



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

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Dear Subscriber:

**COMMENTARY:  
U.S.G.A. Volunteers Diminished  
Foundational Amateurism Demeaned**

**V**OLUNTEERS HAVE NEARLY reached the end of their useful and influential service at the United States Golf Association, or so it would seem by statements made in the *2020 Notice of the [U.S.G.A.] Annual Meeting*, as well as the transcript of a conference call to U.S.G.A. committee members last December.

For 126 years the U.S.G.A. relied upon volunteers to make ends meet while striving to accomplish all that needed to be done. At no expense to the U.S.G.A., volunteers across the country paid their ways when lobbying for championship qualifying sites, marking courses, conducting qualifiers, and applying the Rules. They sat on rules, museum, green section, implement & ball, communications, and amateur status committees. It was a privilege to be involved with the U.S.G.A. How else did the golf association attract the talent of those such as Bill Campbell, Grant Spaeth, Prescott Bush, Richard Tufts, William Foshay, Jim Hand, William Fownes and hundreds of others?

And why else would private clubs and public courses host nearly 700 championship qualifiers a year—more than 50 in Florida alone? Why else would a private club absorb operating expenses approaching \$1 million to host the Mid-Amateur Championship?

All committee members—including Executive Committee members—voluntarily contributed their time and travel expenses. Their volunteering was a statement of support for the American tradition of amateur golf conducted by

amateur volunteers; and in a few U.S.G.A. championships professionals could win some prize money.

How and why has the role of the U.S.G.A. volunteer been so diminished over the past 30 years? In 1995, a U.S.G.A. president was elected because of his expertise with the press, which was needed during the association's centennial celebration. He was not chosen for his legacy

in the game, his previous service to the association, or his understanding of the value of amateurism or volunteers. This was confirmed at the time by some of those who made the selection. Once president, this individual formed his own view of how the U.S.G.A. should perform as a bureaucracy. He favored a more

corporate structure with commercial ties to leading U.S. companies. This path was reinforced by some of the presidents who followed him and who he had supported in their political aspirations; then they did the same. Presidents less vehement in this view were tolerated and persuaded, and so the move to corporate bureaucracy and greater commercialism continued.

Volunteers were still relied upon because they were expense-less to the U.S.G.A. That reliance came to an end in 2015 with the windfall of television broadcast fees—approximately \$100 million each year for 12 years—which has enabled the expansion of the U.S.G.A. staff to more than 350, led by an executive director who also has the corporate mantle of C.E.O. and was paid \$1,613,185, according I.R.S. Form 990, for the period ending November 2017. The push and pull of dealing with sometimes obnoxious and meddling volunteers is no longer required; the staff and the governance committee can now do it all.

The U.S.G.A. higher-ups now fly in private jets, Executive Committee (XCom) members' expenses are

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paid by the association; and you can expect soon to see the XCom receiving directors' compensation fees. How else can you attract leading corporate types with no golf legacy or particular interest other than getting special treatment [Rules and XCom hospitality areas are now separate from one another] at the U.S. Open?

Two months ago, a conference call was organized by Mike Davis, U.S.G.A. C.E.O./executive director and Mark Newell, the current U.S.G.A. president, to address current committee members. A transcript was provided for those unable to join the call. The following are excerpts from that transcript. The color/underlining are ours and are meant to bring attention to particular language:

We [the U.S.G.A. bosses] are evolving our entire volunteer committee structure starting in 2020. Volunteers will no longer be permanently assigned to individual championship committees in favor of a new approach that will allow volunteers to put in for committee assignments on a year-to-year basis. This approach will be more tailored for you individually and accounts for personal needs and desires, as well as provides the opportunity to get involved in U.S.G.A. impact work outside of championships. A key aspect of the reorganization will be greatly increased communication between the U.S.G.A and committee members led by a newly created full-time volunteer manager position. ...

As a part of these changes the U.S.G.A. will also retire the Women's Committee after the Annual Meeting in February 2020 [at Pinehurst]. Many of the Women's Committee's roles have been incorporated across the organization over the last decade as part of the U.S.G.A.'s evolution, and, as a result, we've determined that a separate Women's Committee is no longer needed. The meaningful change that the Women's Committee has fostered over its 103-year history has resulted in a measurable evolution of the role women play in the game not only at the U.S.G.A. but throughout the game. The Regional Associations, Bob Jones Award and Joe Dey Award committees (sic) were retired earlier this year as part of this broader review. ...

The U.S.G.A. was founded by volunteers like you, and it is our priority to ensure our volunteers are getting the most out of their experience. We're excited that this new approach will allow much greater opportunity and provides a sustainable structure that ensures volunteers continue to play an important role at the U.S.G.A. To be clear, you are still a U.S.G.A. Committee Member.

