

Flog golf

Eric Chiles

I once had a friend who shot
three holes in one. He practiced
his chip shots in his rec room
and his back swing left divots
in the ceiling tiles. He died
of cancer on his recliner under
an afghan looking at those dings.

My high school wrestling partner,
who dogged it at practice but
became a warrior during matches,
partied so much in college he became
the team's heavyweight. He liked
drinking three fingers of bourbon
on the rocks and retired to North Carolina
so he and his wife could golf all the time.
On his last green, he looked at her,
said *I'm going* and dropped dead.

My father never hit a hole in one,
but he liked going on golf trips
with business associates sipping
grasshoppers at the 19th hole.
This introduced us to creme de menthe.
I still have his dusty golf bag
in the garage with his three clubs
- a 3-wood, a putter, and an iron
whose face can be adjusted
from a 2-iron to a chipping wedge.
Because his bag was light, he never
used a golf cart, preferring to walk.
All those 18-hole hikes helped him
live into his nineties. A putting green
is prettier than a hospital bed.

I took the 3-wood to driving range
the other day to see if this was a sport
for me, enchanted by its romance,
envisioning smacking that little
white ball three hundred yards,
pinging it off that square yellow cart
wrapped in chicken wire that
harvested everyone's balls like so
many Easter eggs. I teed up a ball
from the bucket on the Astro Turf,
arched the club over my head,
and swung, shooting it like a flare
past the other duffers to my right.
They grabbed their clubs and headed
for their cars. I guess this means
I'll never make the tour, but I'm unsure
what it says about my longevity.

Eric Chiles is more accustomed to walking the woods than a golf course. He is a former journalist turned adjunct professor whose poetry has appeared in journals such as *Disturb the Universe Magazine*, *Pembroke*, *Rattle*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Sport Literate*. He has a hell of a slice.