

Place an Ad | Subscribe

Welcome! Login | Signup

The News & Advance | GoDanRiver.com | RockinghamNow.com | The Burg | Amherst New Era Progress | Nelson County Times | Work It, SoVa | Work It, Lynchburg

NEWS SPORTS LIFESTYLE/ENTERTAINMENT WEATHER OBITUARIES

45°
Cloudy



Advanced Search

SERVICES CLASSIFIEDS REAL ESTATE AUTOS JOBS CONTACT US ADVERTISE WITH US

Home Rockingham Now News

Golf enthusiast plans 57th Masters trip

Story Comments

Print Font Size:



Posted: Sunday, March 28, 2010 6:01 am | Updated: 4:40 pm, Thu Feb 14, 2013.

By MARY DOLAN Staff writer

The rolling hills are voluptuous curves of green velvet that dip sensuously in all the right places. Tree leaves whisper in the breeze, and azaleas perfume the air in their shades of pink, like lipstick. It's no wonder Hunter Gammon can't resist the allure of the Augusta National Golf Club.

Golf enthusiast plans 57th Masters trip

Hunter Gammon, 86, attended his first Masters Golf Tournament in 1954, only 20 years after the tournament began in Augusta, Ga.

Gammon, a Reidsville resident, has attended the famed Masters golf tournament 56 years in a row. And, at 86, he has yet another date – his 57th – scheduled in his little black book with the golf course he fell in love with many years ago.

The Masters, scheduled this year for April 8-11, is one of four major championship golf tournaments and is held with much fanfare at the dazzling Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga.

Gammon, a pharmacist at Carolina Apothecary in Reidsville, is a golf enthusiast who plays the game himself, has built his own golf course and has met the men behind the household names, like Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead and Jack Nicklaus.

He talks excitedly, even after all these years, about his next golf rendezvous in Augusta. His voice almost purrs when he calls Augusta National “the most beautiful course in the world.”

As a spectator for more than five decades, Gammon has had a front row seat for the changes that inevitably occur with the passage of time. He remembers in the early years when the tournament participants, the ones with the recognizable names, would mingle with their fans. Gammon stayed in the same hotel and dined with some of the best. He even attended a wrestling match with Sam Snead.

No longer do the elite golfers stay in the same hotels as their fans. Rather, they rent rooms in Augusta's ritziest homes and stay far away from the fans and the fuss. Their celebrity status has escalated to heights the sport of golf never knew, with the likes of Tiger Woods

Dept of Defense Grounds
All F-35 Strike Force



Follow Us On Facebook



Email Signup

Email:
 Sign me up for Rockingham Now
 Sign me up for Rockingham Deals
 Sign me up for Work It, SoVa Newsletter

Twitter



Join the conversation

NewsAdvance.com is not responsible for the content above, which is provided in real-time from Twitter.

Submit Your Letters!

Submit your letters to the editor here!

[Click here!](#)

and Phil Mickelson.

And over the span of 56 years, Gammon's partners for making the trip have changed as many times as the styles and trends. For many years, his friend and fellow pharmacist Robert Watson made the trip with him. Gammon's sons, Bill and Tracy, have accompanied him. Other friends have come and gone.

One thing has remained the same: Gammon's love for one eye-catching golf course and the game that gets played there every spring.

A last-minute trip, and a tradition is born

It all started in 1954, the 20th year for the Masters, when a casual conversation among friends led to last-minute plans to attend a tournament that was already quickly growing in popularity.

Gammon and friends Hugh Miller and Junior Trent wanted to see North Carolina favorite son Billy Joe Patton play. So they took a road trip down to the city in Georgia that golf fanatics flock to every year. And through some finagling, they even managed to wrangle a room in one of the packed hotels that very first year.

The trio stayed in the stately Richmond Hotel in the heart of Augusta. And every year after that, Gammon returned to the Richmond, until it closed 20 or so years later.

Though devastated when the Richmond, one of Augusta's old gems, did shut its doors for good, Gammon's status as a regular meant he held sway, and he received priority in selecting a room at a new Ramada, which has been his home away from home ever since.