Watching U.S.G.A. Executive Committee and officers' political maneuvering over the decades has always



seemed similar to the C.I.A. analyzing the Supreme Soviet's banquet seating charts to deduce what was really going on up the food chain and behind the scenes. The *2020 Notice of the [U.S.G.A.] Annual Meeting* has made this a bit easier. The new structuring laid out below was presumably enabled by rewriting the bylaws and burying their approval somewhere in the bureaucracy. The following are excerpts from the *Update on Executive Committee Structure and Nominating Process* as they appeared in the notice. The color/underlining are ours:

- The terms of the 14 regular members of the Executive Committee will increase from one year to three years, with a two-term limit. ...
  - The term of the president will also increase to three years, with a one-term limit. In the past, the president has typically served for two one-year terms.
  - The elected officer positions of secretary, treasurer, and general counsel will be eliminated, and those functions will now be assumed internally by the organization's staff leadership.
- The structure of the Nominating Committee has also been changed to include both Executive Committee members and outside members. After the 2020 Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the Governance Committee of the Executive Committee and will include two other Executive Committee members, one U.S.G.A. past president, and one other person from outside the organization. The members of the Nominating Committee will be appointed rather than elected.

These changes were adopted after reviewing best practice in not-for-profit governance and we believe that they will further strengthen the ability of our Executive Committee and management to carry out the mission and responsibilities of the U.S.G.A.

The effective method for altering the culture of an organization is to replace its decision makers, have them change and implement new bylaws, and then import their new vision. In this way, the system that governs is used to eliminate itself, and the old culture is replaced with what is preferred by the new authorities.

## Kasumigaseki & Hirono

### C.H. Alison's Important Work in Japan

KASUMIGASEKI [EAST] WILL HOST the men's and women's Olympic golf competitions this summer on a course unique in its design, renovations, and historical legacy in Japan.

The Club opened in 1929. It was the first golf course in Saitama prefecture – approximately 20 miles north of central Tokyo. The inaugural meeting was in May, and the course was completed by the end of September. Three-hundred ten members were enrolled by the official opening ceremony a month later.

The following year (1930), Charles H. Alison, the peripatetic member of the London golf course design firm of Colt, Alison & Morrison Ltd., made a working visit to Japan. H.S. Colt and Mr. Alison were at the peak of their expertise and influence during this time. To this day, their firm is considered to be one of the three finest golf course design firms in the long history of the game.

In Saitama, Mr. Alison surveyed Kasumigaseki in order to arrive at his renovation recommendations. He then left his assistant, George Penglase, to oversee the remodeling of the young, tree-lined course. As was not uncommon in Japan at the time, two greens were built for each hole so that different grass types could be grown on the different greens. Depending on the season, cold or hot, the green with the grass best for that season would be used for play.

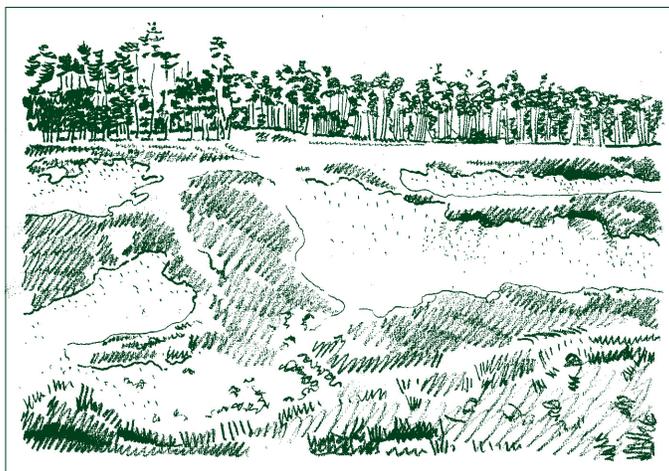
A second course, the West, was added in 1932 to satisfy the needs of the expanding membership. With this addition, Kasumigaseki became the first Japanese club with two courses. There were now 1,000 members.

During World War II, club operations were suspended and the courses fell into disrepair. Following the end of the war, the courses were restored. By 1954, all 36 holes were back in operation and, three years later, the East Course hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> Canada Cup, which eventually became the World Cup. Sixty players from 30 countries competed, including Sam Snead and Gary Player. The Japanese duo of Torakichi Nakamura and Koichi Ono won the team event. Mr. Nakamura took individual honors. This competition is credited with creating a Japanese golf boom and bringing Kasumigaseki worldwide respect.

The Japan Open was played here in 1933, '56, '95 and 2006; the Asian Amateur Championship in 2010; and this year's Olympic competition will be hosted from July 30 until August 8.

