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Caddying for the Dalai Lama: Golf, Heritage Tourism, and the Pinehurst Resort

“It’s always a beautiful day at Pinehurst,” an operator will answer in a cheery customer service voice if you call for a reservation at the resort. What golfer has not dreamed of an expedition to Pinehurst’s legendary courses? The elegant old Carolina Inn with its shining copper cupola. The perfectly manicured croquet green by the golf clubhouse with players clad in spotless whites. The whispering of the loblolly pines along the fabled Pinehurst No. 2 course, where Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, Tiger Woods, and just about every other golfing great has tested his game. Nowadays you’ll find wealthy executives from as far away as Japan and Korea teeing off on one of Pinehurst’s eight courses, designed by some of the world’s most renowned golf course architects.

I want in this essay to examine the story of Pinehurst and, more generally, of golf itself in twenty-first-century America. Many people, of course, dismiss golf as a tacky, tedious, snotty game for rich white country clubbers in plaid pants. It’s a pastime, or so *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd classifies it, for “men with guts pretending they are exercising.” Even so, a staggering amount of land, money, time,

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and passion are tied up in golf today. This country's 16,944 golf courses cover an area more than twice as large as the state of Rhode Island. Golfers spent about \$3 billion on putters, drivers, balls, and other equipment in 2004 alone. More than 26 million Americans played at least one round that year. Some 30 million tuned in to watch at least part of the Master's, the U.S. Open, or some other PGA tournament. Like it or not, golf occupies a major place in American culture and society. It's worth trying to make some sense of the history, pleasures, and contradictions of the game.

Those who dislike golf will find plenty to criticize at Pinehurst. None of the glossy resort brochures discloses that black laborers built the resort at pittance wages in this region of North Carolina where the Ku Klux Klan continued to operate into the 1980s—or that poor neighborhoods without sidewalks or sewers lie just behind the pine trees from million-dollar homes along Pinehurst's fairways.¹ The story of Pinehurst is the story of America today in its juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, racial divides, and the brass ring of leisure and luxury only for those who can afford to pay for it. Here, too, one finds the reworking of history for modern commercial purposes. The resort has branded itself as a must-visit, "historic" shrine of "golf tradition" without acknowledging the centrality of racial hierarchy, union-busting, and legalized apartheid in its very origins and development over the last century. Sanitized heritage substitutes for engagement with history's messy, sometimes uncomfortable realities in the portrait of its past that Pinehurst offers to the world.

I must confess that I am a golfer myself. I am not so much the obsessed aficionado as to want to excuse the heavy freight of snobbism and exclusion that has been part of the game's history. Yet I do believe that any black-and-white view of golf's political incorrectness misses the multiple, sometimes unexpected layers of history, experience, and involvement that make the sport something more than just another form of conspicuous consumption for rich white men. It would be a mistake to imagine that Pinehurst, with its moneyed, Lexus-driving corporate clientele, typifies everything about what it means to play golf today. Parallel, less privileged worlds of golf exist as well, especially those many municipal, or "muni," courses where you'll find plumbers and electricians, women and men, blacks, whites, and Latinos, and people of every background out for a round. These more democratically priced public courses may be truest to golf's hardscrabble Scottish origins, and even to Pinehurst's own first years as a resort for retirees of modest means.

Some extravagant claims have been made for golf. In his *Golf for Enlightenment*, for example, the best-selling New Age author Deepak Chopra tells us that “the ball presents a readout of your karma.” “Golf is a way to transcend,” he explains, because by playing well we “defeat the voice of self-criticism and end the frustration that holds in check deeper, darker, fears.”² Serious devotees can pay several thousand dollars for a few days at the Chopra Center for Well-Being, combining golf and spiritual instruction at the tony La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad, California.

Is golf a ticket to transcendence and enlightenment? The advancement of such laughably overblown claims for the game’s benefits are standard fare in corporate, New Age-flavored, golf instruction-cum-personal growth books these days. At most, I believe golf offers the far more modest pleasures of exercise, being outside, and an absorbing pastime to an overworked, overweight society that spends too much time in front of computer screens and the television. The danger has always been that the game would be hijacked altogether by America’s elites, and, more recently, so linked to the voracious sucking up of land for new courses, obscenely large professional purses, and other negative social effects as to make it difficult to mount much of an argument in the game’s defense.

