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Wide Open Fairways

Bradley S. Klein

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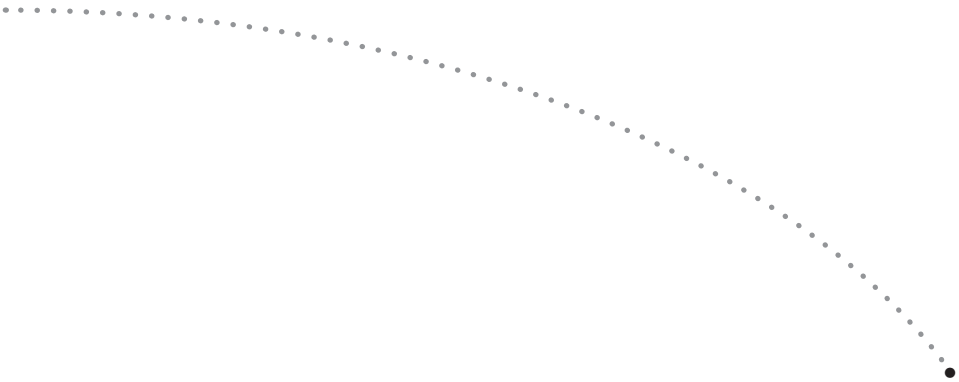

BRADLEY S. KLEIN

WIDE OPEN FAIRWAYS

A Journey across the Landscapes of Modern Golf

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Preface

I spend a lot of time on golf courses. In this book I explain what I'm looking at, how I view these recreational spaces, and why I think they are interesting as cultural forms.

In many ways this is a personal memoir as much as it is an account of what makes golf courses compelling landscapes. The narrative follows my growing up and becoming professionally engaged in golf, first as a caddie, then as a journalist and book author, and more recently as someone who is regularly active in teaching and educating folks in the golf industry about the art and practice of golf course design and maintenance. The fact that I have no formal training in either landscape design or agronomy might have been a handicap, but I hope the reader will come to appreciate that it's possible to bring to bear other disciplines and training. In my case that includes a long stint studying, teaching, and writing about world political culture and political economy. On the more practical side my observations draw upon years spent in the caddie yards of private clubs and, later on, the PGA Tour, where I cut my teeth looping in close to one hundred events, including six U.S. Opens. I never won, but I learned and saw a lot.

These days my work takes me on the road about 150 days a year, and that time is spent walking and talking golf with superintendents, architects, club general managers, and green

committee chairmen as well as staffers and leaders of various golf associations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere.

I get asked a lot how many courses I have seen, and I don't know for sure and don't really want to know for sure. Somehow my mental Rolodex has enough room and flexibility to keep track of the main elements of the places I've seen, but I don't keep a specific list or have a spreadsheet grading each and every course I've encountered. Among the few numerical indices I can refer to is that I have seen 175 of the top-rated 200 U.S. courses that the magazine I work for, *Golfweek*, rates—and I should know this because I lead that rating operation and shepherd a team of 750 course evaluators around and frequently lecture to them (sometimes at them) about how to assess golf courses. Worldwide I've chalked up a similar percentage—having visited 88 of the top 100 courses that *Golf Magazine* rates internationally.

One more index suggests the persistence of my occupational habit. Back in 2004, when I wrote the foreword to Jeff Barr's book *1001 Golf Holes You Must Play before You Die*, I noted having seen 436 of those famous holes. Now, eight years later, that number is up to 516. At least I'm beyond the halfway point to deliverance, though clearly a lot of ground remains to be covered.

But this book isn't about lists or about spreadsheets with data. Instead, it's an entirely impressionistic account of how golf courses are cultural markers—cultural links, if you will—that tie this popular recreation into larger issues of land use, ecology, design, and imagination. The interest here is less on playing these golf courses under competitive conditions—there are already thousands of books about that—than on how these wide open spaces function as landscapes that inspire us, that stimulate our senses and make us feel like we are somewhere special.

I've been playing golf for forty-five years, and since the very beginning, back in the late 1960s, I've been fascinated by the va-

riety of places where I found golf. In part it was simply the beauty of these complex sports fields—the most varied and least rule governed in all of sports. But it was also home life that I sought to escape from early on. Golf courses were lovely retreats for me, and even in my teens I was aware of how powerful a sense of calm came over me the moment I stepped through the gates of a country club onto one of those private courses near our house. I was transported. And so off I went, to caddie and to play and later on to write about the game and eventually to make a living doing something I quite simply loved to do.

