



A Hole-In-One* at St. Andrews!!

Have you ever told a little white lie? Perhaps you complimented someone on a shirt that was not really *that* attractive, but you sensed the person needed a little pick-upper. Or maybe you embellished your credentials on a job application just a teensy bit. Or entered on your scorecard a lower score than you deserved. Or told a friend you were in a meeting when, in truth, you were out with other friends. No harm, no foul, right? Little white lies may clean up a situation to make it more palatable, or hide the truth from someone and prevent hurt feelings, but where do you draw the line? A lie is a lie, right? One thing for sure, it's a popular subject: I Googled "lying" and my search returned 69,300,000 hits. Then, I searched "little white lies" and got 43,500,000 hits. Which could be taken to mean, I guess, not all lies are little and white.



Recently, quite unexpectedly, an opportunity for me to personally ponder this topic fell right out of the sky and landed at my feet, er feet.

My husband Jack and I had traveled to Scotland in July (yes, it is the golf Mecca of the world!) and, like most golfers who love the game, we made the pilgrimage to storied old St. Andrews, one of the most prestigious golf sites in the world and widely regarded as "The Home of Golf." There are seven golf courses at St. Andrews: Jubilee Course, Eden Course, Balgove Course, Castle Course, Strathtyrum Course, Old Course and New Course. Of the seven, the Old Course is the oldest (600 years) and most popular (42,000 rounds played per year). It is also the course on which The Open Championship (a/k/a British Open) is played when St. Andrews is the host course in the rotation (next in 2010). You might be wondering how old the New Course is (it was designed by Old Tom Morris, incidentally). It opened in April...of 1895.

I am sad to say that Jack and I did not get to be counted among the 42,000 who will play St. Andrews' Old Course this year. We were there on a Sunday. Being a public park, the Old Course is open to the public on Sundays, but not for golf! Imagine seeing people walking their dogs, playing Frisbee, picnicking, kicking a soccer ball – on any

prestigious golf course you can think of in America. No way that's happening! But visit the Old Course at St. Andrews on Sunday and that's what you'll see. People are even on the greens! And, of course, a great many of these park people want their picture taken on famous Swilcan Bridge (a/k/a the Weak Bridge) in the middle of the 18th fairway. They pose and pose and pose, imagining themselves to be professional golfers, I guess. Oh, all right! – Jack and I posed on the bridge too!

But I have wandered off course and must get back to little white lies.

It was at St. Andrews, on a Sunday, playing the New Course, that I made a hole-in-one*. Sort of.

Here's the play by play. On the par-3 13th I teed off, never feeling comfortable over the ball, and hit a lovely shank into what the locals call simply "the rough," but which deserves much more description: it is long fescue grass littered with practically impenetrable, deep-green gorse bushes sporting nasty little "prickers." Not inclined to risk life and limb venturing into the rough, I turned to Jack, sighed, and said I'd like to hit another. I re-teed, checked the wind, double-checked my alignment and smoothed a 5-iron to the elevated green. I watched the ball fade against the grey clouds, glanced at the flag in the middle of the green, looked back at the ball arcing toward it from the left side. It landed on the front of the green, bounced once and...filtered right into the hole!

OMGoodness I would have loved to claim a hole-in-one at St. Andrews. But I couldn't. I just couldn't. I looked at Jack and said excitedly, "That went in, didn't it!" He gave me a high five and a huge grin, and I said even more excitedly, "Jack! I just got a great par!" *At St. Andrews!*

Ah, but we golfers, like those Hebrew National commercials, we answer to a higher authority.

Walking up the 14th fairway, Jack looked at me and said, "I'm trying to figure out a way to call it a hole-in-one, but I just can't quite get there." Walking with extra bounce in my step, I promised I'd buy him the requisite drink, a duty that all makers of a hole-in-one accept happily.

A few weeks later I was sharing my hole-in-one* story over dinner and, the minute I said, "sort of," one of my friends chimed in gleefully, 'I know! I know! I know exactly what happened! You hit your first ball into the water,' she said, 'replayed your shot from the tee and the ball went in. That's a great par!' She went on to explain to the others at the table that the Rules of golf do not allow mulligans. -- do overs -- *especially* at St. Andrews, where they have been playing golf with the utmost integrity since about 1400.

According to John D. MacDonald, "Integrity is not a conditional word. It doesn't blow in the wind or change with the weather. It is your inner image of yourself, and if you look in there and see a man who won't cheat, then you know he never will."

Yes, golf has rules, as do all sports. But we golfers are our own referees -- just as we are our own referees in the non-golf areas of our lives. As author Denis Waitley says, "the proof of integrity is what you do when no one is looking." While the Rules and etiquette of golf bring integrity and honorability into the limelight, we choose how to play it. *Hmmmm*. Don't you wonder what must have been happening the first time one golfer said to another, *Play it as it lies*. (LIES!)

As the late, great Paul Harvey once joked, "Golf is a game in which you yell 'fore!' shoot six, and write down five." See the humor in it, but remember it isn't par for the course.

Par is 1*.

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