

PINEHURST: SECRETS OF GOLF'S GRANDEST PLACE p. 48

HOW DID A LOCAL COMPANY SELL 2 MILLION BACON BOWLS? p. 22

A TRIBUTE TO MUSIC LEGEND ARTHUR SMITH p. 58

Charlotte[®]

Our Great
Big Food
Obsession

17 Burgers
We Can't
Live Without p. 62

PLUS

Nachos, Pulled Pork,
and Corn Dogs:
What to Eat at the
Knights Game p. 86

What's Wrong
with the NC
Democratic
Party? p. 72

The city's most
local burger p. 66

Burgers!

Our
Beefiest
Issue Yet!



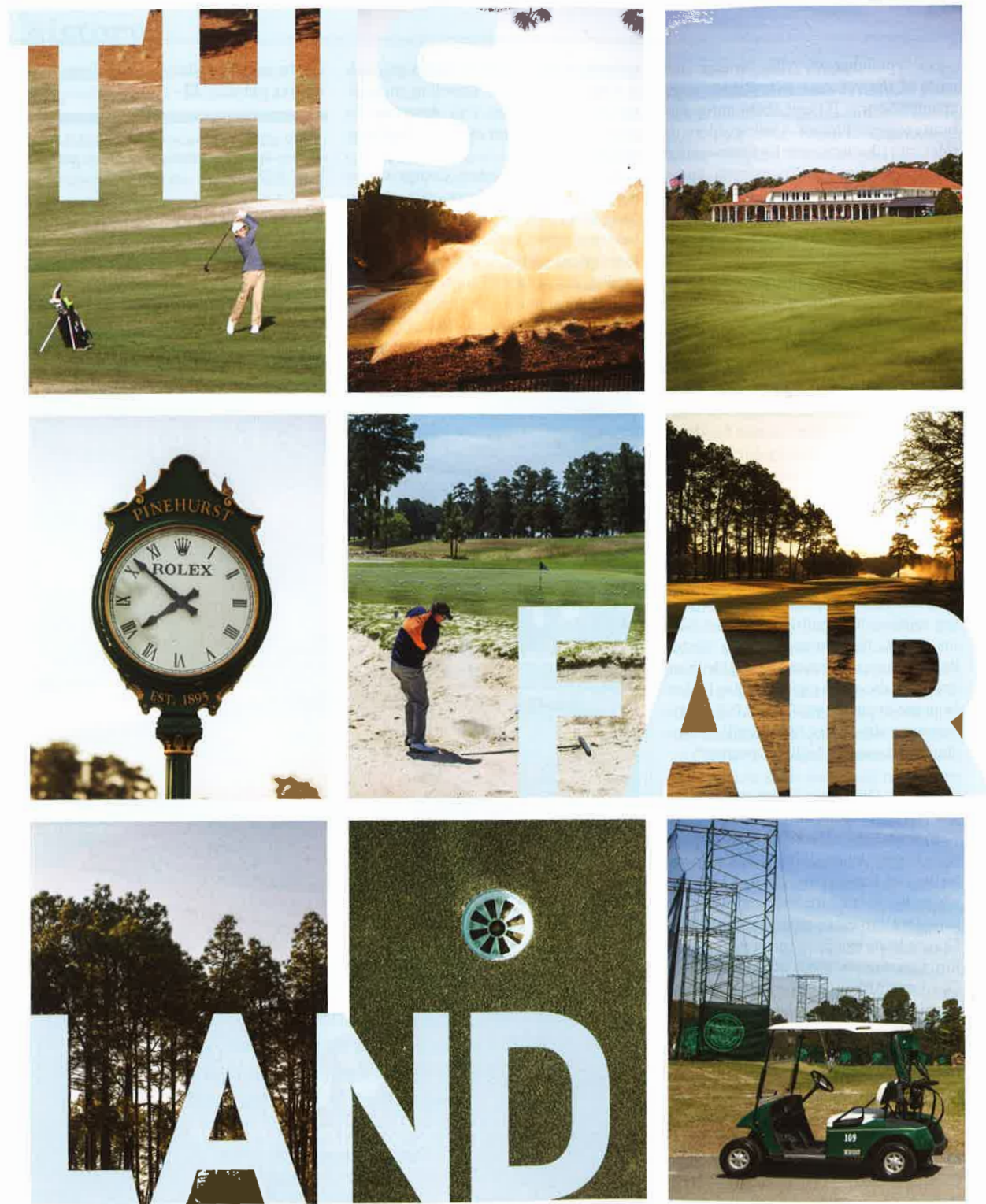
JUNE 2014

www.charlottemagazine.com

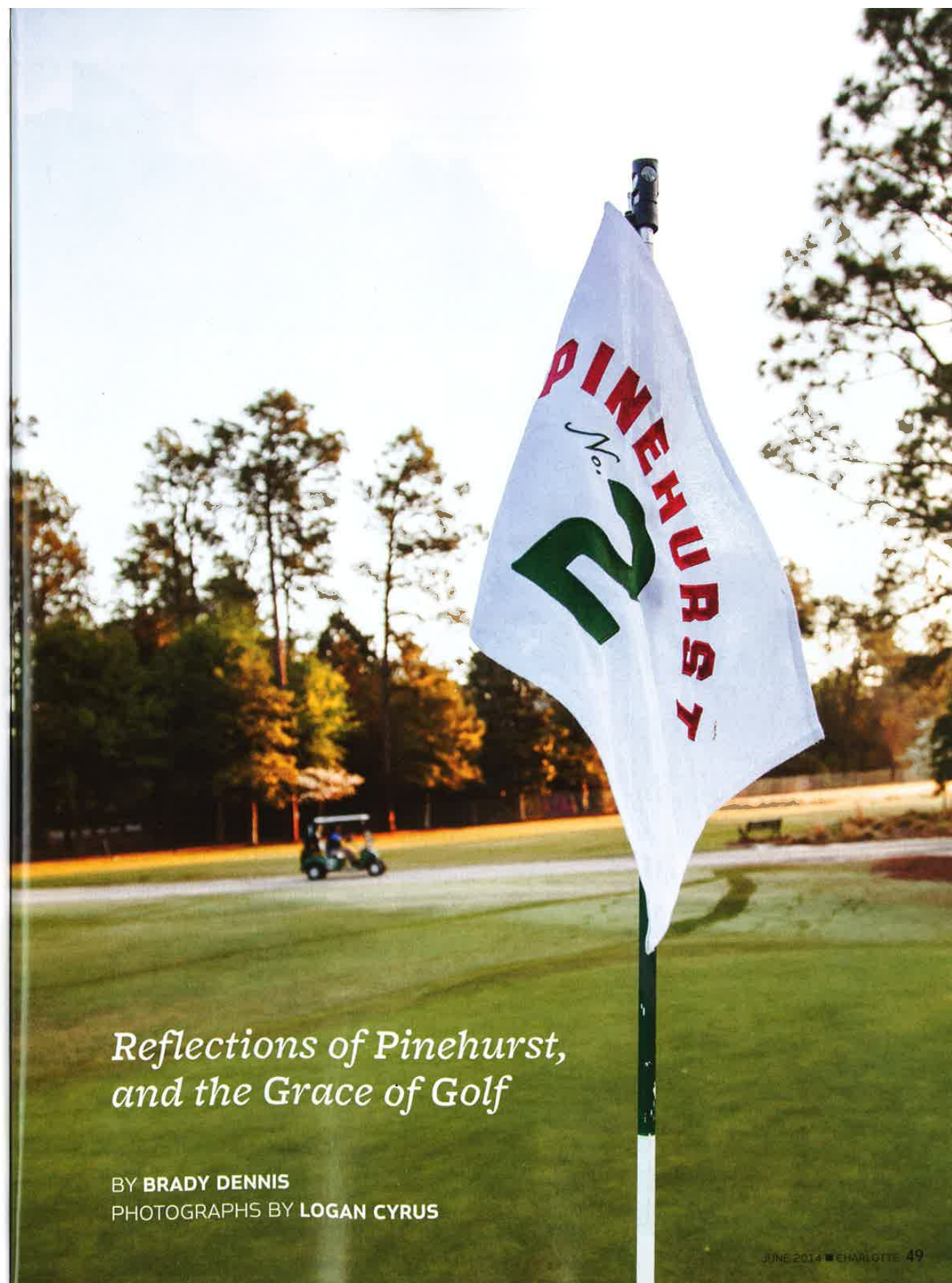
\$3.95



0 74470 88141 4 06>



(Clockwise) When it isn't being used for the U.S. Open, Pinehurst No. 2 is open to the public. Golfers can hit shots from the same fairways as the legends, walk the 18th hole toward the famous clubhouse, or just take in the peaceful, pine surroundings in a place where time often seems to stand still.