That enduring cult classic *Caddyshack* (1980) embraces the more open-ended, even carnivalesque possibilities for the sport. As the whacked-out, golf-addicted, decidedly working-class greenskeeper at a snotty country club, Carl Spackler, played by Bill Murray (an avid golfer in real life), boasts about a special turf-grass mixture of his own invention: “This is a cross, ah, Bluegrass, Kentucky Bluegrass, Featherbed Bent, and Northern California Sensemilla. The amazing stuff about this is, that you can play thirty-six holes on it in the afternoon, take it home and just get stoned to the bejeezus-belt that night.” Although celebrating golf in its own way, *Caddyshack* mocks country club pretensions and golfing solemnity at every turn. Enlightenment through golf? That possibility arises only in one of Spackler’s hilariously delusional pothead shaggy dog stories, this one about caddying for the Dalai Lama:

So I jump ship in Hong Kong and make my way over to Tibet, and I get on as a looper at a course over in the Himalayas. A looper, you know, a caddy, a looper, a jock. So, I tell them I’m a pro jock, and who do you think they give me? The Dalai Lama, himself. Twelfth son of the Lama. The flowing robes, the grace, bald . . . striking. So, I’m on the

first tee with him. I give him the driver. He hauls off and whacks one—big hitter, the Lama—long, into a ten-thousand-foot crevice, right at the base of this glacier. And do you know what the Lama says? Gunga galunga . . . gunga—gunga galunga. So we finish the eighteenth and he's gonna stiff me. And I say, "Hey, Lama, hey, how about a little something, you know, for the effort, you know." And he says, "Oh, uh, there won't be any money, but when you die, on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness." So I got that goin' for me, which is nice.

Soda Fountains, Super-Mex, and the Origins of the Pinehurst Resort

The Boston industrialist James W. Tufts made a fortune manufacturing those classic chrome soda fountains in the old days when you could buy a banana split or a root beer float at the drugstore counter. In 1895, Tufts paid \$1.24 an acre for 5,980 acres in the North Carolina sandhills. Most people thought he was crazy.³ The land was poor, and treeless in the bargain: Its pines had long before been chopped down by Scottish and English settlers to make turpentine. Yet Tufts envisioned an escape from big-city smoke and bustle. The late nineteenth century, after all, witnessed the growth of what historian Jackson Lears calls "antimodernist" yearnings in response to quickening industrialization—and the more enlightened philanthropists of the time wanted to make the bucolic pleasures of nature and the outdoors more available to the masses.⁴ Gilded Age industrialists spearheaded the creation of New York's Central Park to provide a leafy retreat for those unable to afford a country vacation. Viewing Pinehurst as a semiphilanthropic endeavor, James Tufts wanted it to be for people of modest means. The resort, he specified, should serve those "who require the beneficial effects of a winter in the South, but cannot afford the usual high price for accommodations."⁵

Golf was an afterthought at Pinehurst, which initially offered riding, croquet, and shooting. In the shadow of the Civil War, Pinehurst was a strange new kind of Yankee outpost. Legend has it that curious southerners would ask northeasterners to repeat such exotically accented phrases as "pahk the cah in Hah-vahd Yahd." Pinehurst's village was laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted, the masterful landscape architect who earlier had joined forces with Calvert Vaux to design New York's Central Park. The evolution of Pinehurst into a resort more centrally focused on golf came in 1900, when a

young Scot, Donald Ross, was commissioned to design a first course. Ross, the immigrant son of a stonemason and a nurse, made Pinehurst into his base of operations for the rest of his long career. He became the most sought-after golf course architect of his generation, designing almost four hundred courses. His work included such storied layouts as Florida's Seminole Country Club and Michigan's Oakland Hills Country Club, as well as several courses at Pinehurst itself.

What accounts for golf's growing popularity in the early twentieth century? One writer, Bob Cullen, offers an explanation drawn from evolutionary psychology. Since early hominids supposedly left the forest for the better hunting of the savannah, Cullen suggests that natural selection has left us with a gene pool disposed to attraction to wide-open grasslands. In stepping onto a golf course, he claims, we may be "reenacting the steps taken by some hominid a hundred thousand generations in the past, steps that helped him or her become our ancestors."⁶ And what is more: "It could even be that the clubs we carry remind us, on some instinctive level, of the tools they carried in search of food." Cullen offers up one further theory, this one drawn from developmental psychology. Blind babies, he reports, illustrate the "exploratory-motivational assertive system" when they smile on being able to kick a bell to make a sound. The satisfaction of golf lies in gratifying the instinctive pleasure we get from being able to make the world behave as we wish—in this case, by hitting a ball in the right direction.

