

Mr. Van Hengle

Wij zijn hier opvissten van  
America, en een vriend van  
ons die in de International Golf  
Club Association zit, vroeg ons om  
uw op te zoeken. Wij hebben dat  
gedaan met geen geluk. Hij wilt  
graag dat uw hem golfclubs op  
kan sturen dat uw kan spaaren  
c.o.d. (geld op delivery) naar Gene HITT

1210 Highland Ave. Santa Ana  
California - U.S.A.

CHAMONIX

7710 - Vue générale et téléérique du Brévent  
gauche à droite : Aiguille du Midi, Massif du  
Blanc (4807 m.) Dôme et Aiguille du Goûter.  
Au centre Glacier des Bossons.

Hij staat in het boek van de Int. Golf Club ass.  
Dank uw well. MARGA LOUG-

Les Photographies de G. Rossat-Mignod  
Edition 58 Avenue de la Plaine 74 ANNECY - Hte Savoie  
Toute reproduction interdite



(Hengel)  
Steven Van Hengle  
Faxerodeweg 30  
Aerdenhout  
Holland

GENE HITT

1210 Highland Street, Santa Ana, California 92703

Dear Steven;

Thurs. May, 17 '73

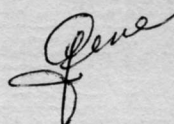
A friend of a friend of mine "a Micheal Berbae" was going to call you for me a few days ago to say hello and inquire if you had any Wood Shaft Clubs from your area that you would want to part with. This was a very hurried conversation between myself and Micheals friend so just wanted to make it clear. If you would drop me a line letting me know about what clubs you have ~~to~~ trade or sell or could purchase for me I would be very happy to pay for the cost of the clubs and shipping expense.

Now to get down to who Gene Hitt is. Have<sup>n</sup> been collecting Clubs for some eight years and have well over 3000 of them, all Wood Shafts. Also interested in Cap Emblems & Bag Tags. Am now 67 years old and have been retired for five years. Was a Landscape Contractor for 15 years, before that a Bank Clerk for 8 years and in building materials for 6 years. This collecting business has to be one of my best obsessions. As of now my golf game has really gone to pot. From once a 9 handicap to a 17, so golf has become 2nd to my collecting interest.

My compliments to you on your Book, "Early Golf". Would like to have a copy very much. Will either send you a Certified Check to cover cost of the book and expense of shipping or you can mail it with a bill and I'll pay for it by return mail. Please Autograph it for me.

Please drop me a line or two as to whether you know of anything I might be interested in. By all means if you are ever in this area please stop by.

Sincerely



beauties

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mes. & eng. golf verbal  
getunder



# Collector Keeps Up With Clubs

BY AL CARR  
Times Staff Writer

SANTA ANA—The philatelist has the pleasure of acquisition and admiring his stamp collection.

Some collectors of ancient guns will occasionally take their muzzle loaders or cap and ball revolvers out to the shooting range.

But Gene Hitt, 69, is a collector of vintage golf clubs who three times a week uses a couple of his hickory shafted "cleeks."

"Cleek," he explains in his tiny, crowded museum, "means hook in Scotch. It is what in modern golf is called an iron. In the old days, it was used to hit a golf ball out of wagon ruts."

In his collection, he even has a short faced iron which is called a "rut club." Its vintage is 1825 and is the oldest club in Hitt's collection.

But the two clubs he carries in his bag for his rounds at Willowick Golf Course are a "pitcher" and a "mashie."

The pitcher compares in use to the modern pitching wedge. However, it has the shallower loft of an 8-iron. Instead of small grooves in the face, it has widely etched ribs.

The mashie is marked as a 5-iron, but Hitt uses it more like a 7-iron.