Reflections of Pinehurst, and the Grace of Golf

BY **BRADY DENNIS**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **LOGAN CYRUS**



Few places in golf are as intimidating as the first hole of No. 2 (here looking back at the teebox from the fairway), where the weight of history is almost as daunting as the challenging golf course ahead.

I should have been in school on that perfect Tuesday morning in April 1994, but what choice did I have? I was a high school junior, 16 years old, with a new driver's license in my pocket, a love of golf and its history in my veins, and a priceless ticket in my hand. Pinehurst was beckoning, as it had so many times before. So I skipped class.

As a boy growing up in Hickory, North Carolina, I made the familiar two-hour trip to Pinehurst many times to see my grandparents, who lived there. But the drive that Tuesday was different. Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer were playing a made-for-TV match on Pinehurst's storied No. 2 course as part of a revival of the old *Shell's Wonderful World of Golf Series*, which had begun in the 1960s. I was one of a lucky few spectators who scored a pass to wander the fairways of Donald Ross's finest work that day alongside my idols.

The siren call of Pinehurst has always been hard to ignore. Countless

MY OLD MAN WOULD SLING HIS CLUBS OVER HIS SHOULDER AFTER SCHOOL AND SET OFF AROUND THE COURSE UNTIL DUSK.

souls have been drawn to the place for any number of reasons since James W. Tufts, the Massachusetts soda fountain magnate, first stepped off a train in 1895, felt the warm embrace of the Sandhills, and purchased 5,000 acres to build a winter retreat for weary Northerners.

Golfers, of course, flock each year to roam through what a newspaper columnist once called "a Mona Lisa of fair land." Pinehurst is filled with ghosts of the game: Ross, who arrived in 1901, not yet the famous architect he would become, living in his modest home off the third fairway of No. 2, forever honoring the masterpiece outside his back door; Ben Hogan, the journeyman wondering if he would ever make it as

a golfer, winning his first professional tournament at Pinehurst in 1940 and deciding to press on; Babe Zaharias blowing through town on her "slam bang" win streak of 1946; the 1951 Ryder Cup team, captained by Sam Snead, which trounced the Europeans. So many other greats have passed through these pines. To name one is to miss a hundred others, famous and infamous.

But the allure has never been limited to golf. Annie Oakley taught shooting courses here. Amelia Earhart landed her plane at the resort's airstrip. Everyone from Will Rogers to the Rockefellers to Oprah Winfrey has come to soak up Pinehurst's serenity.

For me, the connection is a personal one. My father grew up in the village, a few blocks from the third tee of the No. 2 course. Visitors now shell out hundreds of dollars for a single round, but as a kid in the 1960s, my old man would sling his clubs over his shoulder after school and set off around the course until dusk, unbothered by the rangers who knew he wasn't a member.



Dugan's Pub, which has one pub upstairs and another pub downstairs, is one of the most popular watering holes in the village.

▲ FOR THE FOOD LOVER

BREAKFAST — Pinehurst Track Restaurant
Go for the blueberry pancakes, and remember: This unsuspecting place was where former USGA executive director David Fay first presented Pinehurst president Donald Padgett with the idea of hosting men's and women's U.S. Opens back to back.

LUNCH — The Villager Deli
This deli's motto: Nothing fancy, just fantastic. Open since 1982, the popular sandwich shop in the heart of the village wants you to pick a meat, some toppings, a cheese, and bread and then get back out there.

DINNER (UPSCALE) — 1895 Grille
As you're ordering the red snapper or the braised beef or the rack of lamb, be sure to remember to utter the words "Triple Chocolate Soufflé." You won't regret it.