One can, I suppose, make what one wishes of such explanations for golf's attractions. Some critics, however, have turned instead to the Gilded Age sociologist Thorsten Veblen's trademark concept of "conspicuous consumption." By this way of thinking, embracing a game with pricey equipment, elaborate etiquette, and exclusive clubs allowed America's elites both to mark a special identity and to isolate themselves from their social inferiors.⁷ Others have highlighted the xenophobic dimensions of golf's appeal.⁸ The sport's early-twentieth-century expansion at Pinehurst and around the United States coincided with spiking anti-immigrant sentiment toward impoverished new arrivals from the Balkans and southern Italy. Golf, a sport perceived as linked to the lifestyle of the Scottish and British aristocracy, possessed an aura of Anglo-Saxon-ness, in contrast to the pastimes of what one observer called the "swarthy, unwashed masses."

Other, less creepy factors also contributed to golf's growth. Unlike, say, basketball or football, this game could be played by people of all ages. It

did not demand special physical strength, and women could play as well as men. The rise of golf, too, was more than a country club phenomenon. To the contrary, the success and charisma of American golfers from humble backgrounds helped golf earn a wider public. Twenty-year-old Frances Ouimet, son of a working-class French-Canadian immigrant, upset the fabled British stars Harry Vardon and Ted Ray to win the 1913 U.S. Open; Gene Sarazen, Gino Saraceni by birth, went from a poor family of Sicilian immigrants to champion at the Masters, among the world's most prestigious tournaments. Both men were first exposed to golf as caddies, the servant's job of toting a rich man's clubs. That they crossed over from the caddyshack signaled that golf was not just the province of the privileged.

Contrary to the stereotype of lordly British origins, golf did not originate as the exclusive province of the aristocracy, or as a privilege of club membership. The game grew in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries out of other stick-and-ball games and gained adepts across social lines. "Scots instruct their children in it," one chronicler noted in 1774, "as soon as they can run alone."⁹ According to historian David Hamilton, a "long" or "noble" version of the game was played by aristocrats on more developed seaside courses, while ordinary people played a "short game" in village churchyards. The first course in the United States, St. Andrews in Yonkers, New York, was a country club, and more than a thousand private courses were built in the period of golf's massive take-off between the 1890s and the late 1920s. Already by 1895, however, the interest of the less affluent led to the building of the first municipal course. There were several hundred public courses as of 1929, when the Great Depression shut down construction until after World War II.

At least a few of golf's more modern icons come from the world of municipal golf. Lee Trevino, the son of a single mother who cleaned houses in Dallas, grew up in a shack without water, plumbing, or electricity and picked cotton as a child to help put food on the table. "I was twenty-one years old," he joked later, "before I knew Manual Labor wasn't a Mexican." Trevino dropped out of school in the eighth grade to work at a local municipal course in Dallas. There he taught himself the game, eventually becoming so skilled he hustled the unsuspecting by betting that he could beat them playing only with a Dr. Pepper bottle wrapped in masking tape. Trevino went on to win thirty-two tournaments and more than \$10 million in prize money. As a rare Latino in the white world of professional golf, Trevino dubbed himself "Super-Mex" and became immensely popular for both his brilliant play and

sense of humor and banter with the galleries. Trevino's humor sometimes had a critical edge toward the United States and its treatment of Mexicans. He told reporters after his 1971 U.S. Open triumph that he might use his prize money to "buy the Alamo . . . and give it back to Mexico." But Trevino also loved fast living, making money, and a good laugh, and his politics were never easy to pin down. Later, touring the Alamo, he declared, "Well, I'm not gonna buy this place. It doesn't have indoor plumbing." Although happy to mingle with CEOs in search of endorsement deals, Trevino has never forgotten his own humble origins. "I represent the public courses, the working man, the blue-collar worker," he said in his autobiography, *They Call Me Super-Mex*.¹⁰

Also worth noting has been golf's openness to women, at least relative to many other American sports. In the late 1800s, it became one of the first sports allowing female participation, including organized tournaments. The new Pinehurst resort was very much part of the growth of women's golf. From the start, the resort established connections with some of the most famous outdoorsy women of the day. Annie Oakley, the legendary Wild West Show deadeye, gave shooting lessons, and Amelia Earhart once landed her plane on the resort's airstrip. Pinehurst hosted the first women's North/South Amateur championship in 1903 and has held the tournament annually ever since. Peggy Kirk Bell, a former professional who became a matriarch of women's golf, ran the Pine Needles resort down the road from Pinehurst. Pine Needles hosted the U.S. Women's Open in 2001 and is well known for its "Golfari" programs for women golfers.

