

Historical Happenings

Fleck, who bested Hogan in U.S. Open, dies

Professional golfer and Bettendorf, Iowa, native Jack Fleck, who was best known for shocking the golf world by winning the U.S. Open in 1955 in a playoff over Ben Hogan, died March 21, 2014, in Fort Smith, Ark., at age 92.

Fleck was 33 years old when he drove from Iowa to the Olympic Club in San Francisco in June 1955 to compete in the U.S. Open. He barely qualified for the prestigious tournament, having survived a sectional competition in Chicago with only two professional victories in minor tournaments under his belt.

He was in the midst of a two-year trial run to see if he could make the PGA Tour and if not, he would return to Davenport where he would work at two municipal courses.

What transpired in June 1955, however, was one of the greatest upsets in sports history as Fleck bested Hogan by three strokes (69 to 72) in an 18-hole playoff (after tying Hogan's four-round total of 287), denying the era's best golfer a record fifth U.S. Open championship.

In a twist of irony, Fleck mostly used a set of golf clubs manufactured by Hogan that he had purchased earlier that year to win the Open. The night before the tournament began, Hogan presented Fleck with two newly made clubs to complete his set. By the end of the week, Fleck and Hogan were forever linked in golf history.

"They actually wrote afterwards that Jack Fleck out-Hoganned Hogan," Fleck once told *Golfweek.com*. "I'll never forget it."

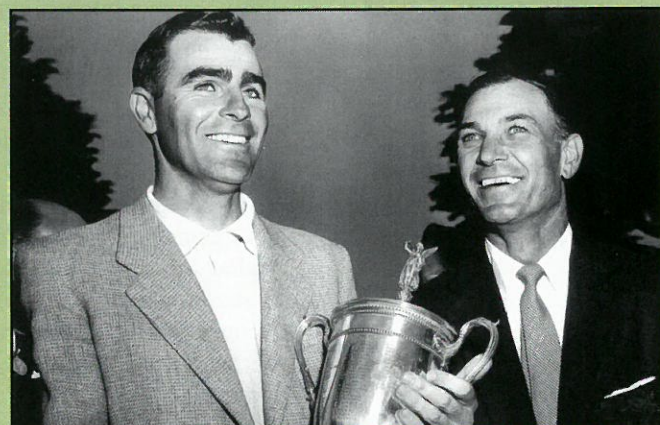
The *New York Times* reported that Fleck "was one of the first American athletes in any sport to make yoga part of his workouts, saying it gave him greater self-composure. He did not drink, smoke or eat red meat."

Fleck was also openly religious. He said that he did not pray for victory, only the strength to compete, and he told author James Dodson for the 2004 biography, "Ben Hogan: An American Life," that he had an unusual experience in his hotel room the morning of the two final rounds.

"I was shaving, and suddenly a voice came out of the glass, clear as a bell. It said, 'Jack, you are going to win the Open.' At first I thought I'd imagined it or maybe somebody was in the room with me. I looked around, and then went back to shaving. By golly, if it didn't come a second time ... straight out of the mirror. Clear as day. 'Jack, you are going to win the Open!' I had goosebumps on me, as if electricity was going through my body."

Fleck was born Nov. 8, 1921, in Bettendorf, and grew up in poverty, the son of farmers who lost their land in the 1920s.

"My mother and father had the toughest life in the



Jack Fleck holds his championship trophy after beating Ben Hogan, right, by three strokes in an 18-hole playoff in the 1955 U.S. Open golf tournament at the Olympic Club in San Francisco. Photo courtesy of AP

world," Fleck said in a 2012 newspaper interview. "There was just no money. We grew all the food that we ate, and my mother canned everything so we could eat in the winter."

Fleck worked as a caddie while attending Davenport High School during the 1930s, competing in tournaments with borrowed clubs before turning pro in 1939 and working at the Des Moines Country Club for \$5 a week. He joined the military in 1942 and served in the U.S. Navy and participated in the D-Day invasion from a British ship off Normandy's Utah Beach. Within two weeks of his discharge from military service, Fleck was on the PGA's winter golf tour trying to qualify for PGA Tour events.

Fleck won two other PGA Tour events in 1960 and 1961 and competed on the senior tour while teaching at rural golf courses in Arkansas before being inducted into the Iowa Golf Hall of Fame in 1990. He sold his Open championship gold medal for \$35,000 after a course he owned in Arkansas was flooded in the early 1990s, but he kept his Hogan clubs.