DINNER (RELAXED) — Dugan's Pub
Wash down a plate of fish and chips or English bangers with a properly poured Guinness.

FOR THE NONGOLFER ▶

The resort's eight manmade golf courses may be the main attraction, but that only helps distinguish the natural beauty of the pine forests. The best place to see them is Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve in Southern Pines, with 900 acres of natural forest, including the oldest-known living longleaf pine tree in the world—a tree that turned 466 this year.

His own father, a volunteer firefighter who worked in a nearby printing shop, first taught him the game on Pinehurst No. 1, where they would sometimes leave their clubs behind and fish the ponds on quiet afternoons.

Decades later, my dad taught me the game here, too. We'd load our clubs in the back of his green International pickup and make the journey several times each summer for my junior golf tournaments. We'd walk the courses together during practice rounds, mapping yardages and strategy, and we'd spend hours hitting wedge shots in the infield of the old horse track off Beulah Hill Road. Dad would drop me off at the small putting green beside the first tee of No. 2, and I'd linger until dark, making putts to win imaginary U.S.

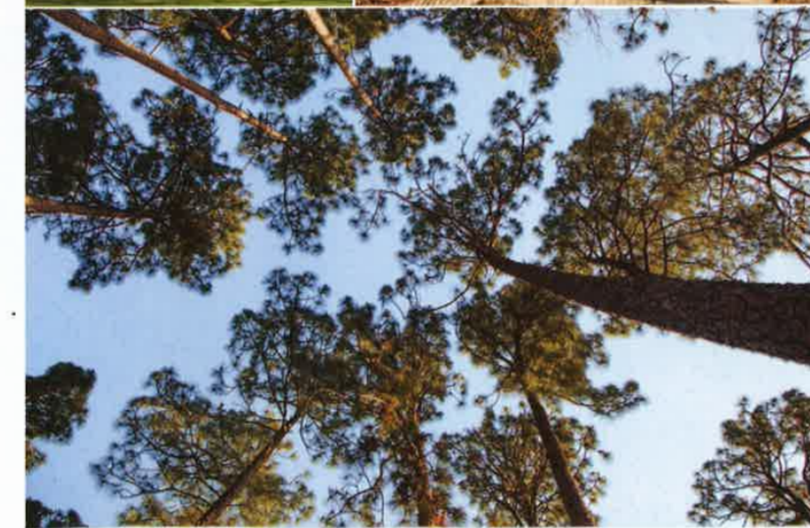
Opens as the nearby Village Chapel bells played "Amazing Grace."