At first the golf writing was avocational, as was my golf—an escape from academic pressures. But all along I knew I wanted to become a golf writer and leave university life behind. It became a matter of formulating one of those famous Five-Year Plans for a transition into the golf world. And it was helped by having carved out an expertise at analyzing golf courses that left me with far less competition than would have been the case had I wanted to write about the PGA Tour or golf instruction.

And so I started, first with the occasional freelance article in *Score: Canada's Golf Magazine*, then in U.S. tournament programs, and finally, in November 1988, for *Golfweek* as a monthly columnist with 1,500 words to fill on matters of golf course design. Soon other magazine assignments followed, but I never left the pages of *Golfweek*, and as my golf workload increased and the influence of my political science book, on U.S. foreign policy, didn't quite measure up to my hopes, it was clearly time to make the leap full-time to golf. Which I did, finally, in 1999, as founding editor of a *Golfweek* offshoot called *Superintendent News*, which saw me writing about golf courses with far more frequency and intensity, now for two publications. And of course we had to start filling the virtual pages of our website. All of which gave me more room, if less time, to explain to folks what makes those golf course special places.

My first golf book, *Rough Meditations* (1997, 2006), con-

sisted almost entirely of already published columns and articles that had appeared in a variety of outlets. I was able to re-present them in only slightly edited form as a series of thematically organized chapters and thus to make sense of the accumulated material without having to rewrite them from scratch. And when I started thinking about *Wide Open Fairways*, I thought I could pull off a similar effort of collection and organization. But several intervening factors made that impossible. For one thing the folks at the University of Nebraska Press wisely balked at publishing a collection of old material. Second, the media culture had changed. What used to be columns and articles of 1,500 to 2,000 words had shrunk, thanks to the collective attention deficit disorder afflicting modern print journalism editors and social media, to the point where my standard column is now down to 840 words, and many web pieces are half that length.

As I began to see if I could stretch and pull and revise existing material that was already published, it became clear that I would have to start with a fresh approach to the material. Along the way, as I recount in the introduction, my father died, and his passing led me to a much deeper appreciation of the extent to which my own approach to golf courses has been governed by my relationship with him—and to the peculiar nature of his own mental universe. As I began to sift through the materials to review the articles I had written and to revisit the places I was writing about, it became clear that there was more substance and continuity to my thinking and experience of golf courses than I had given myself credit for.

I spend a lot of time talking to golf audiences—golf pros, superintendents, green chairmen, and committee members as well as avid golfers. And I have never found it very helpful or effective to belabor a theoretical framework before such audiences. My preference is more straightforward—to explore in a sensible and thoughtful way what makes golf courses special and how to

go about analyzing them and thinking about them creatively and in a way that's ecologically sustainable, makes business sense, and enhances people's enjoyment of the place. So, it might seem strange that after years of teaching Plato, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, I think it is more helpful to downplay philosophical abstractions and theoretical frameworks and proceed instead on a case-by-case basis. Except that my thinking about specific sites is never purely inductive from the particular to the general; it is informed or animated by a larger set of concerns and interests that derive from a wide range of sources, some of them literary, some of them more practical, but all of them shaped by my engagement with an assortment of thoughtful writers who have found themselves involved in important public debates about how to act and how to respond to the various demands of modern industrial culture.

Chief among them are two foundational figures in the history of landscape architecture, British designer Humphry Repton (1752–1818) and the American park and land planner Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903). A prolonged engagement with their writings opened up a whole new world for me in terms of thinking about land as aesthetic space and as moral space. This revelation came as a powerful contrast to two previous conceptions of land I had been reading about. The one, derived from seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke, treated land as an entirely private commodity and had become central to subsequent liberal views of public policy and land use. The other tradition, embedded in the history of strategic-military theory that I was working on, was a kind of heavy-handed power politics view of land as a strategic positional resource. In the view of such strategists as seemingly diverse as Niccolò Machiavelli, Carl von Clausewitz, Capt. Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Halford J. Mackinder, land was conceived in terms of plate tectonics; the struggle for control of space was assumed to be a fundamental tenet of life.

