

December 2022 – Did You Know? Stories from Former BCC Caddies

“Make friends with your caddie and the game will make friends with you.”

STEPHEN POTTER

There was a time when the caddie ranks at clubs were much bigger than today. Golf carts were not introduced until the 1950's so the golfer's choice was either a caddie or lugging their own clubs. In fact, when Blythefield first purchased a few golf carts in the mid-1950's, the caddies saw this as a threat to their summer jobs. I learned this from Irv Kloska who was a caddie back then.

What was it like to be a caddie here at Blythefield years ago? Over the past few years, I have been contacting some of our former caddies to gather their recollections of looping at Blythefield. Here are some memories from a couple of our long-ago loopers.

Irv Kloska

Irv Kloska started looping in the early 1950's. He gave me lots of good stuff from his caddie days. Irv recalls a new structure being built to the north of the pro shop. When the boys in the caddie shed learned that it was to be for cart storage, they staged a short (and ineffective) strike. Irv's memories from his eight years here:

- Irv lived in Grand Rapids near Houseman Field. He got to Blythefield by hitchhiking, sometimes going by an apple orchard where he and his brother Frank helped themselves to apples from the orchard. (More on that below.)
- Caddie rate in the early 1950's was \$1.75 for singles and twice that for doubles, hopefully plus a tip. (He learned to avoid members who would “flat rate” their caddie.) In his later years he had a goal of earning \$40 a week and would not leave until he met it. He also earned money by doing odd jobs at Blythefield, such as working in the rack room cleaning clubs. He once painted the tennis courts. He used some of his caddie money to help with family expenses.


- Irv and the other caddies would bide their time waiting for a bag by playing blackjack, “pitching pennies” (a game that involved tossing coins toward a wall), and by catching gophers.
- Catching gophers was both for fun and profit. The club wanted to get rid of gophers on the course, paying caddies a bounty of 25 cents. Caddies would put the mouth of a milk bottle at a gopher hole and then pour water down a nearby hole. The gopher would scurry out of the hole into the milk bottle. Before turning the critters in for the bounty, the boys would tie strings around their necks for gopher races.
- One of the Blythefield assistant pros in those days was Tom Rosely. Tom (or Thom, as he later spelled his name) saw Irv with some apples and suggested that Irv get some for Tom, using Tom’s car to get to the orchard. With brother Frankie riding shotgun, Irv drove Rosely’s car even though he didn’t yet have a license, and sure enough got stopped by the county sheriff on the way back. When they got stopped, Frankie jumped out and yelled, “Thanks for the ride,” pretending to be a hitchhiker. The officers let Irv off with a warning, probably because Rosely let the deputies play golf at Blythefield.
- Irv played in the caddie golf tournament held each year, and still has the watch that was his prize for winning it.
- Irv once swam in the pool at Blythefield (the original pool east of the clubhouse). It was a hot summer late afternoon. The pool was empty. He and other caddies stripped off their clothes and skinny-dipped to cool off. Some members exiting the clubhouse walked by. The boys swam to the edge of the pool to hide the fact that they were naked. One of the other caddies sang to the members as they passed by, sort of a serenade to make it look like they belonged.
- Irv eventually went to Aquinas College where he played on the college golf team. One of our members had encouraged Irv to apply for the Evans Scholarship. Irv decided not go that route, not wanting a large university away from home.
- Irv married Bonnie during college, and they had two children by the time Irv graduated Aquinas in 1964 with an accounting major. They moved to Indiana where they still live. Irv’s early career was in the accounting and banking industries, but later owned and operated his own business. He is mostly retired now but still goes to the office a few mornings a week.
- He and Bonnie continued adding to their family. They proudly have a large family, raising not only their own 12 biological children but over time becoming home for 11 foster children, one of whom they adopted.

- Caddying at Blythefield was an important part of Irv's youth. He recalls fondly being able to work hard, helping his family with expenses and learning about life. "The work ethic I learned at Blythefield helped me my entire life."

Here is an article from the Grand Rapids Herald, from the week of the 1957 BCC Invitational. The article prominently features Irv.

