. Golfing ruled! Even as we aged we tried to improve. Our goal was to match our golf score with our age. I was the first and only one to achieve that goal. At 74 years old, I scored a 73 for eighteen holes at the Oregon City Golf Course. After that memorable event, growing older meant that my golfing score would deteriorate. At age 85 Portland's three city golf courses can be played without paying the golf fees. Unfortunately, I played only three free rounds because my ankles suddenly deteriorated.

Giving up golfing was one of the saddest episodes of my life. Still, I could pursue my passion for finding golf balls while driving around the borders of the Eastmoreland Golf Course. Erratic golfers occasionally hit balls into the bordering streets. Thus, my hoarding of golf balls continued to grow.

Why have I had such a passion for golf? There are three basic components to it. One is the thrill of the perfect execution of a golf shot, going exactly where I visualized it. Or it could be a miraculous shot out of a deep sand pit or from within a bordering forest.

The second is the beauty of each golf course. At times my aesthetic sense supplanted the golfing sense. Golf courses, especially in cities, are usually their most beautiful landscapes. While we drove cross-country and observed a beautiful [urban] landscape, it usually was a golf course. On occasions, when my ability on the golf course deserted me, I became more interested in the scenery and its wildlife. Several golf courses in the Portland area were havens for wildlife. At times watching birds, beavers, muskrats, nutria and deer took precedence over golf.

The third component of golfing consists of my obsession with finding golf balls. Finding golf balls involved logic, practice and intuition. One observation is that most golf balls lost are located on the right side of each hole. The great majority of golfers are right-handed. Beginners and mediocre golfers often hit erratic shots, most commonly a slice to the right and not a hook to the left.

Another aspect of finding balls is an innate ability. On numerous occasions I told my partners I intended to find a ball in a specific location. Usually I was successful. An outstanding event of my intuition was with my cousin, Ricco, when we visited an area on Lake Shore Boulevard in Cleveland. Twenty-five years previously the area had contained the Lake Shore Golf Course. While walking, I suddenly stopped and said; "Ricco, I think there is a golf ball nearby." After a few more steps I stopped and saw a white speck on a bare spot. I dug around the spot and picked up a golf ball.

My obsession for finding golf balls has dissipated due to irresponsible legs which don't function adequately. If miraculously the legs revive, I will resume playing golf and retain my weird pattern involving golf balls. At present, I am more willing to give up my hoarded two hundred golf balls than in the past. One method would be for our two grandchildren to go to the Eastmoreland practice range, hit a box of balls and leave them for others to use. I have proposed that they set up a table by the golf course and sell balls for twenty-five cents each. So far they have rejected that idea.

Normally our family disposes of household items, still in good condition, to the poorer segment of society. But the poor seldom can afford the golf sport. Though I have sentimental attachment to my hoard, I'm now ready to abandon the collection.

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