Reading all of this while engaged on the side with golf left me in what seemed like two different worlds. But it was that initial reading of Repton and Olmsted that opened me up to an entirely different way of thinking about land. The kicker, so to speak, came when I next started reading Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), the conservationist whose many essays articulating a land ethic made me see land as a rich, contestable, and multilayered resource that could only be understood as the convergence of science, ethics, and public policy.

I made some initial forays into my two worlds of politics and golf to open up space in both directions. On the strategic studies side I wrote an essay in 1998 for the *European Journal of International Relations* called "Politics by Design: Remapping Security Landscapes," which sought to give more identifiable shape and form to the rather abstract accounts of land in my discipline. A year later I wrote an essay called "Cultural Links: An International Political Economy of Golf Course Landscapes" for an edited volume, *SportCult*. Here I analyzed course architecture as successive phases of classical, modern, and postmodern interpretations of public space.

In the last decade-plus as a full-time journalist, I've cast aside the academically laborious effort of edifice building and been satisfied to immerse myself in dense descriptions that are themselves informed by a point of view. No description of anything is theoretically neutral or purely objective. It's always informed, whether overtly or subliminally, by criteria of selection and by an interest in drawing out some lessons.

The essays that follow can be seen in that light. Some of them started out as shorter pieces and had to be extensively elaborated and deepened. Others are entirely new. In both cases the material exists in far different form than initially conceived as the substance of this book. What started out as discrete, previously published pieces now have, I hope, a more unified voice.

To be sure, the essays run the gamut from Willa Cather's mus-

ings on the American prairie to Donald Trump's unintentional parody of Robert Moses's empire building. The common thread is the presence of a city kid ceaselessly crossing the American landscape for wide open spaces. It turns out that in golf I found what I was looking for.

Unfortunately, many of the same places where I discovered the beauty of golf were most heavily hit by Tropical Storm Sandy in October 2012. As the chapters here make clear, the Woodmere (New York) Club and its neighbor, Rockaway Hunting Club in Lawrence, were special ground for me as a teenager, and they have remained important ever since. Part of their charm was their exposure to the tidal marshes of Long Island's south shore and the Atlantic immediately beyond. And it was precisely this setting that made these two courses—among many others in the Northeast—susceptible to storm surges and damaging winds. The impact was considerable, but so too, in the storm's aftermath, is the intent of the clubs' managers to make a full recovery.

WIDE OPEN FAIRWAYS

Introduction

Getting Started

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My father wasn't much of a sportsman and even less of a golfer. But a few precious moments with him on various sports fields, including golf courses, still occupy my mind as I play back images of him. I'm sitting here in my study, flashing back to my dad, Milton Klein, who died in late May 2011 at the age of eighty-nine.

His was a peaceful, painless, and honorable passing in a New York City hospice—as was his wish—with his family on hand. There was nothing unexpected or shocking about it. In some ways it came as a relief after three years of gradual decline, precipitated by a car accident that by all rights should have killed him off then. But he turned out, much to our surprise, to be strong, resilient, and determined. His body showed the kind of persistence and conviction his mind never could.

Not entirely by coincidence, it had also been three years since I had published my last book—a club history of Sebonack Golf Course in Southampton, New York, much of it involving an account of Long Island's natural history and golf development. In the intervening years I had done a considerable amount of traveling, most of it reporting on behalf of *Golfweek* magazine, for which I have been writing for over two decades. But some of that recent traveling was not work related; it was tending to family matters in New York City, where my father's health was

1. Rockaway Hunting Club, Lawrence, New York, par-4 eighth hole. Courtesy of the author.

faltering and my mother's ability to cope was frayed. The deeper their immediate dilemmas, the less they could think or even ask about my own world. I was used to it. It was how I grew up. Sadly, there was nothing new in their inability to escape their own pressing world.

It seemed ironic to be tending to home matters like this. When growing up in New York City, on the southeast corner of Queens County, near the Five Towns area of Nassau County, my instinct then was to flee the house, to get away as often as possible, as early as possible, and for as long as possible. Early on, from the age of fourteen, I learned to use a locally cultivated sense of golf travel into those Five Towns—Cedarhurst, Hewlett Harbor, Inwood, Lawrence, and Woodmere—as an escape and emotional release. It was there, along the marshy, tree-lined corridors of private clubs and lush golf lawns, that I discovered the beauty

of the golf course landscapes. They were my own kind of refuge and retreat. For all their exclusivity as expensive private clubs with gated entry and fencing all around, a working kid like myself could just walk in (or ride in on my bicycle) on "Caddie Monday" or "Caddie Tuesday Afternoon," put the golf shoes on, and tee it up for a round. It always made me feel like I was rich and privileged, even if I had to caddie the previous weekend to earn the right. As if earning money weren't enough, I knew I was also chalking up points with the caddie master that would qualify me to play on courses that most local golfers just drove by or dreamed about.