THE GRAND RAPIDS HERALD, SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 1957


As Life of a Blythefield Caddy Unfolds




WORK AND FUN

Irvin Kloska, 15, who has been a caddy at Blythefield Country Club for five years, was caught by a Herald camera Saturday afternoon during the Blythefield Invitational Best-Ball and tournament. Young Kloska of 843 Lyon NE depicts a typical Grand Rapids caddy, who helps "pay his way" during the Summer months by "toiling" under the hot sun. It isn't all work, however, as Irvin shows. There's a lot of fun mixed with the business of toting one or two bags hour after hour. By watching he learns the game. There are the gab sessions with fellow-caddies and the


Our Alvin Mater High on Tension



CADDY IRVIN KLOSKA
Tote of the Trade



TIME OUT AT THE HOTDOG STAND
But Eyes Are Peered on 18th Green



AND THERE'S BUSINESS OF TWO BAGS
Lifts Macking, Lingo Learning

Blythefield Best-Ball Finals Today

Roy Taylor, Money Face Rathbun, Slack in Feature Seven

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strong team is now out to the first round. Rathbun, Jack Slankoff and Bill Walsh, who were paired together by Rathbun and Slack, were the first to tee off. The team of Harry Allen and Ed Walsh, which was paired together last year and shared No. 10 this year, was back down with Walsh on No. 10 in the morning match. The change in tee time, however, was the slow-making Walsh and Rathbun, who were paired together in the first round. Rathbun and Slack were the first to tee off. The match opens at the 18th hole and will be played on the 18th hole. The match will be played on the 18th hole. The match will be played on the 18th hole.

RETAIN 1ST PLACE TIE

Yankees Nip A's in 10th

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Yankees scored three runs in the 10th inning to win the game. The Yankees scored three runs in the 10th inning to win the game. The Yankees scored three runs in the 10th inning to win the game. The Yankees scored three runs in the 10th inning to win the game.

These photos are the best that can be made from the microfilm at the GR Public Library. So, I've reproduced the captions from them, clockwise from top left:

- **WORK AND FUN:** Irvin Kloska, 15, who has been a caddy at Blythefield Country Club for five years, was caught by a Herald cameraman Saturday afternoon during the Blythefield Invitational Best-Ball golf tournament. Young Kloska of 843 Lyon NE depicts a typical Grand Rapids caddy, who helps "pay his way" during the Summer months by "toiling: under the hot sun. It isn't all work, however, as Irvin shows. There's lots of fun mixed with the business of toting one or two bags hour after hour. By watching he learns the game. There are the gab sessions with fellow-caddies and the

golfers around the clubhouse, relaxing under the cool trees. A caddy must be on his toes too. The proper club must be presented at the proper time. Many of the caddys “work” for their favorite golfers and get to know without any prompting what club the player uses in a particular situation. Outside of tournaments, the caddy’s advice is often heeded. Kloska (above) is set to pull the pin for John MacNaughten Jr. At right, he practices a swing during a leisure moment.

- CADDY IRVIN KLOSKA Tools of the Trade [holding a golf ball]
- TIME OUT AT THE HOT DOG STAND But Eyes Are Peeled on 18th Green
- AND THERE’S BUSINESS OF TWO BAGS Little Walking Little Learning

Rich Warmolts

Another caddie from the late 1950’s was Rich Warmolts. Caddying at Blythefield was a turning point in his life. Rich described this in a message about his caddie days here. This is what he wrote, somewhat edited:

“Hi Brent,

“I enjoyed talking with you about my memories regarding my award of the Evans Scholarship. I put together a few details of our discussions. You asked me if the Evans Scholarship played a part in determining my future career and did it change my life. A resounding **YES!**

“My days as a caddie began at the age of 12. My uncle introduced me to the game of golf and taught me the basics. Soon afterwards, I started hitchhiking, over ten miles, to the Club. Not the safest mode of travel. But it worked! During the four years preceding the Western Open [1961], I had many memorable days. Competing for a loop, and the chance to make \$3 single and \$6 doubles, required good behavior and earned trust from the caddie master, or you went home with nothing! I caddied for a few bucks – giving me the opportunity to buy some good-looking clothes, not the ones my mom purchased for me, and some spending money for McDonald’s. I enjoyed meeting and working for golfers who treated me with respect and provided a good example. They were successful businessmen and just good people to be around.

“After a few years caddying, I learned about the Evans Scholarship opportunity. This was also when I decided to take my education more seriously, getting A’s and B’s at school. All this inspired me to continue my academic goals, graduating toward the top of my class. I graduated from Michigan State University, class of 1966, with a degree in hospitality management.

“After working in the restaurant and healthcare industries for several years, my wife joined me in starting Food Management Associates, Inc., which focuses on serving disadvantage youth and healthcare facilities with our client base nationwide.

“The clients we serve included Vision Quest, focused on disadvantage youth exiting from correctional programs in four states, Covenant House dedicated to the rehabilitation of homeless youth 18 to 24 years of age in New York, New Jersey, Florida, Pennsylvania and California, and Polinsky Children’s Center located in Sand Diego California serving children at risk from babies to 17-year-old. We also serve retirement communities and hospital clients.

“We are truly blessed to have the good fortune, education, and work ethic to ‘give back’ to our clients and residents with quality, healthy food and caring attitudes of our staff. We donate to the Evans Scholar program monthly and plan to include it in our family trust. The game of golf has ‘paid it forward’ and inspired many youth including myself to enjoy successful careers and to value helping others in not only our community but throughout the world.

