

The Champion Tee Totaler

One Sunday afternoon in 1927 George W. Klewer, Chicago architect, sat musing before going to dinner, as golfers sometimes will after a round. In a cabinet drawer was an assortment of tees. He had developed a habit of picking them up where other players abandoned them on the course. Suddenly he noticed they offered a wide variety of types, sizes, shapes and colors. When he sorted them, he found there were 40 different specimens.

After that day, George W. Klewer picked up golf tees with more than an idle interest and in a year his collection numbered 200 varieties. That was the origin of the Klewer tee collection, which at last count totaled more than 1,240 types and has been featured in hobby shows.

If you have any yen for a golf tee collection, you can take it from Mr. Klewer

that a fee course is the place to assemble it.

"At the Northwestern Golf Club in Cook County there used to be 500 to 700 players on Sunday," he explained. "They were pushed so they didn't wait to pick up or hunt for tees. But I did."

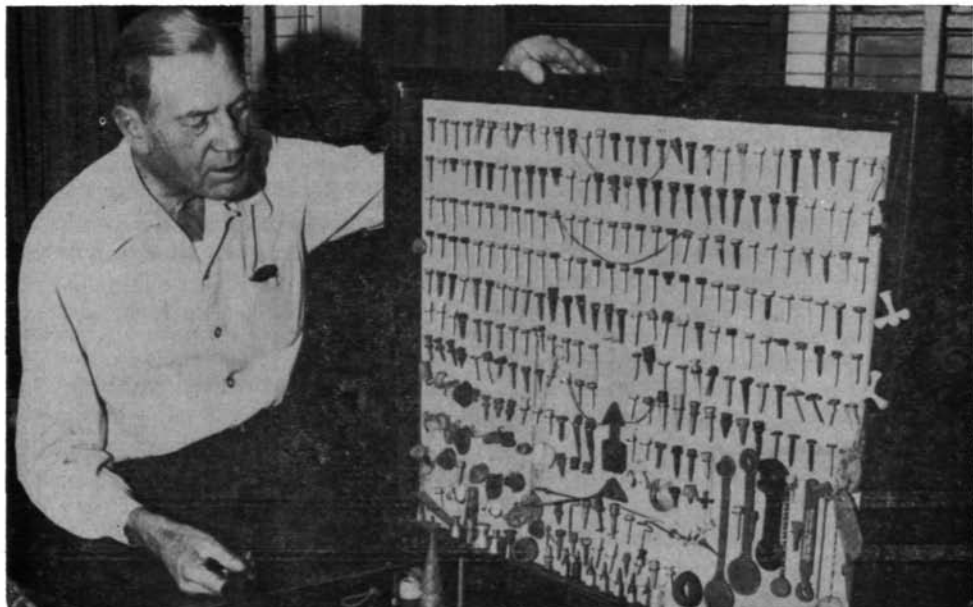
His Friends Helped

By the time Mr. Klewer had his first 200 and his tee collection was really on its way, he put it on exhibition at the clubhouse. From that point its growth was more rapid. Friends, caddies, even strangers began keeping not an ear but an eye to the ground, and saved for him any tees they considered oddities.

Mr. Klewer's collection is now mounted on panels and encased in glass.

"I am privileged by my family to keep one of my boards on the living room table, leaning against the wall," he said.

It's Always Tee Time in the Klewer Home



George W. Klewer, Chicago architect, with a part of his collection of tees. He has been assembling the set since 1927 and at last count it totalled more than 1,240, no two of which are alike

"I look at it often and marvel at what is really a collection of brain power expressed in tees — all for a little device to hold a golf ball, which for years was taken care of by a pinch of damp sand."

As to the history of tees, Mr. Klewer says matters are vague, but he has heard of a Scotchman who brought with him a rubber flange tee when he played in this country 50 years ago. However, things aren't that vague. In the USGA Library is a fraying copy of an 1893 treatise on "Golf," from the Spalding Athletic Library, and it contains advertisements of rubber tees. Mr. Klewer points out that one George F. Grant of Boston obtained a patent in 1899 on a tee with a wooden stem and a flexible tubular head. He credits the Granby Manufacturing Co., Granby, Que., with originating the celluloid tee, although they obtained no patents.

The manufactured tee came into general use along about 1923 to 1925, and Mr. Klewer's collection starts with the earliest type, with the wooden stem and rubber head, and some of papier maché.

Three Classifications

As to materials, Mr. Klewer says his tees fall into three categories, as follows:

Metal: Pure silver, sterling silver, gold plated, cast iron, bronze, brass, mono metal, tin, wire, spring steel, aluminum.

Composition: Cellophane, celluloid, plastic, corn processing residue, bone, Bakelite, casein product, papier maché. Mr. Klewer has some he thinks may be of other composition but can't determine what.

Pliables: Paper, rubber, coated cloth, leather.

"I have one tee," says Mr. Klewer, "of spring wire. One point goes into the ground, the holding arm goes down as the club starts hitting it, leaving the ball in suspension, therefore offering no resistance to the stroke. Then the tee flops back on the ground, safe. It is a patented device.

TO A GOLFER'S CREDIT

When from the eighteenth hole I turn
And quit the course forever more,
St. Peter all my faults shall learn
As he reviews my final score.
I shall admit I raised my head,
Or pressing, used to dip my knees.
But whether yellow, white or red
I never stopped to hunt for tees.

And as he runs my record through
I hope he'll know I struggled hard
My best in every game to do—
But golf's not all upon the card.
When the last faulty score is read
And every eight and nine he see:
Perhaps 'twill help if this be said:
I never stopped to hunt for tees.

Tell him who knows me over there
I was not much, as golfers go;
Say that my game was only fair,
Ninety I seldom got below.
Tell him that putts I used to miss
Which any dub would make with ease.
Then to my credit add just this:
I never stopped to hunt for tees.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

"One unique tee is of wood with a lead center which serves as a score pencil. Another has a lip on the seat to start the ball on the rise. I have one I call the pipe tee, which has the seat for the ball on an angle to the stem. The stem goes into the ground on a slant but pulls out when the ball is hit. My silver tee was bought in Mexico; I don't play with it, of course. It is a noveltee."

Mr. Klewer has five sand molds such as were used 30 years or more ago.

In the Hobby Hall of Fame

The collection aroused so much interest at hobby shows that it sometimes monopolized the newspaper space devoted to the shows. It brought Mr. Klewer election as a member of Hobby Hall of Fame by the Hobby Guild of America.

The USGA Golf Museum and Library contains a collection of tees donated mainly by Mr. Klewer. He has been most generous in his contributions.