To be sure, the early entry of women into golf measured the power of gender ideologies about female frailty and lack of aptitude for sport. That golf was viewed as a more "refined," less "physical" game meshed with expectations of proper femininity. Early women golfers wore hats and long dresses, as if to wear anything less would be to venture too far into the physicality of the male domain. The greatest early female golfer, Glenna Collett, won widespread popularity by playing top-notch golf while remaining (in the judgment of contemporary journalists) "beautiful" and "ladylike." Then, too, the origins of women's golf in the United States were very much tied to the privileges of class and race. At the start it was a sport not for all women, only for rich white ones. Golf, historian Donald Mrozek writes, allowed "women of upper-class instincts and means . . . to isolate themselves" from "working women" and, for that matter, any other American of lesser status.

As the twentieth century advanced, however, the role of women in golf

grew more interesting and varied. The most charismatic figure was Mildred “Babe” Didrikson, who some believe was the greatest female athlete of the twentieth century.¹¹ This tough-talking Texan won two gold medals in track-and-field at the 1932 Olympics, could punt a football eighty yards, bowled 180 on her first try, and swam world-record times. When Didrikson spearheaded the formation of a women’s professional golf tour in the 1930s, she transformed the sport with her fierce competitiveness and unabashed reveling in her own power and athleticism. “Watch close, boys,” she’d boast to a crowd of reporters before blasting one of her rocketlike long drives, “’coz you’re watching the best.” Didrikson once yanked her girdle off mid-round, loudly complaining to the gallery that it restricted her swing. Her unashamed refusal to conform to older standards of female modesty and propriety generated a predictable backlash. In 1935, when she entered the Women’s Texas Amateur at the posh River Oaks club in Houston, one local club member was quoted in the Houston press as saying, “We don’t need any truck driver’s daughters in our tournament.” A showwoman and self-promoter, Didrikson eventually made concessions like putting on makeup and perming her hair to make herself more marketable. But she helped push women’s golf, and sports in general, toward accepting power, force of personality, and the idea of a woman making a living as a professional athlete. “I was the first woman to play the game men play,” she said not long before her early death from cancer, “to hit—I mean hit the ball instead of swinging at it.”¹²

Of course, the constraints facing Didrikson have by no means disappeared. Female athletes, as cultural theorist Abigail Feder-Kane notes, sometimes feel they must fulfill “popular notions of beauty” in order to avoid being stigmatized as overly “manly” in a society often hostile to gay and lesbian identity.¹³ Critics have sometimes grumbled that professional women golfers do not pay enough attention to their appearance—that they too often “fail” to wear lipstick or makeup. One former star, Jan Stephenson, has called for the tour to do more to “market its sex appeal.” But for all its contradictions, golf remains one of the few sports where women can make a good living as professional athletes—sometimes, in the case of top stars, a very good living indeed. Nor are the professional ranks dominated by daughters of the American country club set. More than a third of professional women golfers come from Korea or Japan, and other prominent professionals in this heavily globalized sport hail from Sweden, Mexico, and Thailand. Golf, too, is one of the only sports where athletes have been will-

ing to come out of the closet. Rosie Jones, a well-known star, announced in 2004 that she was lesbian, and there was minimal backlash. Jones plays in tournaments sporting a cap emblazoned with the logo of Olivia, a lesbian-oriented travel agency with whom she inked an endorsement deal.

Pinehurst, Illusions of Authenticity, and Big-Money Golf

The success of Pinehurst is wrapped up in the marketing of itself as a kind of museum and temple of American golf. Here “history,” “tradition,” and “heritage” become keywords central to what Pinehurst promises its visitors. Old black-and-white photographs of the early years and famous past champions cover the walls of the Carolina Inn, which has been designated a national historic landmark. The golf clubhouse features still more pictures and memorabilia. Outside, one finds bronze statues of Donald Ross and Richard Tufts, the grandson of the founder and a key twentieth-century figure at Pinehurst, and Payne Stewart, who won the 1999 U.S. Open and died in a plane crash soon after. Like a tour of colonial Williamsburg or the Tall Ships in Boston’s Harbor, the allure of Pinehurst is a feeling of connection to the world of the past, a world we like to imagine as having been more interesting and meaningful than our own. A round of golf is a round of golf, or so one might think. At Pinehurst it becomes, or is meant to become, much more than that—a chance to “follow in the footsteps of some of the world’s greatest golf legends,” according to the official Pinehurst Web site.

