



PAIR OF ACES

All Golf All the Time for
Pete, Alice Dye

By Tom Schuman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Fourth of a 2019 series on people and organizations that have made a dramatic impact on Indiana. The story of Pete and Alice Dye will conclude in the September-October BizVoice®.

We borrow the words of *Golf Digest* writer Ron Whitten upon the death of Alice Dye on February 1 of this year:

Alice and Pete were a couple for the ages. Alice was Bacall to Pete's Bogart, Hepburn to his Tracy, Nancy to his Ronald, Ethel to his Fred.

Photos on Pages 18, 20, 21 (left) and 23 (top left and right) provided by Chris Wirthwein, author of *Crooked Stick Golf Club: A story of the original masterpiece from America's first couple of golf, Pete and Alice Dye.*



Pete and Alice Dye: Rollins College, 1948, and in 2017 at the Riley Children's Health Sports Legend Experience (*The Children's Museum of Indianapolis photo*). Son P.B. Dye notes the irony of three honorary doctorate degrees for his father, who left high school early to enlist in the military.

Alice, an Indianapolis native, passed away three weeks short of her 92nd birthday. She was commonly known as the “First Lady” of golf course architecture. Pete, age 93 and suffering from advanced Alzheimer’s, is generally regarded as changing the game of golf with his unique style and attention to detail. Add in sons Perry and P.B., prolific golf course designers in their own rights, and you have America’s “First Family of Golf.”

What better way to tell the story of Pete and Alice Dye – with plenty of assistance from family, friends, collaborators and more – than through an 18-hole journey through portions of their fascinating and impactful lives. We present the front nine here before pausing in the clubhouse and returning with the back nine in the September-October issue.

No. 1: Birdies and eagles

Chris Wirthwein’s day job is CEO of Carmel-based technical and scientific products marketing firm 5MetaCom. He is also the historian for Crooked Stick Golf Club and author of the book of that same name that contains the subtitle: *A story of the original masterpiece from America’s first couple of golf, Pete and Alice Dye.*

Wirthwein had the opportunity to spend countless hours with the Dyes. “I would be in their (Carmel) home (beside the 18th fairway of their “baby”). Pete would be in a middle of a story, the phone would ring and Alice goes and answers it. She would say, ‘It’s Jack (as in Nicklaus), he

wants to know what to do with that bunker over on 16.’”

Wayne Timberman, who became a lifelong friend, first met the Dyes in the mid-1950s when he was 11 years old. His father was the golf pro at Meridian Hills Country Club in Indianapolis, where the Dyes joined primarily so older son Perry would have access to a pool to help him cope with his asthma. Although not in the golf course design business yet, their playing reputations preceded them as Timberman recalls the board of directors passing a rule that you had to be a member for two years before you were eligible to play for the club championship.

“The household was unbelievably limited to golf, exclusive to golf,” Timberman describes the later years. “I would decide to challenge them occasionally, take over some old great movie like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I would get it started and within 10 minutes they would be gone. Pete would be at the dining room table drawing and Alice would be doing something else. If you weren’t talking about golf, you weren’t talking.”

No. 2: It’s the family business

P.B. Dye, the younger son, talks about his early days near 79th Street and Spring Mill Road, where the family owned 40 acres. Milking cows and baling hay were part of everyday life. “My dad put a shovel in my hand when I was 7, put me on a tractor when I was 8 and put me on a bulldozer when I was 9.”



The Dye family, at Christmas in 1961, and sporting the red plaid jackets that signify membership in the American Society of Golf Course Architects (sons P.B., left, and Perry).



Pete (left) with legendary golfer Ben Hogan at Seminole Golf Club in the late 1970s.



After her standout career as a player, Alice was instrumental in the formation of the First Tee program that is dedicated to making the game of golf available to people of all backgrounds.

Older brother Perry weighs in. “As kids, and with heavy equipment, it was like a match made in heaven. My job was to take water to the crew (as Crooked Stick was being built). As a young boy, that was huge.

“People work their whole life to get into the golf industry,” Perry continues. “People ask me how I got into it and I honestly have to say, ‘The babysitter didn’t show up.’” He formed Dye Designs in 1984 and has built golf courses in 14 countries.

P.B., when asked if there was ever any doubt about his career, replies, “Wayne Timberman told me that between heredity and environment, you didn’t stand a chance. I didn’t enlist for this. I was drafted.”

That includes being sent to the Dominican Republic on June 10, 1971, as a 15-year-old as the Dye dynasty starts to expand beyond the United States.

