

Little Big Men

How Pinehurst's George Dunlap Jr. and Sr. mastered the worlds of amateur golf and publishing

BY BILL CASE

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE TUFTS ARCHIVES

By 1912, 48-year-old publishing magnate George Dunlap had become addicted to golf. Hoping to share his newfound passion with his 3-year-old son, George Jr., father purchased a tiny blade “putting-cleek” for the boy from Wanamakers Department Store in New York City. George Sr. was elated when his son promptly swung the club with gusto and surprising rhythm in the backyard of the family’s winter home in Pinehurst. But something in George Jr.’s motion looked awry. Suddenly George Sr. realized that the little tyke was swinging the miniature club left-handed!

When Donald Ross got wind of George Jr.’s portside tendency, Pinehurst’s expert on all things golf was aghast and recommended immediate corrective action: “For God’s sake, don’t let him do that. Take his club away from him if necessary!” When the boy persisted in swinging southpaw, George Sr. followed Ross’s advice and hid away the putter. Two years passed before George Sr. dared give his son another club — a wooden righthanded driver. Fortunately, the little boy adapted to addressing the golf ball from the “proper” side, and cured of the perceived ills of lefthandedness, was soon knocking shots from the hedge at neighbor Commodore Newton’s La Casita cottage toward Column Lodge, the Dunlaps’ home.

Fearful of impending broken windows from the curly-haired redhead’s neighborhood play, George Sr. figured it was time for Junior to try a real course. In his memoir, *The Fleeting Years*, George Sr. wrote he was “greatly pleased” to watch his son’s initial drive off the first tee of Course No. 2 fly “straight down the course, possibly 150 yards.” The co-founder of Grosset & Dunlap’s delight in his offspring’s game was just beginning. Ahead were thirty years of remarkable golf by George Dunlap Jr.

In his late 40s when launching young George into golf, George Sr. was already beginning to phase out of active work. On the go since childhood, he had been immersed in a dizzying variety of entrepreneurial activities. After his father, a pastor in little Orrville, Ohio, died in 1870, George recognized he would need to make his own way. In 1878, at age 14, he became Orrville’s local news agent for the *Cleveland Penny Press*. Though thrilled to be clearing \$3 a week, George looked for more profitable ventures. By age 20, he had sold shoes, operated a stationery store, and served as a commission salesman for a photograph enlargement firm.

He managed one year of college at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, but dwindling finances precluded further attendance. While running the stationery store in Orrville, he met Elizabeth, whom he would marry in 1886. George then sought employment that would better support his family, which soon included the couple’s first child, their daughter Glendale. From 1887 to 1898, he labored in a series of four traveling sales jobs at publishing houses in Cleveland, Pittsburgh and New York City. But all those publishers experienced



George Dunlap Sr. and George Dunlap Jr.



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severe financial distress, resulting in liquidations at sheriffs’ sales. Exasperated, George worried he was becoming a latter-day Jonah, permanently condemned to business failures.

The last employer to fall into a receiver’s hands was American Publishing Company. Dunlap’s closest friend there was Alexander Grosset. The two men perceived something might be salvaged from the ashes of the company. Dunlap wrote that, “[W]hen the stock and assets of Publishers Corporation were being sold at ridiculously low prices, we put our heads together and decided to invest all of our ready cash in such items as were available and which, I knew could be readily sold to my customers at a good profit.” Thus in 1898 Grosset and Dunlap acquired those assets by pooling \$1,350. They also arranged a small credit line. Presto, they were partners in the publishing business.

Thereafter constantly on the road, Dunlap came up with a breakthrough brainstorm while conferring with a customer in Providence. Gazing at stacks of a popular paperback book, it struck him that it was “possible to have these paper books bound up in a neat inexpensive cloth binding” and retailed at a “close profit.” No one in the trade had thought of this.

Soon Grosset & Dunlap (G & D) reprints were selling like hotcakes. The uncopyrighted popular works of Rudyard Kipling were marketed with particular success. Some questioned whether G & D should capitalize on an author’s work this way. However, George Sr. considered G & D to be “honorable pirates, because to our credit . . . in no case did we reprint anything that had not become public property by having been reprinted indiscriminately by about everyone else in the business.”