Still, nothing could erase the memory of Fleck's greatest professional achievement, winning the 1955 Open, which netted him \$6,000, a meeting with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and a parade through Bettendorf and Davenport.

In a memoir published late in his life, Fleck recalled the final hole of the 1955 Open and tree-lined fairway of the Olympic Club.

"The clouds let a few streaks of sunlight shone through," he wrote. "And I said to myself, 'If this isn't heaven, I don't know what is.'"

He is survived by his third wife, Carmen; a son, Craig, named for Open winner Craig Wood; a sister; a granddaughter; and a great-granddaughter.

Borlaug statue installed at U.S. Capitol

A 7-foot bronze statue of Cresco, Iowa, native and Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Norman Borlaug was installed on March 25 in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The installation ceremony was held on National Agriculture Day and what would have been Borlaug's 100th birthday.

World Food Prize President Ken Quinn lobbied for years to get a statue of Borlaug at the U.S. Capitol.

"He is one of the great heroes of our time. He should be remembered by every Iowan and known by every American, like the great presidents, the statesmen and generals," said Quinn.

Borlaug, who graced the cover of the March/April 2014 issue of *Iowa History Journal*, was a plant scientist who developed new varieties of wheat and worked with farmers and politicians to improve farming methods and agricultural policies around the world. He has been called "The Father of the Green Revolution" and is credited with saving one billion people from starvation. In addition to winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Borlaug received the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal before he died in 2009.

Borlaug's statue will replace the statue of former U.S. Sen. James Harlan, who served as a senator from Iowa from 1855 to 1865 and 1867 to 1873. Each state is afforded two statues in the National Statuary Hall. Borlaug's monument and a statue of Samuel Kirkwood, who served as governor of Iowa during the Civil War, will represent Iowa. Harlan's statue will return to Iowa for the first time since it was given to the National Statuary Hall Collection in 1910 and will be placed at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant.



This new statue of Dr. Norman Borlaug was installed on March 25 in the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy of World Food Prize

Danish museum gets green roof

A grant of \$50,000 has been awarded by Iowa West Foundation to the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa, for the installation of a \$200,000 green roof on the Curatorial Center addition, currently under construction. The green roof will maximize energy efficiency and the thermal barrier between the outdoor environments and newly expanded 8,000-foot artifact storage area, officials said, as well as serve as a continuation of the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park space. The addition is being built into the western hillside of the museum and connects in the basement level, bringing the

top of the structure at nearly ground level. Construction of the project is expected to be completed this summer.

Historic railroad depot undergoes renovation

Volunteers are renovating the Gilbertville Depot's freight room in Gilbertville, Iowa, with the help of a \$15,500 grant from the Black Hawk County Gaming Association and other private funds, the *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier* reported. A group of volunteers have been working on the property since saving it from demolition a few years ago after the 2008 flood damaged it.

Friends of the Gilbertville Depot have been reconditioning the freight room to prepare for an open house in May. The group wants to use the room to host live music and other events. The 102-year-old depot is alongside the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, which was developed in the 1980s along the old Waterloo Cedar Falls and Northern Railroad.

Dubuque group plans St. Mary's revival

Plans are underway for the rebirth of the area known as the St. Mary's Church Campus in Dubuque, Iowa, as buildings more than a century old would be restored, renovated and repurposed into a mix of residential, commercial and recreational spaces, according to the *Dubuque Telegraph Herald*.

For more than a year, a number of local leaders known as The Friends of St. Mary's have been studying how to preserve the history and architecture of the structures and create a social hub for the neighborhood. The three buildings are owned by St. Mary's Church Corp., which no longer offers religious services since the church closed four years ago, but oversees the properties.

Plans include renovations to the original St. Mary's School on Jackson Street (three floors) so it will house 12 apartments and communal space for recreation. The former church rectory (three floors) will be redesigned into office space for nonprofit groups and for-profit businesses. The former St. Mary's Church will have its 100,000-square-foot basement (half of which has the original dirt floor) converted into spaces for day care, Head Start, culinary classes, a community kitchen, offices, performing arts and a coffee shop. ■



The historic buildings on the St. Mary's Church Campus in Dubuque are being renovated to house a mix of uses. Photo courtesy of The Dubuque Telegraph Herald