But what version of the past is being used to entice visitors? A powerful part of the attraction centers around Donald Ross and the opportunity to play courses designed by America’s most legendary golf course architect. Golf course design always reflects the times. Ross was a contemporary of the renowned Greene brothers and other Arts and Crafts architects, who were rejecting Victorian stuffiness for a new, more natural style full of exposed wood and stone. His lovely, intelligent designs place a premium on flow, accessibility, and following and working within the lay of the land. There was little of the desire to subdue, dominate, and pasteurize the land so evident in later Cold War golf course architecture and its massive earth-moving, which paralleled the paving of America for suburbs and strip malls. Nor did Ross add any of the fake waterfalls, man-made island greens, and contrived high-corporate glitz of more contemporary designs. A linchpin of Pinehurst’s marketing is the offer of allowing golfers to play Ross’s No. 2 course, the jewel of Pinehurst and the “greatest expression of his genius.”

Actually, the No. 2 course does not much resemble the course that Ross designed in the early 1900s. The celebrated trademarks of No. 2 are its steeply pitched, wickedly fast, turtleback putting greens—and it's these greens that television golf commentators will discourse upon as an expression of Ross's "genius," the ability of No. 2 to stand the "test of time." But these famous greens bear little resemblance to anything in Ross's design.¹⁴ Like all putting greens in the early twentieth century, the ones at No. 2 were not made of grass at all but of sand hard-packed with tar. They were also relatively flat; it was only decades of top-dressing, once the greens were converted to grass in 1935, that little by little elevated them to create the turtleback effect. What many visitors imagine to be the signature and guarantee of the master designer is, in other words, actually the unintended result of the mundane process of fertilization and maintenance across the years. The amazing speed of the Pinehurst greens is an even more modern invention. Only gradually over the last several decades have turf management companies, a massive high-tech industry of researchers and corporations, figured out how to engineer strains of grass that can now be grown to an astonishing density of about 1,540 plants per square inch—and mowed to the miniscule length of one-eighth of an inch so as to give the golfer a sensation akin to putting on ice.¹⁵ The No. 2 course is lovely and challenging in spite of or perhaps because of the changes across the decades. It nonetheless bears only a partial resemblance to Ross's original plan, no matter how much Pinehurst seeks to portray it as an "authentic," unsullied expression of the great man's creative vision.

To package the past as a matter of picturesque, desirable "heritage" and "tradition," Pinehurst must also ignore some of the most basic, unsavory realities of its actual history. The resort was, after all, very much an artifact of the age of Jim Crow. The hotel and first courses were built in the late nineteenth century in a period of lynching, disenfranchisement of black voters, and backlash against the supposed "coddling" of African Americans in the aftermath of the Yankee triumph in the Civil War. Black men, paid next to nothing and denied the right to vote, did the backbreaking job of transforming the scruffy pine wastelands into golf courses; they were the gardeners and maintenance workers at the resort, and the caddies who carried the bags for white golfers. Their wives and mothers did the brunt of the cooking and laundry at the hotel. Occasional efforts to organize for improved pay were crushed, sometimes by the quick-tempered Donald Ross himself. "One time," recalled a Pinehurst old-timer, "the caddies talked of a strike

unless wages were raised. Ross heard of this, walked to the caddie pen, asked the leader what was going on. Hearing the grievance, he whacked the caddie on the head with his ever-present five iron and informed him the strike was over.”¹⁶ So strong was early-twentieth-century prejudice that blacks were not allowed the “privilege” of cleaning the rooms until 1960, as if this would violate taboos of pollution and contamination between the races. A statute forbade selling Pinehurst property to “any person of Jewish or Negro descent and lineage.”