After G & D’s reprints struck paydirt, Dunlap developed an enduring revenue stream by publishing books catering to the juvenile market. The adventures of characters like Tom Swift, the Rover Boys, the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew made best-sellers for G & D. Zane Grey’s Western novels also flew from bookstores’ shelves.

But his efforts to build G & D into a juggernaut took a toll on George’s health. Already slight in stature, his weight declined alarmingly to 105 pounds. So in early 1908 the Dunlaps bunked into the Berkshire Hotel in Pinehurst, “an attractive and homelike little hotel, just what we wanted and there we spent six happy weeks.” The family returned to the Berkshire in 1909 with newborn George Jr. in tow. Soon the Dunlaps planted permanent roots in Pinehurst, building Column Lodge on Ritter Road, and quickly became esteemed fixtures of the village’s “Cottage Colony.” Unfortunately, there were

hardships to endure. A 2-week-old son born to the couple died in 1907. Eldest daughter Glendale passed away at age 24 in 1911. Very slow to grow, George Jr. also caused anxiety to his parents.

In 1917, George Sr.’s health continued to be “of a somewhat precarious and uncertain nature.” He arranged for relief from active duty at G & D. By 1918, he felt “wedded to Pinehurst, spending a full six months of each year there, with ample leisure, and almost complete freedom from business cares.” He lowered his golf handicap to 12 and competed in Tin Whistles competitions. But the real silver lining in George Sr.’s season-long presence in Pinehurst was witnessing George Jr.’s development into a world class player.

At 10, George Jr. broke 80 for the first time. He splashed onto the local scene at 11 in 1920 by winning Pinehurst’s Junior Championship. George Jr. dominated the club’s juvenile ranks throughout his teens. Several inordinately talented juniors helped spur him. Eugene Homans later won the North & South title and finished runner-up to Bobby Jones in the U.S. Amateur of 1930. Dick Chapman (three years younger than George Jr.) became a great champion, carrying off the U.S. Amateur in 1940 and the British Amateur in 1951. Forbes Wilson was George Jr.’s fiercest junior rival. All were George’s schoolmates at Miss Chapman’s Cottage School, prompt-





George Dunlap Jr. and runner-up Sam Parks in the 1931 North & South final match



George Dunlap Jr.

ing a *Pinehurst Outlook* scribe to observe: “It would be hard to find any school in the country regardless of size, whose graduates have lower handicaps than those of the Cottage School.”

To gain distance, George Jr. adopted the strategy of swinging hard and fast, like “a hummingbird’s wing.” His speedy action helped compensate for his diminutive frame. As he matured, he became the man to beat in Pinehurst. At 17, he led all qualifiers at the prestigious North & South, annually held on Course No. 2. He surfaced on the national stage during his years at Princeton by winning the Intercollegiate Individual Championships of 1930 and 1931. George Jr. continued carting off copious quantities of silver in Pinehurst during the late ’20s and early ’30s with victories in multiple Mid-Winter and Tin Whistles Championships. The hometown hero capped off his college days by winning his first North & South title in 1931, trouncing Sam Parks in the final 6 and 5.

George’s superb ’31 campaign merited selection to the American side in the 1932 Walker Cup matches in Brookline, Massachusetts. Regarding his four-somes victory, George recalled “the thrill I experienced when captain Francis Ouimet asked me to be his partner in foursomes. The match was played at The Country Club. Since everyone there remembered his famous 1913 U.S. Open playoff victory, we had a huge gallery.” George won his singles match too, carding a course record 66 in his morning round.

Presumably, George Sr. could have arranged for his son to concentrate on golf to the exclusion of working. But George Jr. took a job in 1933 on Wall Street in the statistical department of Hemphill, Noyes & Co. While working in New York, he fell in love with a Long Island woman, Kathryn Vogel. Kay (as she was called) later remarked that on March 25, 1933, “George and I just got in his car and drove down to Elkton, Maryland, and got married by ourselves. It was fun. We like to do things that way.” A year later, Kay bore the couple’s first child, also named Kay.