These were my first "wide open fairways." They were quiet, peaceful, and expansive. Everything at home, by contrast, was noisy, turbulent, and confining. The house was small, and my parents were always loud and interrupting each other, and it was clear to me early on that my father was really odd, with annoying habits such as checking the locks repeatedly or pacing around at night when most people were sleeping. And my mother, in turn, needed to have the house scrubbed neat and clean every day and the meals served at a routine time and according to the same menu themes (i.e., Tuesday was always fish night). Between my father's disorder and my mother's need to impose order, I felt lost and ignored. And confined.

By contrast, there was something so beautiful, so peaceful, so expansive and inspiring, about the scale of the golf course. And I loved being out there early in the morning and spending the whole day watching as the light shifted. The morning sun quietly burned off the fog, passing across the land like some sort of ascending curtain, revealing shape and definition to the land—rolls and swales that would change shape by the minute as daylight suffused the scene. As the mist burned off, the scene would turn crystalline, and the golf course features assumed unambiguous character. By late afternoon the shadows would reappear, though with more clarity than in the morning, and then the air

would seem to thicken as evening arrived and shadows gradually absorbed the textures and shapes of the golf course. I loved seeing and feeling the cycle of a full day spent out there.

Sibling rivalry can be especially intense when the siblings are fighting for scarce resources such as attention and love. The three of us—all boys, two of us twins (of which I was one)—did more than our share of squabbling. Golf was my asylum. I spent long days caddying, arising at 5 a.m., then heading off on the Long Island Rail Road's Far Rockaway Line or taking a shorter, more direct (if more laborious) path on bicycle. The train was slower but made me feel classier and more grown-up, as if I were commuting to work—a little sandwich in tow.

Nobody thought of sunblock in those days. But I always had some sort of goofy hat on, only in part to fend off the sun. Mainly, it was to distinguish myself from the horde of more senior caddies who occupied the caddie yards. This was in an era when carts had not yet totally eliminated that hustling sector of the labor force. The competition was formidable. It helped that I immediately discerned three different groups of caddies: not the usual triptych of A, B, and C but rather, a ranking along generational and class lines. There were the "daylighting" workers, usually in their twenties or thirties, otherwise employed as truck drivers, policemen, or teachers, who were looking for a sideline to earn extra cash. I couldn't beat them out at first for the earliest, choicest loops; the caddie master seemed to favor them so they could be done early and get home to their families or their regular work lives. But I quickly saw that I could provide better caddie service than the older, more broken-down men, the ones who stumbled into the caddie yards every morning the same dissolute way they had stumbled into everything else in life. As for the other teens who aspired to caddie, I knew I had to beat them out by showing up earlier, showing more interest in club members, hustling the parking lot to earn some tips and ingratiate myself with members, and simply being will-

ing to take on extra jobs or being more attentive and helpful on the course.

I learned my yardages quickly. Learned to read the characters of my players. Learned when to shut up and when to speak up and offer advice. And most of all, I learned the golf course—every roll, every mound. I had literally fallen in love with the trajectory of the golf ball—how it jetted out on a rising arc and then butterflied back down to earth. Upon mastering the ground game and what happened when the ball hit the ground, my little bag-toting education was starting, and nobody could outsmart me.

Life's lessons, all in the caddie yard. My friends never got it, even the ones who said they liked golf. They found looping too much work. By contrast, I reveled in the labor and in the way it opened up whole new worlds for me. For one thing I was relieved of all kinds of class anxiety to find out that rich people could be really stupid out on the golf course; they hit foolish shots, said nasty things, looked for lame excuses, and would try to blame their caddie (me!) when it was nobody's fault but their own.

There was no need for me ever to fear upper-class people or to shy away from them when I possessed a piece of knowledge that might help them in what they were trying to do. The yardage, the wind direction, the slope on the green—any of this could serve as a resource that I could leverage into having them take me seriously and listen to me. It all gave me a level of confidence and self-esteem that I should have been learning at home. What my father couldn't provide as a role model, I could cultivate for myself out here on the golf course. And this enhanced my sense of the place as something special, as something that helped me grow up. This was my magic garden. And I would master its dimensions and its secrets and thereby empower myself.