In preparation for the hosting of the Olympic golf championships, Kasumigaseki commissioned a renovation by Tom Fazio and his son, Logan. The Fazios' work included the addition of 400 yards. The par-71 East Course can now be played at 7,466 yards. The Club describes the recent renovation as follows:

*The East Course was redesigned by Tom and Logan Fazio in October 2016. It successfully retains the classic look and feel of the previous remodelling work by C.H. Alison, while at the same time adding moderate undulations on the fairways and amply sized greens with dynamic level changes surrounded by large and deep bunkers. The course, of exceptional beauty, has a dynamism that requires accurately targeted iron shots.*



HIRONO'S 7TH - "DEVIL'S DIVOT" - 190 YARD, PAR 3

**H**IRONO, ANOTHER CHARLES ALISON DESIGN, is considered the finest course and most exclusive club in Japan. It has undergone a significant renovation by Martin Ebert—the current master of Open Championship renovations—which was completed last October. Located 350 miles west, southwest of Tokyo and less than 25 miles from Osaka, Hirono is currently ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the world – appearing between The Country Club and Royal Birkdale. Its

allure, like all of the world's great courses, consists in the combination of an extraordinary piece of sandy land, some elevation change, Mr. Alison's insightful routing, his panache for bunker shape and placement, and his overall presentation of a truly beautiful inland golf landscape.

During the same trip in late 1930 on which Mr. Alison attended to the renovation for Kasumigaseki, he also created the design for Hirono.

After walking the property extensively, he used topographical maps to create his precise routing, shaping, and hazard placement. The drawings shown in the Hirono club history are identical in approach and execution as those drawn for Sea Island two years before. They are line drawings on blueprinted graph paper which leave no doubt as to the criteria that comprise the design. Despite his general disdain of water hazards, Mr. Alison did bring them into play on six of Hirono's holes.

Like so many golf courses built before the Depression and World War II, time and economic impacts left their marks. In tough times, golf course maintenance is understandably diminished. At Hirono, it was no different. Less mowing resulted in fairways becoming more narrow, putting greens smaller, and border trees crowding the playing areas. Much of this was corrected over the decades following the war.

A few years ago, the Club decided that a greater restoration was deserved. The English firm of Mackenzie & Ebert was given the job of restoring Mr. Alison's *original design intent*. Such a potentially vague charge might spell disaster for someone other than Martin Ebert, whose Open Championship course renovation/restoration work has been well received at Royal Portrush, Royal St. George's, Royal Liverpool, Royal Lytham & St. Anne's, Royal Troon, Turnberry [Ailsa], and Carnoustie. Quoted in *Golf Course Architecture* last April, Mr. Ebert summarized the Hirono job:

*The opportunity to view the course revealed a wonderful layout with no weak holes at all. The topography could be described as ideal for golf, containing enough movement throughout without it producing a tough walk.*

*Following two visits to work up proposals and discuss the project with the Restoration Committee, we were commissioned. The strong brief was to restore the great work which Alison left although, at this point, reference should be made to the significant input of Seiichi Takahata, who found the site and was one of the founders, and Chozo Itoh, the first course superintendent.*



For R.R.P.:

*"He regarded it with distaste, and a touch of asperity crept into his manner."*

*The Oldest Member pondering his portrait hanging in the Clubhouse.*

P.G. Wodehouse  
THE ROUGH STUFF

✦ CABOT LINKS IN NOVA SCOTIA is contemplating the addition of a ten hole short course, which is planned to be built just inland and slightly upland from Cabot Cliffs – the Coore and Crenshaw design that has garnered much attention from GOLF LETTER readers since it opened in 2016. The site overlooks the Cliffs course and affords long views of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

✦ THE BREAKERS OCEAN COURSE IN PALM BEACH, in the shadow of the great hotel, has been treated to a welcome renovation by Rees Jones. The oldest golf course in Florida—originally designed by Alexander Finlay in 1897—the Ocean Course was built on a small tract of what is now incredibly valuable property. Having undergone several iterations during its first 120 years, Mr. Jones' charge from the hotel owner was to create a modern design taking full advantage of its small, stunning location. The greens were enlarged and contoured to demand greater accuracy from approach shots and greater discernment when chipping. The number of white sand bunkers were reduced and are all visible from a distance.

✦ VICTORIA G.C. IN SRI LANKA has undergone a remarkable transformation to reverse the disrepair in which it had fallen. Designed by Donald Steele and Martin Ebert and opened in 1998, this course, Sri Lanka's third, has good bones that were in dire need of some arthroplasty. Under Sam Sakocius' supervision, the nearly grass-less site was covered with nursery-grown zoysia, a rudimentary irrigation system built, and some bunker improvements completed.

✦ CANTERBURY G.C. IN KENT should be played if you are in the area attending this summer's Open Championship at Royal St. George's. Canterbury was designed in the mid 1920s by H.S. Colt. Its subtle charms will surprise you, and you may find it satisfyingly tranquil during the congestion and traffic that always come with the Open.

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

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