But new-found domesticity was not all that marked 1933 as a special year for George Dunlap Jr. Somehow, the newlywed found time to play the greatest golf of his life. During the couple’s honeymoon in Pinehurst, George took advantage of the opportunity to play several rounds with the great champion Tommy Armour. George later remarked that “watching him



Mr. and Mrs. George Dunlap Jr.

[Armour] play of course was a lesson in itself, and he also corrected several mistakes I had been making.”

With the “Silver Scot”’s help, the Princetonian was soon primed to take a run at winning his second North & South. He fired a stunning amateur course record 65 in the qualifier. And my, was George Jr. a tidy putter that day: only 17 putts recorded on Number 2’s sand greens! George maintained his sensational play throughout match play. In the quarterfinals, he shredded par again, closing out old junior foe Forbes Wilson 5 and 4. George waltzed to the finals where he routed Jack Toomer 6 and 5.

He traveled to the U.K. that summer with Kay. The mighty championships of Great Britain were part of their “second honeymoon.” In the British Amateur at Royal Liverpool, George found his low-running shots to be well-suited to Hoylake’s baked fairways. Initially overlooked, George charged to the semifinals, taking down defending champion Ross Somerville in the process. The eventual winner, 54-year-old The Hon. Michael Scott, finally subdued George Jr. in the semis. Then the American journeyed to St. Andrews for the Open Championship. His sparkling 71 in tough conditions led all qualifiers. While he faded to a tie for 35th, his play in both championships was highly satisfactory.

Given the intensity of the competition in Great Britain, George Jr. decided to hang up the hickories for the balance of 1933. But in light of his son’s form, George Sr. strongly recommended he enter September’s U.S. Amateur at Kenwood Country Club in Cincinnati. George Jr. eventually acquiesced and headed for Cincinnati. Before being paired in the match play brackets, he needed to survive the qualifying rounds. Things looked bleak on Kenwood’s 18th green where he faced a 20-foot putt just to squeeze into a 12-player playoff for eight spots. He holed it! The playoff melee provided another close call, but George Jr. sneaked into the 32-man field’s last spot.

George’s hot putter enabled him to prevail in the early matches, but he fretted that his shotmaking was inconsistent. Until the semifinals, he harbored no thought of winning. Once there, he confronted the intimidating Lawson Little – a true David and Goliath matchup. The longest hitter in golf, Little was at the brink of a career that would bring him multiple major victories, including the 1940 U.S. Open. The match was tilting in Lawson’s direction when George, outdriven by 50 yards, found his ball lodged in a heel print encased in sticky black mud. Denied relief, he somehow propelled a brilliant muck-flying 4-iron with his ball settling seven feet from the pin. Shaken, Little misplayed his

His championship record shines even brighter when the infrequency of his tournament play and brevity of his career are taken into account.

shorter approach and George stole the hole. The muddy masterstroke proved vital in the smaller man’s 4 and 3 upset victory.

In the final match, George faced former champion Max Marston, a fellow survivor of the 12-man playoff. George played flawless golf out of the gate and quickly built a commanding lead. He played rapidly “as I’m afraid the alarm clock will ring and wake me up.” A model of clockwork efficiency, George’s morning round of 68 put him 7 up. After lunch, the lead grew to nine holes, and George coasted to a 6 and 5 win. Innately modest, he shrugged off the suggestion that he had now arrived by winning the national championship. “I’m likely to be knocked off in any local tourney,” he exclaimed. George credited prior experience on Pinehurst’s sand greens for his error-free putting as the “surface of the sand records its [the ball’s] path.” The circular sand configurations surrounding the holes at Pinehurst also provided a sort of “bullseye” which he visualized when playing championships on grass.

George also confided to the reporters his ambition “to get out of New York and then live the life of a country squire in the Carolinas. But meanwhile I must scratch gravel here in Wall Street.” He rarely discussed golf with his cohorts at the brokerage firm, and most were caught off-guard by his victory. “Why, is that our Dunlap?” was the common refrain after word spread of his triumph.