As much as I loved rock music, I spent Woodstock Weekend carrying two bags thirty-six holes a day, $6 per bag, no tipping, $24 a day on a good day, which I could supplement with $1.50

by "picking the range" late afternoons or early evenings before heading home. Anything to prolong the joy of watching shadows dance across the fairways. Anything to stay away from home.

Soon after my dad died, I faced my first Father's Day without him. Not that I have ever been one for taking such days seriously. The good intentions behind these occasions often seem to get hijacked by maudlin commercialism and clichéd sentiments, becoming a parody of their otherwise admirable intent. But there has to be something of substance to all of this familial honoring. Why else would golf books celebrating "Final Rounds" with dad be a formula for literary success? And why else would images of a father watching his son win the U.S. Open on "his day" be a tear-eliciting staple of our TV screens?

I envy the beauty of those soft-focus moments when father and son truly bond. In my case, our case, the relationship was complicated by my father's lifelong mental illness. Back in the 1960s, we didn't know exactly what the diagnosis was. Kids aren't supposed to know those sorts of things about their dads, and in any case the doctors and psychiatrists were never quite certain. Some sort of mood disorder, elements of manic depression, suggestions of schizophrenia—though these words that my mother, citing the doctors, floated around to us by way of explanation seemed to me from early on to miss the mark. In medicine, as in everyday life, attempts to impose formal categories seem to rely upon a misleading confidence. As if everything has a proper place, a box that fully explains and exhausts the complexity of its content.

My father's turmoil could not be encapsulated in such boxes. Actually, I believe no one's identity is contained or accounted for in this way. Of course, with most people that's not a big issue, but with someone who was constantly sputtering and misfiring, there was need for some sort of designated expert to fix what was wrong. Or at least explain it. No wonder they call psychiatry the "impossible profession."

I spent a considerable amount of time listening to my father, trying to figure out ways to reach him, trying to let him know I loved him and cared. It was clear to me early on that he hardly knew he existed as a real person. In later years I came to realize that his sense of self was complicated by a version (or degree) of Asperger's syndrome in which he was far more comfortable tinkering with things than relating with people.

He spent his life as an electrical engineer for various stereo companies, later gained New York State certification as a licensed professional engineer, and made himself amazingly useful around the house as an all-purpose fix-it man. He was equally comfortable tinkering with the insides of a TV or taking apart the house plumbing and managed, all by himself, to design and build the upstairs dormer bedroom in which the three of us boys grew up. And he loved to play violin, which ultimately proved his salvation for fifty years of Wednesday nights (and four annual concerts on Saturdays) as a member of the Rockaway Five Towns Symphony Orchestra.

His occasional descents into his complicated inner life were more of a ritual than a major dysfunction. He was kind and devoted to the family, loyal to his wife (my mother) for fifty-nine years. Somehow he managed on a modest salary to keep us all properly housed and fed, though without hand-me-downs we would never have been adequately clothed. Our house was small, only made serviceable by that one big dormer of a bedroom. My parents were convinced that such an arrangement—three little beds, one long desk with three chairs—was cute and loved showing it off to visiting friends and relatives. We, meanwhile, cringed at such tacky middle-class domesticity and tried to express our disdain for the arrangement. When we pointed out, for instance, that the effect of the blue-green slate linoleum floor was to turn the well-lighted room into a fish tank, my mother simply explained how it expedited her cleaning of the place. And there was that hideous clown face on one wall—

a remnant of her art class days that she thought was wonderful and we were convinced was spooky because the eyes seemed to follow us around the room at night.

In this, as in all other things having to do with our growing up, my parents would not or could not listen. And in case of any disagreement or conflict, my father demurred and let my mother settle matters—though in taking up the burden, she always provided an account designed to elicit our sympathy and guilt for the burden the household posed to her.

One summer week dad accompanied our older brother, Elliott, to Boy Scout camp, leaving Gary and me home with our mom. On a Friday night we got Chinese takeout and set up our meals on little tables in front of the black-and-white TV to watch *Fear Strikes Out*, the 1957 movie about Red Sox outfielder Jimmy Piersall (played by Anthony Perkins). The film depicts the sad public spectacle of Piersall's emotional anguish, most of it attributed in the film to the ceaseless haranguing he got from his dad (portrayed by Karl Malden). At one point Piersall is so tortured by his struggles to succeed and please his father that after getting a base hit in Fenway Park, he erupts midgame, climbs the netting behind home plate, and starts yelling at his father there. As we're watching this with increasing uneasiness, my mother starts getting agitated and finally blurts out, "That's what your father's like; that's just what he's like."