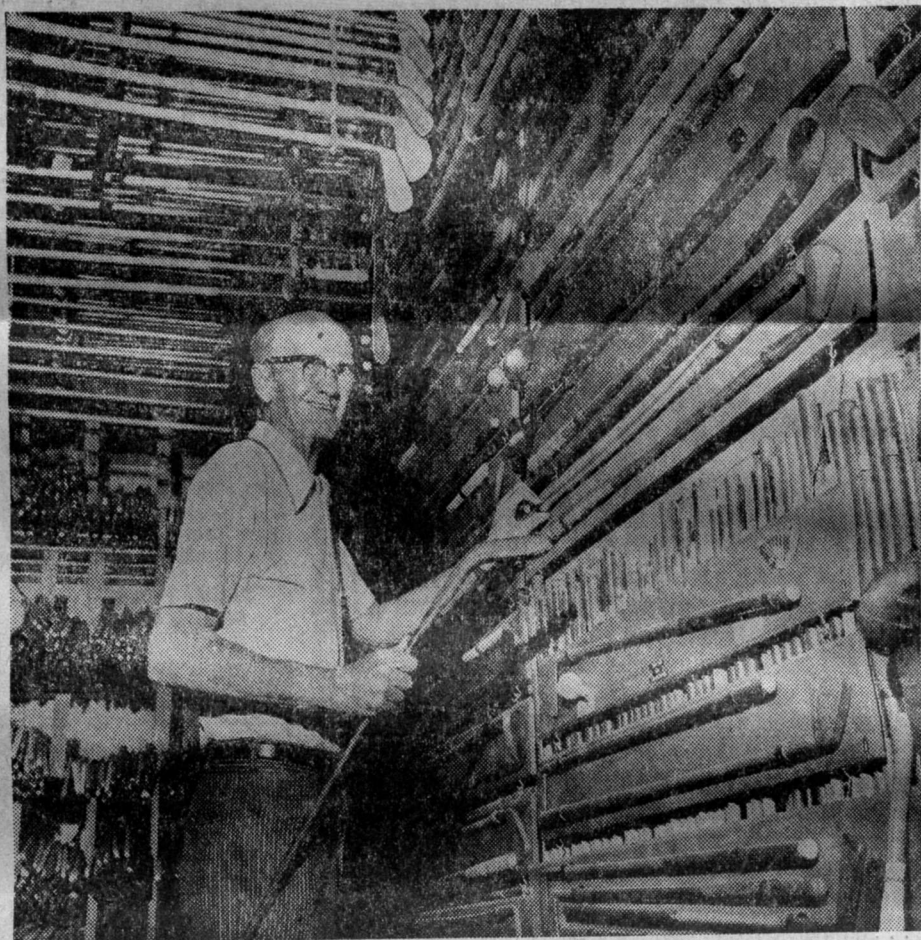
## Gets Backspin

"I use them because they give the ball backspin," said Hitt. "For instance, they'll stick on Willowick's flat No. 1 green. Usually, a shot will hit and run there."

"With the pitcher, I can take a full swing from about 50 yards out."

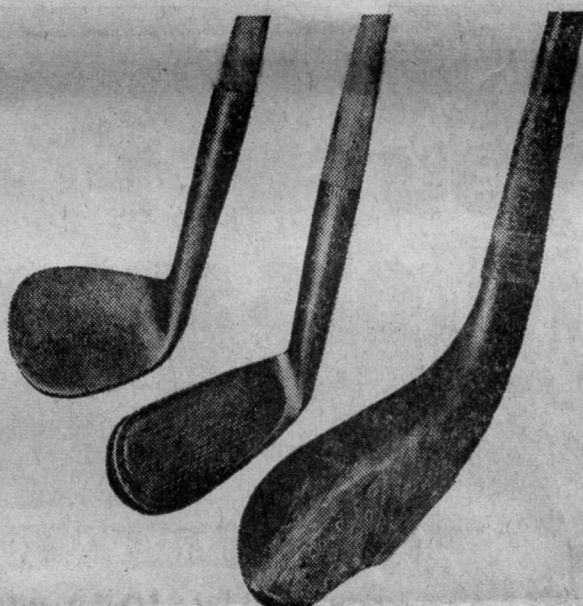
Once a year, Hitt gets to use more than just those two clubs. He belongs to the Golf Collector's Society which has an annual international mail-in tournament in which all players use wooden-shafted clubs made before 1930.