But friends in Pinehurst, well aware of George’s exploits, rushed to schedule a celebratory banquet at the country club on January 2, 1934. A veritable “Pinehurst Hall of Fame” attended. Donald Ross graced the head table. So did Pinehurst titans Leonard and Richard Tufts. Former Amateur champion, U.S.G.A. president and Pinehurst product W.C. Fownes paid tribute. O.B. Keeler, Bobby Jones’s biographer and sidekick, emceed and remarked that George Jr.’s 68 in the morning of the National Amateur final was the equal of Jones’s greatest, “and I’m not sure but that George’s round was over a stiffer course than Bobby’s.” Proud “Daddy Dunlap” stole the show when he hauled out the Wanamaker miniature putter that his toddler son once wielded in Column Lodge’s backyard.

The banquet initiated a turbulent two years of change for father and son. Elizabeth Dunlap, George Sr.’s wife, died in February 1934. Eight months later, Alexander Grosset also passed away, necessitating for a time George Sr.’s re-immersion into the business affairs of G & D. Late in the year, George Sr., now 70, began courting Sarah Gaines of New York City. They would marry in Pinehurst’s Village Chapel the following March. The couple would winter at Broadview Cottage on Ritter Road, which George Sr. had built in 1928.

Much was also happening with George Jr. and Kay in 1934. Woodbine Cottage on Everette Road became their winter residence. The couple’s second child, George T. Dunlap III, was on the way. And George continued to make the North & South his personal fiefdom, capturing his third title with a grip-



Left to Right: Richard Tufts, W.C. Fownes, George Dunlap Sr., O.B. Keeler, George Dunlap Jr., and Leonard Tufts at the banquet honoring George Jr.’s 1933 U.S. Amateur victory



George Dunlap Jr. at the 1935 North & South Amateur

ping extra holes decision over boyhood chum Dick Chapman. With his second place finish in the North & South Open, George demonstrated he could play with the PGA Tour's best. He made another strong run at the British Amateur in a second semifinal finish at Prestwick. The prematurely balding ace joined a Walker Cup squad team that overwhelmed Great Britain and Ireland at St. Andrews. But George Jr. came up empty in defense of his U.S. Amateur crown, vanquished in round one by Willie Turnesa.

Another seismic shift in the fortunes of the two Georges arose when Pinehurst, Inc.'s lending banks insisted that the Tufts family unload the Pine Needles Inn and golf course, including 531 acres of Knollwood real estate. The grand Tudor-style hotel, erected by the Tufts in 1928 at a cost of \$750,000, had been vacant since the spring of 1932. By 1935, the Donald Ross-designed Pine Needles golf course lay buried under waist-deep weeds. The course had not been fertilized for two years. With no end in sight to the Great Depression, the assets were marketed for a fraction of their former value.

Few people had any money, but George Sr. still did. He sensed a golden opportunity to replicate his G & D success by buying depressed assets. He, along with George Jr., O.H. Stutts, and Pennsylvania oil patch legend Samuel Ramage mounted a bid to purchase the Pine Needles property. In August 1935, the corporation formed by the investors, Patuxent Development Company, bought everything for a pittance: \$75,000. *The Pilot's* editor Nelson Hyde approved. He penned, "... there is little doubt in the minds of those acquainted with the [Dunlap] group that they will make a success of the restoration of the Inn and the golf course to its former position in our resort life."

The Dunlaps immediately sprang into action to restore the course to playable condition. Plans were set in motion to

refurbish and expand the hotel. New dining and culinary facilities were made ready. The course's sand greens were converted to grass. George Jr. designed a mogul-filled putting green. As Patuxent's vice president, he had plenty on his plate to accomplish in preparation for the hotel's reopening on November 14, 1935. Adjacent lots also needed to be sold, so to be closer to the action, George Jr. relocated the family winter residence to Knollwood.