I still don't know what appalled me more—the revelation of my father's character or my mother's lack of discretion. She seemed to revel in going public about her misery. Soon after the *Fear Strikes Out* incident, she discovered that her favorite magazine, *McCall's*, was offering a $1,000 prize to a reader who submitted the best essay on overcoming hardship. Here was my mother's big chance to benefit from her suffering. Thus began what seemed like an endless month of her dutifully documenting my father's illness, all of it typed and retyped on a little Remington. She was not shy about reading it to me and asking for edi-

torial comments before she submitted the essay. I was terrified it would win because then it would get published, but I figured the odds were long, and I had to hide my relief when she got the envelope with the form letter announcing that it didn't win.

The whole idea of the family was not to burden my parents further because they both had their hands full with my father's fragile psyche. He lacked confidence at work, was indecisive in small matters, and was totally unhelpful when it came to the kinds of everyday issues that teens worried about. The kind of stock paternal advice that formed the substance of TV shows like *Leave It to Beaver* or *My Three Sons* was totally absent. Issues with teachers, friends, or young love were lost on him. Whenever I would solicit his advice, his response was invariably something like "What do you want me to tell you?" I was probably no older than ten when I developed the counter stock response: "If I knew what I wanted you to tell me, I would not have to ask." Soon enough I stopped asking and tried to figure stuff out for myself.

My father was a decent provider, kept a solid house around us, and made sure we had enough to eat and were headed academically in the right direction. But that kind of family commitment came, like everything else he did, with a certain abstract sense of duty that was, until very late in his life, basically devoid of warmth and spontaneity. He meant well enough, was never mean or negligent. In fact, he was attentive to a fault to his one self-described role in life—to provide enough for us—but he agonized terribly about debt and financial uncertainty, to the point where he would go sleepless for weeks or worry himself during vacations because of the cost, which meant he could never allow himself to relax.

He was fastidious about middle-class stability and impressed upon us early on the importance of earning our own way. We learned to take on any and all small jobs to earn pocket money—delivering newspapers, shoveling snow, mowing lawns, or

distributing leaflets in advance of the Fuller Brush man. This income supplemented a small weekly allowance and gave me a little bit of independent spending money as well as teaching me the early virtues of being highly entrepreneurial. I remember the feeling of sudden wealth when I made $5 shoveling sidewalks the day after a February 1965 snowstorm shut down New York City for a week. At sixteen I was an after-school stock boy in Alexander's Department Store making $1.75 an hour—$35, before taxes, for a half week's work. All of it was my way of avoiding having to rely on my father and of showing him—if he was ever looking—that I could succeed on my own and could act responsibly and maturely.

As hard as I worked and tried to gain his approval, it didn't quite result in the attention I craved. Worse yet was that instead of him embracing me or recognizing my efforts, I had to face the humiliation and embarrassment of his own behavior.

The polite way to put it, which we often did for friends or neighbors in explaining away my father's odd reclusiveness, was that he was into his own world of engineering. He loved extended scientific discussions of atmospheric pressure or the principles by which an electronic signal magically carried voice and sound. But talk about the merits of the internal combustion engine versus steam power only goes so far at the dinner table.

A further by-product of his nature was that he only reluctantly sampled my often frantic attempts at sports greatness. In my three years of Little League he caught the tail end of just a single game, too late to witness the one great catch and throw for a double play I made that entire fifteen-game season. On the golf course he never saw me play. It was only rarely and with reluctance that I dared to rattle his fragile routine by asking him for a ride to or from a daylong session of caddying. And he (and my mother and brothers) never wondered what I was looking at whenever we drove by a golf course and I would crane my neck to get a better look.

