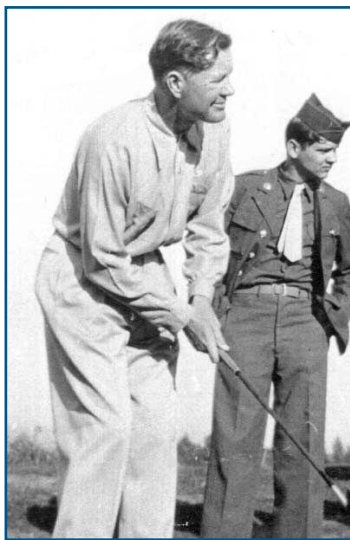


From 2005 to 1945

Byron Looks Back 60 Years Later



Byron Nelson playing in an exhibition in Port Angeles, Washington, 1945.

Quite honestly, I never thought I'd still be talking about 1945 sixty years later. Even though my family has a pretty good history and longevity, I'm still kind of surprised that I'm here with most of my faculties, most of the time.

My first thought, in looking back at what I did in 1945, is the consistency with which I was able to play. In fact, for many years afterward - even after I left the tour - my game, my swing, and the scores I shot never varied much.

Of course, 1945 was a big part of my record of 113 consecutive times finishing in the top 20. It used to be called "finishing in the money," but that was when nearly all tournaments I played in paid only 20 places, and in fact, 10th place paid just enough - \$180 to make your expenses and get to the next tournament. In fact, that 113 record included 106 times in the top 10. So I guess you'd have to admit I was a pretty steady player.

Recently I was watching TV, and they were showing pictures of pros who came along just a few years after I played. It got me to thinking that it's too bad there wasn't more filming done of players in my time. There's very little record of my swing, or any film of me playing at all. Just the first Shell's Wonderful World of Golf in 1962 when I played Gene Littler, some instructional stuff called "Let's Go Golfing," and some of the match where Ken Venturi and I played Palmer and Player. So most people, if they want to see pictures of my swing, would have to have my first book, *Winning Golf*, that was published in 1946.

What's so different is the growth of the game today. It's been greater than I ever thought it would be. A lot of that is due to different kinds of technology, from agronomy to shafts and clubs to the ball itself. And there's been quite a bit of talk about limiting ball flight, making course conditions tougher, and things like that, but I just don't see how any of those things are going to stop today's players from getting just as good as they want to be.

Modern players today, if they had to play on the courses we did and the conditions we had, they'd just flat out refuse to do it. But we didn't have any choice, so we played and we enjoyed it.

Isn't it all amazing, though? All that I did in 1945 was great, and the records I established in my whole career are wonderful, but I never imagined I'd still be remembered 60 years later, or have this great tournament named for me, or be part of an organization like the Salesmanship Club, that has helped tens of thousands of children and their families over the years.

I'm still proud of my records and delighted that I've been able to give back to the game that has meant so much to me. How many old pros do you know who are as fortunate as I am? I've got two great homes, two cars, plenty of clothes to wear and food to eat, and I don't owe anybody a single dime. I've got more friends, I do believe, than anyone in the world, and I've been blessed with two wonderful wives - Louise, to whom I was married for 50 years and four months before she died, and now Peggy, and we've been married 18½ years already.

Yes, I've been fortunate. I don't know anyone more blessed than me, to have the wonderful reputation I have as a good golfer and even more important, a good Christian man, though I have great responsibility to never let anyone down. But I love it, and all I can do is be grateful and try as hard as I can to deserve it.

— By Byron Nelson