The managing of Patuxent's real estate ventures coupled with Tin Whistles golf, a happy family, and civic involvement as a Scouting leader made for an idyllic life. With his goal of becoming a "country squire" in the Carolinas achieved, George Jr. gradually reduced his tournament play. Despite the rust, he continued to tack on North & South victories. Including his titles in 1935, 1936, 1940 and 1942, George won the event

seven times in eleven years, a record unlikely ever to be approached.

When Samuel Ramage died in 1941, George Jr. bought his Patuxent stock. There was concern that the oil baron's death might fracture the company, but George Sr., still active at 77, took pains to allay those fears and endorsed his son's credentials for running the business: "Fortunately for the company, George [Jr.] was reared in Pinehurst . . . and has the background and practical knowledge of local conditions, as well as the expectations of guests of the hotel and those seeking locations for winter houses."

The Pine Needles Inn managed to weather the Great Depression, but the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel" proved to be an onrushing locomotive in the form of World War II. In April 1942 the Army Air Force - Technical Training Command appropriated the facility for use as its operations center. While some outside guests were permitted, posted sentries barred others



Dick Chapman (left) with George Dunlap Jr. (right)



Pine Needles Inn

Mid-way between Southern Pines and Pinehurst, N. C.
Beautiful . . . Modern . . . Fireproof . . . Convenient . . . Comfortable

EVERYTHING A VACATION DEMANDS

That would really be sufficient to describe this lovely resort home, but there is much more to be said:

Pine Needles Inn in a beautiful fireproof building in the English tudor style, located in the pine scented woods between Pinehurst and Southern Pines North Carolina. The rooms, perfectly appointed, each have outside private bath; and as nearly all rooms are connecting almost any combination or suite, may be arranged for you. A noiseless elevator eliminates the climbing of stairs, and makes the room on the higher floors with their magnificent view even more desirable.

An intriguing eighteen hole golf course, designed by Donald Ross and under the able direction of Dave Guthrie (professional at Buck Hill Falls, Pa., for many years) as professional, beckons both the beginner and the experienced player from the very edge of the wide front terrace. Croquet . . . Tennis . . . Archery . . . putting greens (which will delight the putters hearts) . . . a pure white sand play-ground for the children . . . odorous pine walks . . . are all to be found within the six hundred acres of pine woods which comprise the Inn property. Excellent riding horses . . . steeplechasing . . . polo . . . Fox hunting . . . lake fishing . . . shooting (game and trap) . . . are among the other activities available for our guests and all arrangements are gladly made for you at the Inn desk.

The putting greens referred to in the above paragraph were inspired by the visits of George T. Dunlap, Jr. (former national Amateur Golf champion and Vice President of the Patuxent Corporation which owns the Inn) to the greens of the famous St. Andrews Course in Scotland.

The same staff and service which have established such an enviable reputation for the Howell House in Westhampton Beach, Long Island (summed up in the saying: "Our greatest advertisement is what our guests, young and old have to say about us") will be on hand to welcome you.

A beautiful paved road connects the Inn directly with U. S. Route No. 1 at Manly, N. C., and a divided Boulevard connects the Inn with Southern Pines and Pinehurst.

Golf rates are exceptionally reasonable: \$1.00 per day; \$5.00 per week; \$15.00 per month; \$40.00 per season.

Tennis rates are also low: 50c per day; \$2.50 per week; \$7.50 per month; \$20.00 per season. Any further information will gladly be furnished by Mr. Emmett E. Boone, Manager.

from entering the gates. Rental payments from the Army during this period certainly did not produce the sort of revenue the Dunlaps had been expecting. Moreover, the business of marketing Knollwood real estate lay pretty much in mothballs for the duration.

After the army left, the Dunlaps reopened the hotel to the public. Business hummed along until April 23, 1948. On that fateful evening a gentleman sought to buy hard liquor at the golf club and then in the Pine Needles Inn's "Green Room." While establishments could be licensed to purvey beer and wine, sales of liquor were outlawed. That state law was sporadically enforced and mostly ignored. The supposedly thirsty patron was told "no dice" by bartender Sherman Patterson because the man was not registered as a guest. So he checked into the hotel under an assumed name and returned to the bar. Only then did Patterson sell the man two mint juleps for \$4.