By the way, the story actually begins with Pete’s father, Paul “Pink” Dye, designing and building a nine-hole course in Urbana, Ohio, in 1922. P.B. went back 70 years later to construct a second nine at what is now the Urbana Country Club.

No. 3: Alice far more than par for the course

As a child, Alice Holliday O’Neal would ride her bicycle to play golf at Indianapolis’ Woodstock Country Club. At age 15, she won the Indiana State Junior and Woodstock Club championships. Among her career accomplishments:

- 50 amateur championships, including nine for the state of Indiana and 11 in the Indianapolis city tournament
- Two United States Senior Women’s Amateur Championships and a pair of Canadian Senior tournaments
- Played on the U.S. team in the 1970 Curtis Cup, the biennial amateur competition between the United States and Great Britain/Ireland

“Think about where my mom was in the game of golf,” Perry reminisces. “She was playing golf and promoting my dad. Mom hit the ball so straight. It would make your head spin. We would shag balls for her and they would all be there together.”

Nancy Fitzgerald is the only woman with more Indianapolis city golf championships than Alice, earning her first title (1969) one year prior to Alice achieving her final win in that event. A Michigan native,

she was attending Indiana University when she came to Indianapolis to watch Alice play. The two later became the best of friends.

“We just made a great connect. She was probably one of the best thinkers around the golf course. Her course management was terrific. Once she was locked in, she was locked in,” Fitzgerald enthuses. “She loved the game. She really loved the game. We learned from each other. I helped her a teeny bit; she helped me a whole lot.”

While the on-course accomplishments were obvious, Fitzgerald says Alice’s character set her apart.

“She was extremely humble. Her awards, I read about one in the paper. I said, ‘I live two doors from you and this is how I have to find out.’ I’m not sure where she put all her trophies. Pete said she threw them in the closet with the rest of them.”

No 4: Pete’s playing days

As a high school junior, Pete won the individual title at the Ohio High School Golf Championship. In 1957, he qualified for the U.S. Open. Although he didn’t make the cut, his score equaled that of Arnold Palmer and was eight shots better than 17-year-old Nicklaus.

Later that same year, a fundraising exhibition at the Urbana course arranged by Pete’s father featured Nicklaus, Sam Snead (winner of a record 82 PGA Tour events), Pete and Bob Ross Jr., the reigning Ohio Amateur champ. Final scores on that day: Snead, 70; Dye, 71; Nicklaus, 75; and Ross, 76.

Pete won the Indiana State Amateur

Championship in 1958. As a 57-year-old in 1983, he had home course advantage in making the cut in the U.S. Senior Amateur Championship at Crooked Stick. He was clearly an excellent player. In 1959, however, he was ready to shift gears (both he and Alice were successful in insurance sales) and begin building golf courses.

Tony Pancake became the head golf pro at Crooked Stick in 2003. He tells a story from within the last decade.

“Mr. Dye liked to walk. One day, he was in his mid-80s with his bag on his shoulder. It was 95 degrees, hot and humid. I asked him what he was doing, and he said, ‘You didn’t have any caddies.’ I came in to the staff that day and said, ‘We always have a caddy for Mr. Dye, even if it means closing down the golf shop.’

“We have to take care of this man. He took care of all of us.”

No. 5: Where it all began

Wirthwein’s book reveals the full story, beginning in February 1964 when four prominent business leaders and Paul “Pete” Dye, Jr. – described as a little-known golf course designer with 10 courses to his credit – conducted a meeting at the Indianapolis Athletic Club. The goal: “to build the finest golf course in this area.”

He and his family did just that at Crooked Stick, but they (the members) didn’t necessarily come – at least at first. It took a number of years for the club to thrive and for the course to gain notice beyond

central Indiana. That started with hosting qualifying events and national championships, beginning in the early 1980s.

One who did come on board early was Curt Miller, who today serves as chairman of the Katz, Sapper & Miller public accounting firm.

“I used to pay \$2 to play the back nine in 1966, 1967,” he reflects. “In 1967, when the club officially formed, Riley Fledderjohn, one of the charter members said, ‘Curt, this is where you should belong.’ For practical business reasons, I wanted to get involved.

“There were 88 charter members. I was No. 97.”

Junior, Senior and Mid-Amateur tournaments at Crooked Stick preceded the 1991 PGA Championship. Little known, long-hitting John Daly, who entered the week as the ninth alternate to gain entry into the tournament, overpowered the course in what was later selected as the “top moment in PGA Championship history.”

