

JIM MERCER

Most of us probably don't give too much thought as to how golf courses come into being, in all likelihood they probably just spring into existence fully operational from Minerva's mind. Jim might take exception to that concept as that is what he did for a living. Farming along the Missouri River in Whiting, Iowa probably didn't seem the most exciting pursuit after returning home from WW II. Having grown up on a farm in the depression era lends one to realize that farming may not be the easiest or most lucrative career to pursue. The opportunity to work with his uncle who was the course superintendent at the Silverado golf course in Northern California became the opportunity of choice. Learning course management and tournament organization from the ground up was the preparation that carried him through life.

Most golfers recognize the name Pete Dye as one of the worlds' foremost golf course designers. Jim left Silverado to go to work for Pete Dye and Landmark. Maybe the name David Phaff doesn't ring a bell, but he would be the course architect. The first has the vision and the other with the knowledge and wherewithal to put the concept onto paper. So where does Jim come into the picture? The managerial skills to move the dirt and turn the blueprint into a reality, get the course staffed, making sure everything is up and running before moving onto Landmarks next project.

Guess who took the job of course superintendent at Mission Hills when it became available? Of course this was after having built five courses for Landmark and Peter Dye. The Dinah Shore ladies Nabisco open tournament began at Mission Hills while Mercer was superintendent, so you can see an earlier background in running tournaments didn't hurt.

Running a top drawer golf facility puts one in the position to meet extraordinary celebrities. Carrying a five handicap also allows you to play numerous rounds of golf with these folks and not embarrass yourself. Rubbing shoulders with the likes of President Ford, Johnny Miller, Arnold Palmer , Dinah Shore and having the pictures on your wall of fame are special.

Sometimes young men join the service to get out of trouble, some join to get into trouble. Jim joined the 82nd Airborne Division so he had a choice of who he wanted to serve with. Combat jumps into North Africa, Sicily, Anzio and Normandy have a tendency to impact a persons' character. If you have had the opportunity to watch the TV series The Band of Brothers you might get a sense of what he experienced.

The Sullivan Brothers were from Waterloo, Iowa and the loss of all five young men in one attack prompted congress to enact a law so that other families would not be so impacted. Jims brother George, or as the family refers to him as Toby, served as a marine paratrooper on Guadalcanal and is referenced in Flags of Our Fathers as being a member of the squad of E Company, 3rd platoon 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, that put up the first flag on Mt. Suribachi. He died the following day. Brother Bobby was a submariner having made 13 patrols from Perth and Freemantle, Australia. The Haddo-256 and Sennet-408 made sorties into the South China Sea, Sea of Japan and other points in the South Pacific. There is a lingering grudge that the ineptitude of the naval torpedo ordinance people caused the war to be protracted longer than necessary. Quite the family Jim belonged to.