And though Patton didn't win that 1954 Masters – he came close – Gammon enjoyed himself more than he ever could have imagined.

Heaven on earth

Gammon will never forget when his love affair with Augusta National began.

He recalls stepping onto the golf course for the first time and telling his friends: "If heaven is any prettier than this, then I don't wanna miss heaven."

Gammon gushes about the perfectly landscaped and manicured green, and the azaleas that bloom in all the right places at just the right time.

"Perfection is No. 1 there." Gammon said.

And though the beauty has remained intact, Gammon is wistful about the distance between players and patrons these days.

Back in the good old days – yes, that's how Gammon refers to them – he had a chance encounter with one of his favorites.

Gammon was staying at the Richmond and realized Sam Snead was also a guest. Snead entered the bustling lobby and asked if anyone wanted a ticket to a wrestling match taking place that evening. Gammon eagerly accepted, and the two men watched the event together, like old friends.

Gammon said they spent the evening chatting away, as if they'd known each other forever.

"We talked hunting, fishing, farming – everything except golf," Gammon said. He thinks Snead was grateful for conversation that didn't center upon the sport he played.

Calendar

February 2013						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		
today's events		browse			submit	

He's met Curtis Strange and Jay Haas – “I got to know them real well,” he said – and the Hebert brothers, Jay and Lionel.

And when Gammon built Wolf Creek Golf Course in 1956, a little-known golfer – at that time – came to test it out.

“Arnold Palmer came to Reidsville and rode over the course I built,” he said with pride.

Keeping the streak alive

And in only one year, one out of the past 56, did Gammon even come close to missing a trip to his favorite golf course. The year was 1971, and Gammon's father was ill with cancer. To this day, Gammon gets tears in his eyes as he recalls his father's insistence that he go, that he not miss a date with his dear Augusta National.

Gammon's father promised him he would be waiting, eager to greet his son when Gammon returned. He was. He passed away one month later.

Aside from that one near-miss, Gammon's health and work and family have never hindered him from going. He anxiously awaits his return to Georgia each spring.

The chance encounters, the friendships, the exhilaration of watching the sport and, of course, the beauty and Southern charm of Augusta National have made the Masters a vital part of Gammon's life these past 56 years. It's a love like no other for Gammon.

“It's a feeling that's hard to explain,” he said.

© 2013 NewsAdvance.com . All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Discuss Print

Posted in [News](#), [News](#) on Sunday, March 28, 2010 6:01 am. Updated: 4:40 pm.

Similar Stories

Most Read

- [Victims' grandson faces murder charges in Campbell County deaths](#)
- [Meteorologist sent to hospital after Moneta crash](#)
- [Crown Sterling goes back to basics](#)
- [Murder-suicide victims have Danville ties](#)
- [Authorities continue to investigate double homicide in Campbell County](#)

<h4>Sections</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home News Sports Lifestyle/Entertainment Obituaries Classifieds Online Features Weather 	<h4>Services</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Us Personnel Subscription Services Submission Forms Site Index Add Search Toolbar 	<h4>Contact us</h4> <p>http://www.rockinghamnow.com</p> <p>http://www.rockinghamnow.com</p> <p>Phone number: 1-800-323-2951</p> <p>E-mail: news@reidsvillereview.com</p> <p>Address: 1921 Vance St. P.O. Box 2157 Reidsville, NC 27320</p>	<h4>Search</h4> <p>_____ <input type="button" value="SEARCH"/></p> <p>Search in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> Nelson County Times <input type="checkbox"/> Work It, Sova <input type="checkbox"/> Work It, Lynchburg <input type="checkbox"/> Amherst New Era Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Photos <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> GoDanRiver.com <input type="checkbox"/> RockinghamNow.com <input type="checkbox"/> Inside VT Sports <input type="checkbox"/> News & Advance <input type="checkbox"/> The Burg
--	--	--	---

Copyright 2013, RockinghamNow.com , Reidsville, NC. Powered by [BLOX Content Management System](#) from [TownNews.com](#). [\[Terms of Use\]](#)