

The Masters - 1968

by Jack Garvin

It was March of 1968 and I was scared. As an artillery 2nd Lieutenant I was afraid just about every day. I figured I had about six months to live, tops. Vietnam loomed in my future, where artillery second lieutenants had a life expectancy of about one month as forward observers.

Meanwhile, in beautiful Savannah, Georgia I had enjoyed the warm winter while stationed at Hunter Army Airfield, one of three helicopter training centers for Vietnam. My two year U.S. Army career was about six months old in March of 1968, when a Captain in the next office called out rather loudly "Lieutenant Garvin!" This was one of those recurring times that caused me to panic. Are these the orders for Vietnam I have been dreading? "Yes sir." I replied as I entered the Captain's office. "Garvin, you're a golfer, aren't you?" to which I replied, "Yes sir." "I have an extra ticket to the Masters next month. You want to go?" Is this a trick question I immediately thought? No, he wouldn't do that. "Yes sir!" was my enthusiastic reply.

My thoughts centered around the idea that at least I'll get to see Augusta before I die in the jungles of southeast Asia. All I had to do was take two of my 14 days of allotted leave to cover the Thursday and Friday of Masters week in April.



2nd Lieutenant Garvin in the jungles of Savannah, GA

Captain Martin drove me and two of his friends each day through the back roads of eastern Georgia to Augusta. Towns like Rincon, Sylvania, Millen and Waynesboro were welcome sights along U.S. Highways 21 and 25 as we made our way along the 280 mile daily round trip. Mostly four lane highways today, in 1968 they were two lane roads.

I recall riding in the third seat at the back of Captain Martin's station wagon. Watching the tall pines of the Georgia countryside go by backwards still remains a Master's memory.

We parked behind the 6th tee and entered

the gates to 'Valhalla' from there. My green Masters badge had cost \$20 and was good for all four days of the tournament. As soon as we entered the gates I was on my own, free to roam the course at will. It didn't take me long to learn that Augusta National was not as flat as it looked on television. Or that some people didn't roam as I did but got to their favorite spot and stayed there in their folding chairs. Hungry? How about those pimento cheese sandwiches, wrapped in wax paper? Today they go for \$1.50. In 1968 they must have been no more than 50 cents each.

The greens were huge and slick. I saw for the first time shots that hit greens close to the flags but then spun back perhaps 50 or 60 feet. It's hard to believe that in 1968 Augusta still had bermuda greens, not bentgrass as they are now.

Eventually I became tired from walking the course and found a favorite spot to sit and watch: the elbow of the 13th fairway. From there you could see the tee shot and the second shot which might be laid up or daringly fired at clearing Rae's Creek and getting on the green in two. I can still see Gene Littler hitting what looked like a perfect shot that hit the top of the bank and bounce down into the water. His club toss said it all. Precision was needed on approaching these huge greens.

This was my routine for the first three days. Follow someone for a few holes then settle down and watch from #13 fairway. To my disappointment, Arnie didn't make the cut that year and Jack finished tied for 5th.

Late on the fourth day I ended up behind the 16th green, but I could see shots come down the hill to the 15th green from my vantage point with binoculars. What I remember most was Bob Goalby hitting a 3 iron onto the 15th green to about five feet from the hole. He made the putt for eagle and went on to end up tied with Roberto DeVincenzo at the end of the day.

As we piled into the station wagon to head back to Savannah we discussed whether we wanted to take another day of leave to come back on Monday for the 18 hole playoff. The car radio told us there would be no playoff. De Vincenzo had signed a wrong scorecard and was not tied with Goalby, but finished second, a stroke back. Roberto got \$15,000, Goalby got \$20,000 for the win.

I went back with Captain Martin and his friends the next year to the 1969 Masters. By that April I was no longer afraid all the time. I was a 'short timer' and the window had closed when I could be sent to the Republic of Vietnam. I only had five more months until I could come back home to Missouri and rejoin

civilian life.

If someone ever asks me about my military service in the late 1960s I have a great war story to tell: I went to the Masters all four days, two straight years.



Did you know?

In 1931 Bobby Jones earned \$300,000 from his series of 12 movies "How I Play Golf, by Bobby Jones"



Roberto De Vincenzo at the scoring table



Bob Goalby at the green jacket ceremony

OFFICIAL SCORE CARD

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Totals
Yardage	400	555	355	220	450	190	365	530	420	3485	470	445	155	475	420	520	190	400	420	3495	6980
Pur	4	5	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	36	4	4	3	5	4	5	3	4	4	36	72
Player	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	51	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	5	35	66

I HAVE CHECKED MY SCORE/HOLE BY HOLE

PLAYER SIGNATURE: *Roberto De Vincenzo* ATTEST: *Jim Clavin*