“Thanks, Brent, for reaching out and allowing me to share the memories that truly changed my life in many ways!”

-Rich Warmolts

Rich told me that going to Chicago to interview for the Evans was an important trip for him, and how gratified he was when he was awarded the Evans. Here is a page from the 1964 BCC yearbook, with a photo of Rich and three other BCC caddies then in school on Evans Scholarships.

The Caddie Program at Blythefield

It is our aim in 1964 to have the best caddie system possible. A Caddie Master will be employed for the busy summer months. Before he takes over, the Caddie Committee and the Professional Staff will conduct classes to make sure the boys understand their duties and responsibilities. We will do everything we can to train our boys and to inject in them the Blythefield spirit.

We of course need your help. The way you treat your caddie will make an impression on him that will perhaps influence his entire life. Most boys have a natural desire to please you. They are hero worshipers and it's easy to be a hero in their eyes. A kind word or little pat on the back when he does a good job, will make him enjoy working for you and the dividends are worth while. A well-trained, enthusiastic caddie will make your day on the course a much more enjoyable one.

There is much talk today about the problem of juvenile delinquency. We have a great opportunity to help solve this problem by being good sports and setting good examples.

The committee can and will do a better job too, if you will take the time to grade your caddies in the space provided on the caddie tickets.

A caddie's duties are: to carry the bag, to watch the ball and do his best to find it, to know where to stand, to replace divots, to rake the sand traps, to hold the flag stick, to be clean, to be polite and courteous, and to do everything he can to make your game a pleasant one.

Outstanding caddies have an opportunity to go to college on the Evans Caddie Scholarship Plan. We are very proud of the three Blythefield caddies who are attending college presently on full four-year scholarships; also our "1963 Caddie of the Year" James Piereson has just been awarded a scholarship and will enter M.S.U. next September.

Our caddies are permitted to play golf on Monday mornings. At the end of the season, we have a caddie party in the Clubhouse with dinner, entertainment and prizes for the boys who have the best records for attendance and ability. We also have prizes for the winners of our caddie championship.

Your Caddie Committee asks for your help and suggestions. Our one desire is to make this year, 1964, the best ever.

EVANS CADDIE SCHOLARS FROM BLYTHEFIELD



Richard Warmolts
M.S.U. '65



Bruce Corey
M.S.U. '66



Daniel Boguslaski
M.S.U. '67



James Piereson
M.S.U. '68

GRADUATED

Robert Block, M.S.U. '58
Richard Block, M.S.U. '60
Michael Malinowski, U. of M. '62

I recently spoke to Rich, asking if he had any humorous stories about his caddie days. He shared this: "A funny event was when member [name deleted] would drive up to the club, as all the caddies would run and hide. He was a bad tipper [he paid flat rate] \$2.25 and a stick of gum was his payment to his caddy for 18 holes."

The stories of Irv Kloska and Rich Warmolts give you a glimpse at what a club like Blythefield can do to make a positive impact on kids. Both Irv and Rich confirm this. Not all caddies will get an Evans scholarship, but it is a great way for us to help deserving caddies. What follows is an unabashed pitch to you by your DYK author.

The Evans Scholarship Foundation

Blythefield has a strong tradition of supporting worthy caddies through Evans scholarships. Over the years, 23 Blythefield caddies have earned their college degrees by being Evans Scholars. Space does not allow telling all their stories of their caddie days, how the Evans has impacted their lives, etc. Right now in 2022, two of our caddies are currently in college as Evans Scholars, both

at MSU.

The number of young adults who have benefited from the Evans scholarship over the years is staggering. The Evans Scholarship Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization started in 1930. Since then it has funded full rides (tuition and room and board) for almost 12,000 students. Caddies are selected for the Evans scholarship based on their character and financial need as much as their academic success in high school. Currently there are approximately 1,100 Evans scholars in college. The graduation rate for Evans recipients is 95.6%. Almost 90% of your contributions are used for scholarships (the rest is for administration of the program). Charity Navigator service gives the Evans a 100% rating for “accountability and transparency.” If you are on the fence on whether to contribute, please give it your heartfelt consideration.

Finally, next year you will have an opportunity to learn more about another of our former caddies who was an Evans scholar. Matt Stark, one of the five Stark kids who caddied at Blythefield back in the 1980’s and 1990’s (their story was in the December 2021 DYK) has just joined Blythefield. You may recall that Matt went to UM on an Evans scholarship and is now a lawyer here in Grand Rapids. Please introduce yourself to him when the club reopens next year.

Brent Rector

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p.s. I was going to add my own story of caddying at Blythefield in this DYK. Since this DYK is long enough already, I’ll save that story for next month.