The patron was actually an undercover ABC agent, and part of a massive sting operation designed to catch virtually every Moore County hotel and restaurant in its web. Similar stings were simultaneously taking place across the street at Mid Pines, Southern Pines Country Club, Jefferson Inn, Grey Fox Restaurant, Dunes Club, Skycruise Club, French Restaurant, Pope's Restaurant, Village Inn, and Dante's Restaurant. The Carolina Hotel and Pinehurst Country Club were not raided, which caused George Jr. to wonder whether teetotaler Richard Tufts might be the whistleblower. The ensuing ABC raid of the Pine Needles Inn resulted in arrests of bartender Patterson

and hotel manager Emmett Boone. The agents seized 25 gallons of hard liquor.

Justice was swift. All defendants were hauled into the court in Carthage for trial on Monday, May 2nd. *Pinehurst Outlook* editor Bob Harlow provided a masterful tongue-in-cheek account of Pine Needle Inn's attorney J. Talbot Johnson's histrionics: "Mr. Johnson became so intoxicated with sympathy for his whiskey-selling client that he was overcome by emotion . . . Mr. Johnson, in summing up for his client wept great glistening tear drops, which rolled down his cheeks and threatened his light gray cravat. Had this sequence been enacted in a Hollywood motion picture studio it would have rolled movie fans in the aisles from Maine to Oregon." Johnson heaped praise on the Dunlaps, arguing that they operated Pine Needles "on a high moral plane, the equal in every way of such famous hostelries as the Waldorf Astoria . . . serving the same class of clients and operated by men whose characters are beyond approach."

It was to no avail. All defendants were found guilty. But the damage caused by the accompanying fines paled in comparison to the havoc generated by the required two-year minimum ABC suspension of the hotel's beer and wine license. Could the Pine Needles Inn even operate under such a sanction?

The Dunlaps thought not. The ABC bust turned out to be the proverbial last straw. A month later, Patuxent negotiated the sale of the hotel and golf course for \$406,000 to the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis. The facility, to be known as "St. Joseph of the Pines," was converted to use as a general hospital and sanitarium. The Dunlaps insisted though "that the golf course . . . be maintained and made available to the public." The Sisters leased the course out until the Bell and Cosgrove families purchased it five years later. After receiving his share of the sale proceeds, George Sr., now 84, gifted a \$600,000 endowment to the hospital in his hometown of Orrville. The facility was renamed in his honor. George Sr. passed away in 1956.

Perhaps because he was miffed with the powerful forces that caused the closing of the Inn, George Jr. elected the following October to sell his Knollwood home and relocate to Fort Lauderdale. Through Patuxent and personal ownership, he retained control of numerous Knollwood lots, gradually selling them over the next fifty years. Like his father, George Jr. survived into his 90s. He spent his final years in Naples, occasionally enjoying nine holes with George III.

When I discussed his father with George III, a long-time lawyer in Barstow, Florida (and like his father, a collegiate golfer at Princeton), he mentioned George Jr.'s humility regarding his golfing achievements. "Dad rarely talked about his golf success except for a long driving contest he won at Princeton. He savored that one, probably because of his size." George Jr. topped out at 135 pounds.

George Jr. was similarly nonchalant about the prospect of competing in major championships. He last played the U.S. Amateur in 1936, when he was only 27. He never competed in the U.S. Open. He even dragged his feet responding to an invitation to the first Masters in 1934. He agreed to play only after Bobby Jones prodded him with a personal letter. It was his only Masters appearance. His championship record shines even brighter when the infrequency of his tournament play and brevity of his career are taken into account.

Though small in stature, both George T. Dunlap Jr. and Sr. were giants in their respective pursuits of golf and publishing. They played leading roles in our local history during the first half of the 20th century. They still seem alive to any true son or daughter of the game. As it happens, I live in a house adjacent to the yard where George Jr. took his first left-handed swings. It is easy for me to imagine wee George Jr. still there hitting balls with his father looking on, even though that halcyon scene occurred over a century ago. PS

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