How does Pinehurst deal with its Jim Crow origins? One way has been by avoiding the history of racism and racial stereotyping altogether. Consider the so-called Putter Boy mascot, based on a 1912 sculpture that stands outside the clubhouse. A carefree, *Little Rascals*-style white child with oversized clubs and a droopy hat, the Putter Boy has long been a Pinehurst advertising trademark. Framed originals of various Putter Boy posters hang around Pinehurst, with replicas available for purchase. But there’s one in this series you will not find anywhere in the resort’s plentiful public display of historical memorabilia; instead it’s filed away in the Pinehurst archives. It’s a midcentury scene depicting the boy receiving a trophy while the stereotypical, Little Sambo-style figure of a smiling black caddie deferentially stands nearby. To modern eyes, the poster looks very “incorrect,” and in this sense it is what Walter Benjamin would call a “dialectical image” confronting us with the uncomfortable history of racism and discrimination at Pinehurst. One suspects that it is exactly because it does not fit the selective “happy heritage” Pinehurst theme that this Putter Boy poster has been banished from public view by the resort’s image-makers. In other cases, Pinehurst has tried to recode the role of African Americans from a matter of servility to a point of pride. In 2001, for example, the resort created the “Pinehurst Caddie Hall of Fame” and held a ceremony honoring the first ten inductees, all of them black. Caddying certainly demands skill. This is especially true at Pinehurst, where the job of “reading” the break to advise the player on the proper line of his putt is doubly demanding due to the fiendishly sloped greens. At the same time, celebrating retired caddies serves Pinehurst both to acknowledge and disarm the explosive topic of race. These men’s contribution becomes one more part of the resort’s “heritage,” yet without any mention of the structures of race, money, and exclusion that limited blacks to the servile job of toting white men’s clubs. A chapter called “The Caddies” in *The Spirit of Pinehurst*, a coffee-table history published by Pinehurst, relates “colorful” anecdotes about Fletcher Gaines, Jimmy

Steed, and other old-time caddies. Omitted is any mention that caddying was considered a menial, blacks-only job in the caste system of Jim Crow; that African American were forbidden from living in Pinehurst Village; and that blacks were banned from the PGA tour until 1961, making golf the last major professional sport to integrate. The central role of black women in doing the cleaning and cooking that kept the resort running receives no acknowledgment of any kind in official Pinehurst history.

One recent promotional poster shows two handsome, smiling, well-dressed couples—one black and one white—dining together by sparkling candlelight in the Carolina Inn. The poster's imagery establishes an implicit distance between the old, segregated south of Jim Crow and a new, feel-good Pinehurst of multicultural harmony and inclusion where blacks are now welcome. But the truth is that the resort still has something of a plantation feel to it. One rarely, in fact, sees black diners at the Carolina Inn; an overwhelming majority of the resort's guests are white. By contrast, blacks still do much of the dirty work at Pinehurst—the majority of the maids, shoeshine men, valets, and busboys are African American. Excluded from Pinehurst itself, black workers in the early twentieth century made their homes in poor neighborhoods out of sight of the resort. Today some of these areas—Jackson Hamlet and Monroetown—do not have sewage lines, garbage collection, sidewalks, or other basic amenities. These small black neighborhoods contrast sharply with the plush, million-dollar homes for wealthy vacationers and retirees that have mushroomed around Pinehurst in recent years. At least some black locals worry that Pinehurst wants to see their neighborhoods gone altogether. "All Pinehurst wants to do is put in a darn golf course [here]," says Karen Stanford, a Monroetown activist.¹⁷ The rapid expansion of pricey golf course resorts in South Carolina's Hilton Head Island area has meant the end for a number of old, rural African American communities where residents have sold out to developers, or been forced to move by rising tax rates.

These days, however, money counts as much as or more than race at Pinehurst, or so many area African Americans believe. "It's the color of your money, not your skin," says one older woman from nearby Fayetteville, a sometime golfer herself. A sprinkling of wealthy African Americans, among them several retired sports stars, have bought upscale homes near the resort and play there often. If James Tufts intended Pinehurst to serve those of "modest means," that part of his vision has been lost today. On a summer day, the fee to play the No. 2 course is almost \$300; it will set you

back another \$60 for a caddie, and rooms at the Carolina Inn begin at \$130 for a single. In the lead-up to the U.S. Open in 2005, Pinehurst advertised a so-called Championship Package:

A caddie wearing your name, your tee time announced as you step up to the first tee as Hogan, Snead, Nicklaus and Woods have all done before. Your name and scores posted on our virtual scoreboard. Your moment in time captured with a photo beside Payne Stewart's triumphant statue. And bragging rights in stepping in the footsteps of golf's giants.

It costs \$2,005 per person to live out this fantasy, a price tag representing more than a month's salary for a maid or maintenance man at the resort. Unlike most other top U.S. courses, Pinehurst is not a private country club. The resort proudly advertises itself as one of just three recent U.S. Open hosts where the public can also play, the others being New York's Bethpage Black and California's Pebble Beach. The reality is that Pinehurst is public in name only, since the astronomical greens fees mean that only rich golfers can afford a round there.