On May 19, Hitt selected 14 clubs from his collection of 3,456 and shot a 97 at Willowick. He said that wasn't bad for him the



**GOLF 'MUSEUM'** — Gene Hitt of Santa Ana has a collection of nearly 3,500 vintage golf clubs. Below are three clubs: rut iron (for playing out of wagon tracks), left, wood-faced iron (to preserve ball), center, center and 'playing' driver.

Times photos by Cliff Otto



playing golf three time a week.

"I've spent all the money I'm going to spend on old golf clubs. I won't buy, and I won't sell."

Hitt likes to research his golf clubs.

"The problem is, few books are available. Libraries clean out their old books. I write to manufacturing companies, but it costs them money in time spent researching to give me information. I have some old catalogues, some from manufacturers, some from friends. This way I can at least date the clubs. We collectors exchange information."

Now that he has that A Patrick driver ("I haven't seen one in the eight years I've been collecting"), Hitt

The "museum" is an 8 by

This club was given to

an 8-iron. Instead of small grooves in the face, it has widely etched ribs.

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On May 19, Hitt selected 14 clubs from his collection of 3,456 and shot a 97 at Willowick. He said that wasn't bad for him the way he is playing these days.

"I used to be a 9-handicapper, but now I'm lucky to break 90. In that particular round, my trouble was distance and the putter. I kept coming up short of the green with the club I selected and I couldn't putt with the putter I picked."

### Tires Easily

He continued, "I didn't try the clubs out at a driving range before the round because at my age I tire easily."

Hitt said a fellow collector playing with him that day shot a 79 with his own set of vintage clubs.

Who was he?

"No names," Hitt said.

"We don't want the price of clubs to skyrocket," he said. "If I mention a name, someone will try to sell him a club at a high price."

"We have little idea how much these vintage golf clubs are worth. I've bought armloads for 25 cents apiece. A fellow gave me a club once. I took it to Willowick to show around and was offered \$300 for it. I refused to sell. I didn't have another club like it. And, besides, it had been given to me."

The international Golf Collectors Society is having a convention in October at Morris Plains, N.J., and one of the hopes of the convention is to establish a price for vintage clubs.

"I have no idea what this collection is worth. It could be \$5,000 or \$100,000."

As he spoke, he waved his arm above his "museum."

tracks), left, wood-faced iron (to present



The "museum" is an 8 by 20 foot corridor, part of his garage. It used to be his office before he retired from the landscaping business.

The museum has displays upon displays. His exceptional clubs, are mounted on boards, two to a board. They go from floor to ceiling. At the entrance way, about 50 putters are stacked. The back of the room looks like a club storage area, except that it is vintage, hickory-shafted clubs by the hundreds which are stored there.

He has a 32-book catalogue of every club in the "museum."

### 'Playing' Club

He started his collection on Feb. 15, 1965, paying \$1 for a women's niblick (9-iron or sand iron) made by George Nicoll of Scotland. His most recent acquisition is a "playing" club (driver made by A Patrick (Scotland), vintage 1860.

That club has a long (about 5 inches), narrow head. It has a leather toe ("to protect the ball, balls were valuable then") and a half sole of bone."

The grip has a foundation of cloth, then a wrapping of sheepskin, "easy on the hands, but it doesn't last long."

The back of the head has a strip of lead in it, much like the lead tape golfers add to their clubs today. Even in 1860, they were looking for distance through club head weight.

playing golf three time a week.

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Now that he has that A Patrick driver ("I haven't seen one in the eight years I've been collecting"), Hitt said he wants most a "heavy iron," vintage around 1900.

After that? "There'll be something else, I'm sure."

Hitt is not too concerned about burglars breaking into his "museum."

He said, "For one thing, I have a secure lock. But mainly, it would take a bunch of men to carry all this stuff out. And they could never do it quietly."

How much really, is this collection worth?

"It might be \$5,000 or \$100,000. At least, there's a small fortune in scrap metal."