The closest I ever came to relating to my father was in high school, after I had started caddying, when I began buying up large sheets of oaktag and drawing golf courses and routing versions of golf holes I had actually walked. I took great pride in relying upon exact proportions, with one millimeter always equal to one yard. The 305 millimeters constituting a foot-long ruler were ideal for a short par-4. And so I spent many hours under the spotlights he had assembled for the purposes of our doing homework. I would spread-eagle my oaktag across the six-foot-long desk, radio blaring, and deploy my own little landscape architect's arsenal of No. 2 pencils, protractor, wooden ruler, and erasers. It was a complete world, down to a game with dice I invented that enabled me to create a sliding scale of yardages so that I could play a round with enough realism of uncertainty and chance to make it look and feel like real golf—all of it played out on imaginary courses made up of the best holes in the area, or the best holes I had seen on TV or read about.

I'm sure my brothers thought all of this was nuts—not that I ever asked them. My mother only seemed to worry that I was making a mess with eraser debris and that she was emptying the litter baskets upstairs a whole lot. She looked at everything I did not as an activity that kept me busy but as a potential for disturbing her routines of cleanliness. It seemed odd that she'd get upset about my using litter baskets; she apparently believed that garbage cans ought to be kept clean and empty.

As for my father, I don't recall him ever wandering upstairs on his own to see what I was doing or to look in at my handiwork. I had to volunteer showing him my golf course work. But he had no basis of a real golf course in his head and thus no way to appreciate the extent to which I had sought accuracy or proportionality. Having given up any expectation that he would provide an appreciative account, I reverted to doing commentary myself—as if relying upon the form of radio or TV play-by-play to give the scene some life.

My father tolerated my love of golf. He would sit through a brief account of a hole or two I'd played, most memorably when I made my first par, on the 300-yard, par-4 seventh hole at Woodmere (New York) Club on caddie day. I came home that summer evening to draw a free-hand diagram of how I'd hit a 3-iron off the tee short of the cross-bunker, hit another 3-iron to just short of the green, chipped on, and sank a ten-foot putt. Such moments of fatherly doting were rare and less the product of his own spontaneity than my intention to make him notice me.

But even that triumphal report was short-lived. It was summer; he was in one of his turbulent phases, which we had taken to calling his "zombie" mood. Toward the end of that Monday night dinner (it was dairy night), well after my account of that par, I said something at the table that got him so upset he took a pitcher of lemonade that was sitting in the middle of the dinner table and dumped it all over me. That put a sudden end to dinner and chased everyone else away in embarrassment. But I was so sad and mortified by the whole thing that I sat there in tears and refused to budge as he cleaned up the mess he had made.

It was typical of our relationship that I took him to his first baseball game, Cardinals at Mets, the Thursday night after the 1964 All-Star Game at Shea Stadium. We huddled upstairs in the third deck, nearly shivering in unseasonably cool weather—until, that is, Frank Thomas sent us home happy with a walk-off three-run homer in the ninth inning for a 4–3 win.

Seven years later I took him out for his first and only hole of golf, on a Monday night at a local course I revered for its old-world charm, the Rockaway Hunting Club in Lawrence, New York. Only later did I learn of its incredible design heritage, with architects Devereux Emmet, Perry Maxwell, and A. W. Tillinghast all involved in its evolution. All I knew then was the place was magical for its setting along the tidal marshlands of south-

ern Long Island. It was an enchanting place, and not simply because the golf holes were old and creaky and unlike anything I had ever seen. It was also the way the routing started and ended amid century-old estates and how the middle of the course was on a peninsula that required a footbridge crossing onto low-lying land surrounded by an estuary. For my high school senior year film class project, I used the coastline along the eighth fairway as the location for a postapocalyptic movie set to Crosby, Stills, and Nash's "Wooden Ships" that I shot with a handheld 8 mm camera. I can't remember her name, but the girl we placed in the rowboat was a tall, emaciated albino from my class who was the first person I knew to have been smitten by J. R. R. Tolkien's novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The five-minute film, my one and only attempt at film direction, had nothing to do with golf. But I liked the bleak setting and thought the links-style hole an ideal place to show a lost soul coming ashore in fog and wandering about a vast open space devoid of human habitation or structure.

Clearly, it was a special setting for me. That is why I finally determined to take my father there and show him the place. I drove the five or six miles in the family's Dodge Dart, managing to keep the rattling stick shift from overwhelming me. We tucked the car behind some bulrushes by the sixth tee, and I hoped to entice him long enough to see my magical eighth fairway. I handed him a golf ball and a 5-iron and invited him to play away. After what might have been a dozen or so swipes advancing the ball toward the green, he turned to me and simply said, "Enough."

But of course it wasn't. And now it never will be.