



THERE'S NO GIVING UP in Golf

by Vincent Hagel

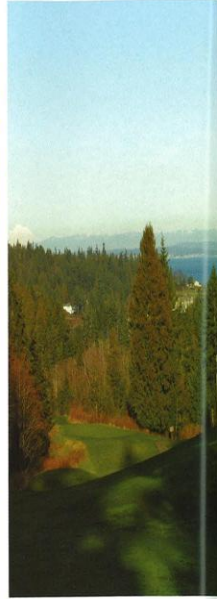
The problem with discovering little-known facts of history is that they are often so interesting one cannot resist sharing them. In 1838, U.S. Navy explorer Captain Charles Wilkes led the Navy's first expedition to map the Pacific. After mapping Antarctica and Hawaii, he spent time mapping Puget Sound. He anchored in Discovery Bay and sent some of his six vessels to map the Sound, at one point landing in a small bay, which he named for one of his Naval Academy heroes, Augustus C. Ludlow. Wilkes had entered the Naval Academy in 1818 at the age of twenty, five years after Ludlow had perished in battle. Ludlow, born in 1792, had entered the Academy in 1804 at the age of twelve, graduating in 1810, and was commissioned as an ensign. Three years later, off the coast of Nova Scotia, Lieutenant Ludlow was second in command to the Captain of the U.S. Frigate *Chesapeake*, James Lawrence, as they battled the British *H.M.S. Shannon*. Ludlow was mortally wounded in the battle, and the ship was eventually lost to the British. Regardless of the loss, Lawrence's words to Ludlow were eventually sewn onto a battle flag by Admiral Perry and became the motto of our navy: "Don't give up the ship."



I doubt, however, that Wilkes ever played golf—a game for landlubbers. His temper spurred two courts martial, both of which found him guilty. His severity supposedly inspired Melville's Captain Ahab, but it could never have inspired good golf, which requires endless patience, though I am certain he must have been inspired by the view one can experience today from the second tee at Ludlow's Trail Course. The Trail is one of three nine-hole venues; the others are aptly named Tide and Timber. This past February I played the course. I had previously played the Tide and Timber courses several times in the late nineties,



but remembered fairly soggy conditions in the winters—too soggy, really. However, changes made during the past three years were much better than rewriting history, a privilege normally reserved for the survivors of battles. Golf at Port Ludlow, however, is no longer a battle with the elements.



Peter Japhcott

the club pro, assured me before we played that three years of extensive sanding had resurfaced the fairways, allowing golf to be the pleasure it ought to be in the mild climate of Puget Sound—and he was right. Thirty tons of sand per year, ladled out carefully across fairways and tees, have resurfaced the course. Now one can enjoy the beauties of great shots and great views, and the miseries of poor shots and missed putts without muddy distractions. The course is dry and walkable—even after a winter of fierce and record rainfall. Regardless of the ease of walking, Peter supplied my partner and me with a cart so that we could play and photograph as we rode. We began on the Trail Course first tee, a downhill shot opening to a comfortable, but not easy, second shot to an elevated green. The first surprise occurred when we walked off the green toward the second tee and encountered Mt. Baker splendidly supervising the Sound. There is little in life like a cloudless day on the Peninsula.

The second tee offers a more difficult—and still downhill—shot, probably

more difficult because several years have passed since I last played Ludlow. I must admit to being distracted by the spectacular views. The third hole is a great par three of 172 yards over a little water—again downhill—followed by a genuine par five with a blind second shot and carefully raised green. Rather than detail the course hole by hole, I will summarize the Tide Nine as great fun capped by a challenging uphill ninth hole.

Peter Japhcott called this a “woodland” golf course. While a few homes border some of the Tide Course, “woodland” still is the right word, even more so on the Timber Course, where we played our second nine. The first hole culminates on a tree settled below the rising Olympics. The second hole twists downhill, guarded by many more trees—hence the Timber designation—and speckled with numerous stumps, many from cedars having long ago fallen. Few were cut; rather, they succumbed to age and wind, falling where they had stood for years. Often the stumps lie with their roots exposed above the ground, whitened and dried by the sun. Others are laden with

moss or ivy, or other growing flora. Within their reaches are golf holes with bunkers hankering to challenge one just a little too much, giving the unwise golfer the “I can make it over that one” feeling that Jack Nicklaus called a “sucker pin.” This course is really a lot of fun.

During the spring and summer months it is beautiful as well, though my photographs from February do not include the multitudinous pink flowers for which the course is so well known and appreciated. I mostly remember the spring rhodias, but many other flowers also color the landscape during the blooming seasons.

One of the most photographed golf holes in Western Washington is the Timber Eighth hole. From the tee you need to fire an easy mid-iron over a mirror-like pond reflecting trees and sky in perfect symmetry. A good shot is rewarded with a fair, but undulating green. You can walk off with a satisfying par to face the ninth hole whose long rise toward the clubhouse requires careful placement so that the third shot will stand a chance to reach the green well above you.

After eighteen great holes, we spoke for a while with Peter, who looks forward to the coming months and the golf season, though his workload will probably interfere with his mountain biking in the Olympic National Forest and the photographs he takes along the way. Off-season golf still keeps him busy, though. Each off-season month features online specials that include a cart or other amenities. The cart, I believe, is necessary on the third nine, the Trail Course. We drove the Trail Course, but did not play it. The wild January storms had left thousands of branches and twigs strewn about, but we took a peek anyway—and what a peek. The greens were all cleared and the views of the Sound and the Cascades

would have distracted me from golf. This is the kind of course where a golfer could take a non-golfing spouse or friend along for the ride, just to enjoy the beauty. The Trail Course rises above the forest, descends into it, traps sunlight, traps the imagination, and definitely traps one’s desire to play it. Fairways are long, narrow, and undulating; some tee shots are daunting; some holes are long and winding; and the surrounding ground is strewn with trees blown by the wind, though there is evidence of developing the area for what will probably be not-inexpensive home sites. By the time we had finished, Peter was closing for the day. The afternoon shadows were long, the air was cool, and our feet

were dry, regardless of months of endless rain. Anyone who has played Ludlow in years past will want to return, and anyone who has not yet played it will want to thank Robert Muir Graves for his vision. How a person can walk through thick woods and envision the wonderful possibilities for golf holes is a mystery to me, but I’m glad men like Graves can.

Golf on this course was no battle. No ships were lost. No golf balls were lost, and certainly, no time was wasted. Captain Wilkes and all of us who have followed him to Port Ludlow had mapped a bit of paradise. ▶