Crooked Stick has played host to a number of other prestigious events, most recently the 2012 and 2016 BMW Championships with winners Rory McIlroy and Dustin Johnson, respectively. They all came to admire and play the initial course that launched the Dye legacy.

No. 6: Course classics

Once again, we must condense a lifetime of mastery into a few short paragraphs. Here is a top six (of the 100-plus courses designed), per Perry’s Dye Designs web site:

- Harbour Town (1969) at Hilton Head Island, a partnership with Nicklaus (more on that later)



The view from the television tower behind the No. 17 tee at Crooked Stick prior to the 1991 PGA (left) and the famous No. 17 Island Green at TPC Sawgrass. Tony Pancake, director of golf at Crooked Stick: “None of us can change the golf course; only Pete and Alice can. I love the way the club honors them.”

- TPC Sawgrass-Stadium Course (1982) at Ponte Vedra Beach, just south of Jacksonville, Florida
- The Ocean Course (1991) at Kiawah Island, South Carolina, built for the 1991 Ryder Cup that became known as "The War by the Shore"
- The Golf Club (1967) in New Albany, Ohio, outside Columbus. Work began there after the back nine at Crooked Stick had been completed and funds were not available to start work on the other nine holes
- Oak Tree Golf Club (1976) in Edmond, Oklahoma
- PGA West-Stadium Course (1986) in La Quinta, California

Seventh on that list is the Teeth of the Dog course (named so because of jagged rocks that resemble canine canines) at Casa de Campo resort in the Dominican Republic. The Dyes had a vacation home there and P.B. has made it one of his favorite locales since being sent there nearly 50 years ago.

Wirthwein was in the Dominican Republic this winter when Alice passed away.

"They (the Dyes) are national heroes there. On the 18th hole, the flagstick in the hole was at half-mast," he explains. "In 1971, there were no highways, no roads. That course was created with shovels and wheelbarrows. The impact of what they did for that country. The highway, the first one

in the country and it's only a couple years old, goes from the airport to the golf course."

No. 7: Design influences

A trip to St. Andrews, Scotland, in 1963, where Pete played in the British Amateur Championship, inspired the Dyes. Deep pot bunkers (*Bury Me in a Pot Bunker* is the title of an autobiography about Pete's career), Scottish-style mounds and the use of railroad ties were among the design features they utilized throughout their careers.

Yes, they brought back the architectural style to the United States but Pete "added angles to it. He loved to change the rhythm on the golf course," Perry outlines.



Pete, building a green at Crooked Stick in 1964, "practiced" golf course design by digging holes in the family yard.



Alice was always ready to assist in any way possible.



Harbour Town Golf Links was a 1969 collaboration with Jack Nicklaus.

Here are two of the many facets of Pete and his work.

“My dad was not a golf course architect,” P.B. insists. “He literally goes on site and runs the job. He’s a designer, a construction manager. We call ourselves ditch diggers. We figure it out as it goes, what work needs to be done at that moment.”

All true. Yet Wirthwein tells of a letter Pete wrote about improvements needing to take place prior to Crooked Stick hosting that 1991 PGA Championship.

“He wrote about what it would look like for a spectator and what it would look like on television,” he shares. “He may have been the first guy to do that. When you sit on their back porch (at Crooked Stick), you’re looking across the 18th fairway. You can’t see the lake that is there, just the green. Pete told me he loves the long views. Well, there is one on their back porch.”

No. 8: ‘Visible intimidation’

We’ll let the golf authorities weigh in without interruption on the mental side of the equation:

- Miller, speaking of Crooked Stick (but potentially many other Dye creations): “They wanted it playable for the amateurs, but also wanted it challenging for the pros. There is a lot of visible intimidation – that was part of the genius Pete had.”
- Pancake provides an example with the addition of water on hole 17 at Crooked Stick between the two BMW tournaments.

“The last three holes, he wanted water on each and to alternate it right, left, right. He said, ‘I want a big lake left of 17. I want their eyes to go right to the lake and scare them to death.’ That’s exactly what happens.”

In 2012, the 17th was approximately the 11th-ranked hole in difficulty. Four years later, with no changes to the tee or green, it was the most difficult hole. “That’s Pete Dye at his best. He gets into your head better than anyone I know.”

