

"Woody" - A Tribute To Don and Helen Woodward

by Lynne Belluscio

Last year, many of you might have noticed "Woody" standing near the road at the LeRoy Country Club. When Niagara Mohawk marked the huge black walnut tree for demolition, Jim Gomborone asked the guys from H.B. Chain Saw Carvers to carve it into a golfer. Since Donald Woodward and his sister Helen developed the golf course, Jim thought that it was only fitting that "Woody" be dedicated to the Woodward family.

On Saturday, May 18, "Woody" will become the official LeRoy Country Club mascot. The festivities start with the first annual "Woody Golf Tournament" with registration at noon, a shot-gun start at 1 pm, followed by a pig roast, complete with all the fixins at 7 pm. Dan Cote from the LeRoy Historical Society is organizing the event with the proceeds helping to defray the cost of a new roof on the LeRoy House porch. We are most appreciative to Jim Gomborone and the Country Club for their help and support.

Don Woodward loved golf almost as much as he loved flying. When he built the DW Airport on Asbury Road, he built a driving range across the road, but he knew that he really wanted to develop a regulation course nearby.

In 1930, he announced that he was going to build a nine-hole public golf course across the road from his restaurant, "The Barn." He watched people playing miniature golf and asked them why they didn't play regulation golf, and they told him they couldn't afford it. Don told a friend, "It seems a pity that all those people cannot enjoy the real golf course." It wasn't his intention to build a difficult course, but he designed a number of hazards. The land was well suited for a course with rolling hills and a creek. He spent \$4,000 building the pond and installed a sunken sprinkler system to keep the greens irrigated.

Don kept the rates for the course affordable. It cost \$1.00 for a round of golf. (In the spirit of this, Jim Gomborone will be giving each registered Woody

Tournament golfer, a voucher for a \$1.00 game of golf.) A ticket for 10 games cost \$7.50, and if someone wanted to play all day, it only cost \$2.50. Don had a small club house near #1 tee, but if you wanted lockers and a shower, you'd have to go across the street to the Barn.

When there were huge crowds at the airport, there were games of aerial golf. Russ Holderman, Don Woodward's pilot, explained the rules: "The team is composed of a golfer and a pilot. The pilot drops the ball from the plane on or as near the green as he can, then his partner, the golfer, holes it. The game was played for the first time in Western New York here." (I don't think we can play aerial golf this year but we are inviting pilots to fly over to LeRoy and play in the Woody Tournament. Let us know if you're flying in and we'll make arrangements to have you picked up at the airport. If you fly in, you can register for the tournament for \$30!) There might even be a couple of WACO's flying into the airport. Don Woodward's fleet of airplanes included several WACOs.

By 1935, Don had turned the golf course over to his youngest sister, Helen, who was a "devotee of the ancient and honorable game of golf." Helen undertook a number of improvements. She built a "tidy little club house, completely equipped." She also added nine more holes. The work was begun in 1935. Earl Seely was in charge of the 25-man work crew and it was mentioned that the work force had to be doubled in order to complete the work in time to reopen in 1936. Five holes were added on the east side, adjacent to the Ribstone Silo Company (owned by Don). The other four holes were built on the west side, west of the present #10 hole.

When Jim Gomborone



mentioned the Woody Tournament to me last fall, I called Don's daughter Dottie, and asked her if she had any of Don's golf clubs, and sure enough last fall, she brought in a couple of irons. They were in pretty rough shape, but we plan to have them on display at the Woody Tournament.

There are multiple golf events during the tournament. There is a \$50,000 shoot out. Vision Automotive Group is sponsoring 3 hole-in-one contests. Additional prizes, events and registration

information can be found on the website at www.leroycc.com.

Registration is \$50 per person. (Historical Society members \$40 and Country Club members \$25) If you can't join us for a round of golf, join us for the pig roast at \$20 per person.

So put together a four-some and join us for an afternoon of golf and welcome "Woody" to the LeRoy Country Club. www.leroycc.com, or call the LeRoy Historical Society 585-768-7433.



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