# THE SANTANA

Published by the  
EXCHANGE CLUB OF  
SANTA ANA, CALIF.

Chartered April 10, 1948

MEETINGS HELD EVERY  
THURSDAY NOON AT  
MR. R.T.'S RESTAURANT  
STEWART TITLE BLDG.  
BROADWAY AT 10TH  
SANTA ANA, CALIF.

JULY 26, 1973

THURSDAY NOON - FULL HOUSE AGAIN, WITH HERB KISHMER MESSING UP THE "KEEP THIS TICKET" HALF OF THE DRAWING. HE BLAMED AL PAGE, BUT I WAS THERE AND I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING EXTRAORDINARY. AL PAGE JUST GETS BLAMED FOR EVERYTHING. WE DID ENJOY LOOKING AT YOUR WATCH, AL - - - -

Charlie Clapp waited until John Hess had seated himself before ringing the gong - softie - and Bob Moore gave the blessing, after a vain try to pass the privilege back to Charlie. Our little guest Terry Tate, from the "Up With People" show, made a plea for housing accommodations for the cast, who'll be here en masse for their show at Valley High School on August 3rd and 4th - anybody with an extra room may call her at 835-1764. They'll be staying from the 2nd to the 6th. In Joe Greene's absence, it was unanimously decided to buy Terry's lunch and charge it to Joe. (That was all right, wasn't it? Ed.) Terry drew Keith Cramblet's number for a tenner, and Bob Moore, because he gave such a great invocation, (?) got \$5 consolation.

You all missed a fine picnic at the Flying "B" last night! We got there just in time to miss the softball game, thank goodness, but the kiddie games and horseshoe pits kept everyone busy until dinner time. Outstanding hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, salads, and all the beer and soft drinks you could drink. Newport Harbor Club deserves a big hand for their efforts, and better support from the rest of us next year, OK?

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Pete Prager took over the program chairman's seat and introduced his friend Gene Hitt, who's a Charter Member of the "Golf Collector's Society" ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. It's a world wide organization of golf nuts, who dig up old golf clubs, balls, even knickers, and meet once a year to exchange goodies and lies. Gene concentrates on old clubs, and has a collection of over <sup>3400</sup> ~~XXXX~~ oldies - search your attics, guys!

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAM WILL BE CHAIRED BY WADE HERRIN, AND THIS TIME DR. VILHELM DENIJS WILL BE THERE, TELLING US ABOUT THE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND THEIR VERY WORTHY PROGRAM - SEE YOU THERE, AL PAGE!



GENE HITT

1210 Highland Street, Santa Ana, California 92703

Dear Steven:

Sat. Aug.11,'73

Received your most welcome letter of July 3rd. Have delayed answering it thinking I would receive your Mimeograph Copy, also the Dutch version with pictures and translations. Have kept thinking it would come any day so I could comment on it. Have the picture of The Young Golfer on the wall by my desk in this musty museum where ~~where~~ every one can see it. Am very proud of it.

Steven if there is anything I can do for you towards your Golf History please let me know and I'll do my best to find it for you. There could also be other things you would like to know about, so please don't hesitate to ask. I'M retired and this G.C.S. with fellows like you have been very helpful to me as far as keeping active.

Have had 85 visitors to see my collection since November 7, 1972 listed in a guest book that I started at that time. Should have started it about 5 years ago. Guess one can't think of every thing to do when he should.

-----  
! THEY ARE HERE! YOUR MIMEOGRAPH VERSION AND THE  
~~DATA~~ VERSION WITH THE TRANSLATION  
DUTCH!  
-----

Just picked up the mail and the one and only thing I received was from you. I can not thank you enough, or explain the wonderful feeling it is to get such a prize. If only I can find a way to do as much for you sometime.

Seems as though I'll have to wait until monday to mail this to you so I can get to the Post Office and get the correct amount of postage as I have no way of weighing and judging the cost.

Steven thanks again and again.

Sincerely

*Gene*

P.S. I have to be some kind of a Typewriter operator.