- Dave Harner, director of golf operations at French Lick Resort, is in total agreement. “Pete’s courses are known to be very visually deceptive. In other words, if you see the green off to the left a little bit, it causes you to want to aim that way when you actually should be playing out to the fairway.”
- Wirthwein: “He absolutely does trick you. Many of the hazards he puts on golf courses are not there to snag the golfer; they are there to make you make a bad decision.”
- P.B.: “He did everything he could to screw with the professional’s eyes, to make his eyes lie to him. Be as deceptive visually as you can. He does everything he can to make you think. Because we all know in golf as soon as you start to think, you mess up.”

No. 9: Straight talker

The previous hole contained a lot of “he” references to Pete’s work. But make no mistake, Alice was an integral part of the team. She was the first female member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and the first woman to serve as a director of the PGA of America.

On a more practical level, Pete was stymied in what to do with what became the famous 17th hole Island Green at TPC Sawgrass. When Alice suggested he put the green in the middle and fill up the big hole with water, Pete balked.

Miller picks up the story. “Pete took out a seven iron, hit it in the

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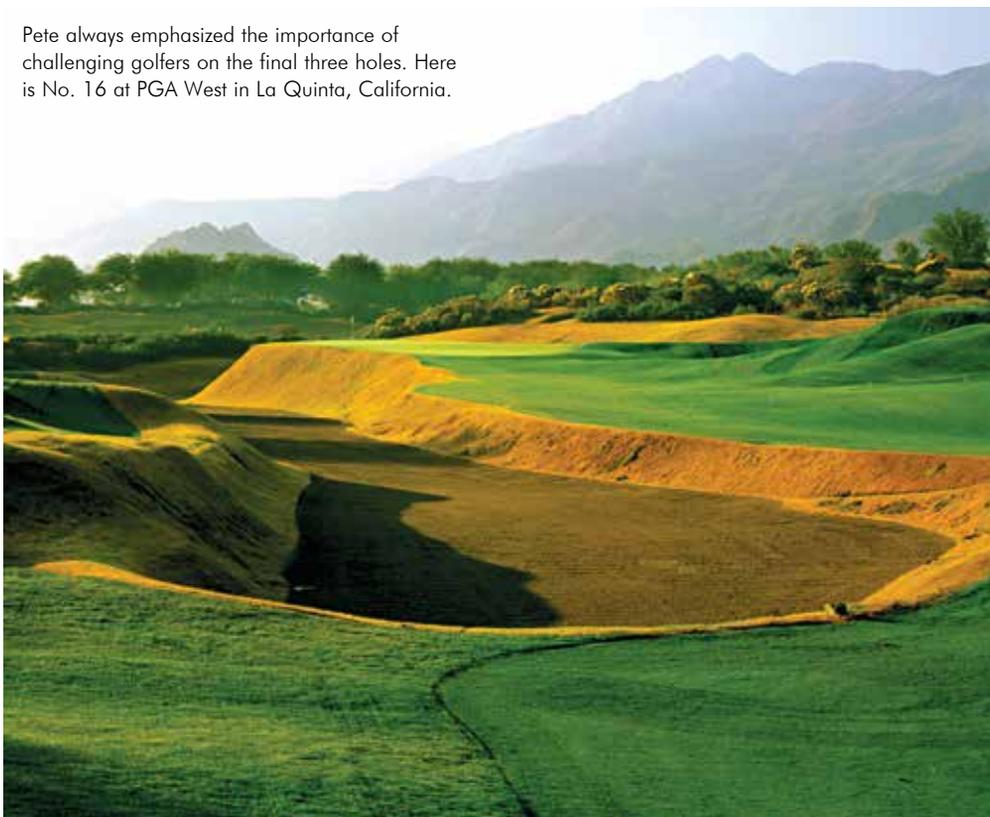


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Pete always emphasized the importance of challenging golfers on the final three holes. Here is No. 16 at PGA West in La Quinta, California.



middle of the green and said it's too easy. Alice's response was, 'It's easy with me and the frog watching. Put 10,000 people out here and it won't be easy.'

The rest, they say, is history.

Fitzgerald and Harner both share anecdotes of bunkers on different holes that were going to adversely impact the tee shots of either some of the women or less accomplished players. The next time on the course – in Harner's case the next day – the bunkers were gone.

At one point in her career, Fitzgerald tied Alice for the most Indianapolis city championships with 11 each.

"When it came time to play the next year, I said I was done. I liked that we were tied, that we could be co-something," she recounts. "This is classic Alice. She said, 'That is about the dumbest thing I have ever heard.' She would call it like it was." (Fitzgerald later won her 12th city title to break the tie).

September-October issue:
The Back Nine



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