It would be wrong to single Pinehurst out for criticism. Far from an exception, the recent history of the resort measures much larger trends in golf and society. The number of exclusive, members-only country clubs has stayed more or less the same in the last decades. What has occurred instead has been the rapid expansion of the phenomenon of the upscale, so-called daily fee golf courses and resorts in the manner of Pinehurst. These destinations do not follow in the model of the blue-blooded, Brahminic old money of the traditional country club. They answer to the logic of cash, the free market, and global corporate capitalism. Here money—not social connections—is what matters. If you can pay several thousand dollars, you can spend a weekend at a resort like The Sanctuary in South Carolina, Sea Island in Georgia, or Amelia Island Plantation in Florida. These resorts market themselves in predictably gendered ways—golf for the men; shopping and spa for women. The Web site for The Sanctuary advertises its “spa experience” as a “relaxing ritual of water, steam, and rest . . . in our serene and luxurious surroundings.”

In other words, the same dynamics of money and exclusion operate in golf resorts far beyond Pinehurst. The white-collar masters of postmodern corporate capitalism are welcomed onto a fantasy island of “comfort,” “amenities,” and “luxury”—and the real world of poverty, inconvenience,

and social division is fenced out into invisibility. A working class made up disproportionately of people of color, an increasing number of them migrants from Latin America, waits upon these resort “guests” and do the lawn mowing, room cleaning, and ditch digging; they are typically non-unionized, sometimes working two jobs to get by. Geographer Stephen Daniels speaks of the “duplicity of landscape” to describe how particular places may appeal to “subjective experience and pleasure” while betraying no trace of the relations of power and authority that make their very existence possible.¹⁸ A golf course presents an outward appearance of a pristine, parklike beauty belying the hard labor that goes into its making, not to mention the vast amounts of herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals necessary to create that “natural” green look.

Consider, too, the names of some new golf course resorts in the Carolinas and Georgia—Brunswick Plantation and Golf Links, The Plantation Inn and Golf Resort, the Ritz-Carlton Lodge at Reynolds Plantation, for example. You’d think there’d be reluctance about naming a golf resort after the plantation, an institution so dependent on slavery, the horrors of the Middle Passage, the death and exploitation of millions of people. Think again. For modern marketeers, the word means to conjure a gauzy, azaleas-and-magnolias “heritage” of southern ease, elegance, and privilege—and at the same time, one suspects, an aura of privilege, hierarchy, and racial entitlement of the antebellum South so attractive to white vacationers. The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island bills itself as “captur[ing] the spirit, history, and charm of southern hospitality.”

The rise of the upscale, Brunswick Plantation-style golf economy mirrors the dynamics of a winner-take-all society. As many observers have noted, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened shockingly in this country over the last few decades. A CEO at Wal-Mart or McDonald’s earns millions more than the poverty-line minimum wages their companies pay to workers or the barely higher salaries paid to day-care workers and schoolteachers, who are arguably doing society’s most important jobs.¹⁹ The resort offers a pasteurized green wonderland for global capitalism’s winners to enjoy the privilege of their status. One morning not long ago, golfers at the Wakefield Plantation course in North Carolina raced their gleaming white golf carts along the sixth fairway. Just off to one side, a crew of Mexican men was digging up a drainage ditch, the type of work that keeps the course in its manicured condition. None of the players raised their hand to acknowledge the men; it was as if the workers were not even there.

Golf, Democracy, and the Muni Course

Fidel Castro shut down Cuba's golf courses after seizing revolutionary power in 1959. Like many critics of the sport, he must have assumed that golf was by its very nature linked to American global capitalism and its excesses of money and injustice. The story of Pinehurst and courses like it do, in fact, bear out some of that harsh view. As I see it, however, the blame lies not with the sport itself, a game anyone from young to old can play and enjoy in principle. The problem lies instead with the uses to which golf has been put and particularly with its continuing linkages to snobbism, domination, and inequality in the United States.

Even today, there are other, more democratic faces of golf in this country. A few blocks from my house in Durham, North Carolina, for example, you can play the Hillandale Golf Course for \$20, or \$10 at the reduced twilight rate. It's \$3.50 for the lunch special of a barbecue sandwich, chips, and soft drink at "Bogey's Grill" by the pro shop. On a midsummer morning, the cars in the parking lot index the great mix of people you'll find there—the van of a housepainter getting in nine holes between jobs; the BMW of a doctor playing hooky from the nearby medical center; the banged-up old Oldsmobile of a retired highway engineer. At least a third of Hillandale's regulars are African American; it's a favorite for women golfers as well, and for beginners who'd be too embarrassed to show up at a high-end resort course. Although the number of low-priced, public courses has declined some, you'll find them in many places nationwide. Here, as novelist and golf nut John Updike notes, "golf is a game of people" where anyone can lose themselves in "the bliss and aggravation" of the sport.²⁰

I sometimes see one foursome out early at Hillandale, all in their later years. Three are white, one black. One is a woman, Berta.²¹ She's a retiree who, in exchange for free golf, sometimes works as a so-called Course Ranger, driving around in a golf cart to prod slow players along. Berta is weathered and tiny, perhaps four feet tall. But she attacks the ball with an authority that reminds me of my grandmother, a retired secretary, who'd blast it out farther than my grandfather, much to his wounded pride. Berta and her foursome don't smile or joke around much; they take a more serious, concentrated pleasure in a game that gets them outside with others in a shared passion. A few days ago, I stopped to watch Berta teeing off on the par-3 seventeenth hole in a light rain. The ball headed on a low line straight at the flag, bounding up near the hole. "Nice shot, Berta," one of her part-

ners called before they all jumped in their golf carts and sped away in the Carolina mist toward the green.

Notes

I would like to thank Anne Allison, Carolyn Christman, Grant Farred, and Charles Piot for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay. All responsibility for any errors is mine.

- 1 For the Klan's activities in Moore County, to which Pinehurst belongs, see Morris Dees, *A Season for Justice: The Life and Times of a Civil Rights Lawyer* (New York: Scribner's, 1991). Dees defended prison guard and civil rights activist Bobby Person, who had a cross burned in his front yard and was otherwise threatened by the Klan for challenging the racial discrimination in the Moore County prison system. For more on poverty and social inequality in the area, see the reports of the Cedar Grove Institute and the University of North Carolina's Center for Civil Rights.
- 2 Deepak Chopra, *Golf for Enlightenment* (New York: Harmony Books, 2003), 159, 186.
- 3 Bradley Klein, *Discovering Donald Ross: The Architect and His Golf Courses* (Ann Arbor: Clock Tower Press, 2001), 62–105. For more on Pinehurst, see also Pete Moss, *The Village of Pinehurst: A History from 1894 to Today* (Ann Arbor: Clock Tower Press, 2005).
- 4 T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).
- 5 Klein, *Discovering Donald Ross*, 68.
- 6 Bob Cullen, *Why Golf?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 42.
- 7 For an elaboration of this argument, see Donald Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880–1910* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), especially chap. 4.
- 8 For an introduction to the Anglomania and xenophobia of that time, see Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Richard Moss's *Golf and the American Country Club* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) explores the perceived links of golf to "Anglo-Saxon tradition" in early-twentieth-century America.
- 9 Quoted in David Hamilton, *Golf: Scotland's Game* (Kilmacollm, Scotland: Partick Press, 1998), 65.
- 10 Lee Trevino, *They Call Me Super-Mex* (New York: Random House, 1982), 124.
- 11 See Susan Cayleff, *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrickson Zacharias* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).
- 12 *Ibid.*, 159.
- 13 Abigail Feder-Kane, "'A Radiant Smile from the Lovely Lady': Overdetermined Femininity in 'Ladies' Figure Skating," in Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, eds., *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation*, 206–32 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 211.
- 14 Ron Whitten, "Donald Ross Wouldn't Recognize These Greens," *Golf Digest*, June 2005, 273–78.
- 15 Thanks to Richard Cooper and John Stier for help with these figures. The plant density figure is for the latest A-4 bent-grass putting green variety.
- 16 Dick Taylor, "Donald Ross," in Lee Pace, ed., *The Spirit of Pinehurst*, 98–105 (Pinehurst, NC: Sports Media Group, 2004), 104.

- 17 Quoted in Julia Oliver, "Rift Separates Pinehurst and Monroe Town," *Fayetteville Observer*, May 5, 2005, 3.
- 18 Quoted in Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), xx.
- 19 An already classic book about the contradictions of wealth and poverty in modern America is Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Owl Books, 2002).
- 20 John Updike, *Golf Dreams: Writings on Golf* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 110, 147.
- 21 "Berta" is a pseudonym.