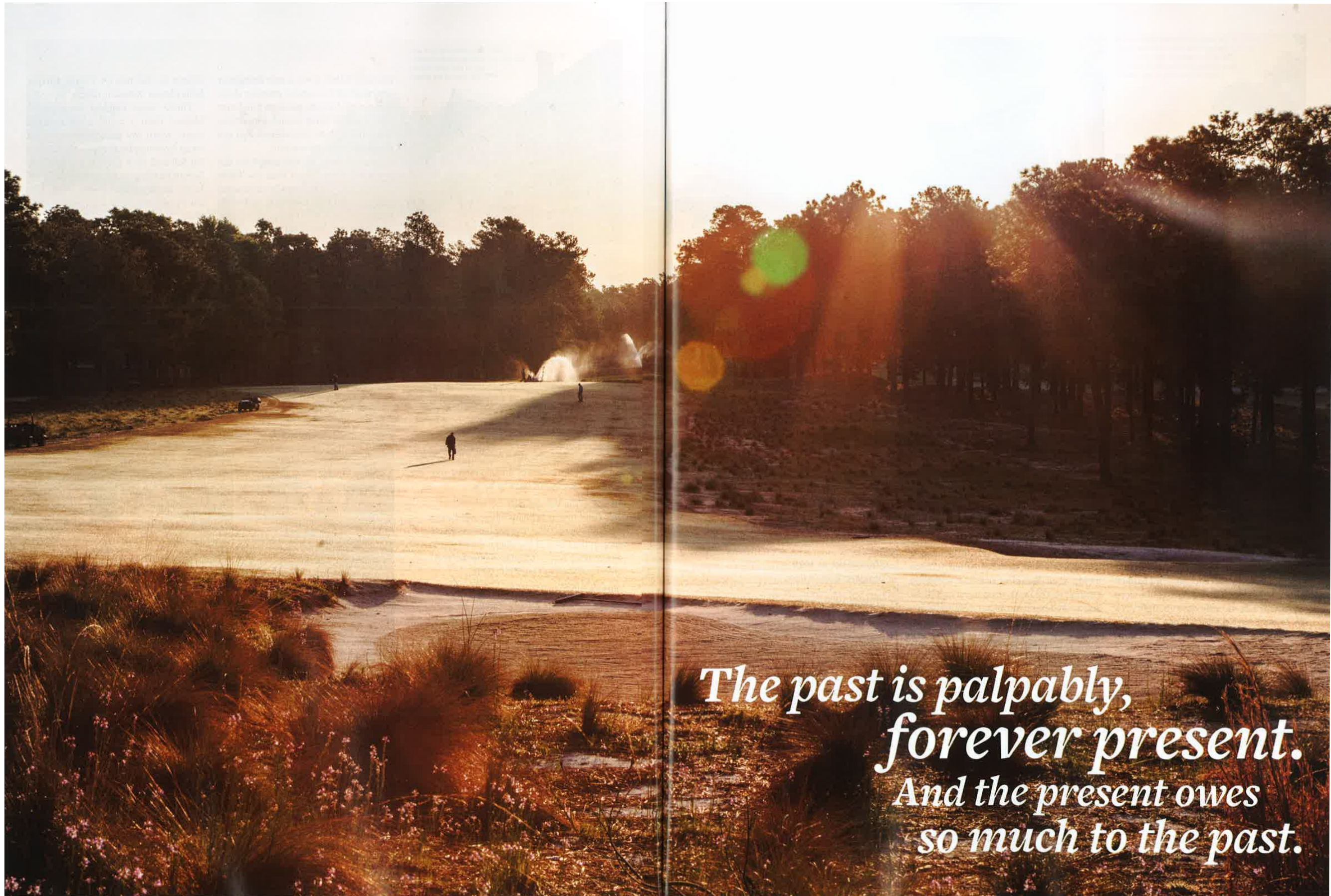
Those were magical days—more blessed than I could have realized then—when my grandmother would wrap homemade sausage biscuits in tin foil and stick them in my golf bag before heading to her job at the local bank; when my aunt, who worked at the Pinehurst resort, sneaked me on to the 14th tee of No. 2 to play a few holes after the paying golfers had mostly gone for the day; when it was possible to spot Dean Smith and Michael Jordan lacing up their spikes for a round on a random summer afternoon.

Each time you cross into Pinehurst's borders, time somehow fades. The past is palpably, forever present. And the present owes so much to the past.



Given the size of the pine trees that surround it, many visitors to Pinehurst may not even see The Village Chapel, hidden off Azalea Road. But they'll undoubtedly hear the church bells at some point.





*The past is palpably,
forever present.
And the present owes
so much to the past.*

The patio just outside the 91st Hole Restaurant at the clubhouse (right) fills up for lunch with golfers on most days. Nongolfers, meanwhile, pass the time in Pinehurst Village (below).



During that Tuesday match between Nicklaus and Palmer two decades ago, there were no scoreboards in sight. No TV towers. No Goodyear blimp. No whispering commentators. No gallery ropes. The two old warriors were relaxed and jovial most of the day, but it was easy to spot a flicker of the competitive fire. Palmer jumped out to an early lead, but by the back nine, the Golden Bear was cruising to an easy victory, 67 to 74.

Somewhere in the middle of the 16th fairway, I worked up the nerve to walk beside Nicklaus after he hit his second shot. On our way toward the green, I asked him the first question that came to mind, about the USGA's recent announcement that it would bring the first U.S. Open to No. 2 five years later, in 1999.

"Mr. Nicklaus, what do you think about the U.S. Open coming to Pinehurst?" I

IN 1974, JACK NICKLAUS, ARNOLD PALMER, AND PRESIDENT GERALD FORD WERE ALL AT PINEHURST ON THE SAME DAY.

squeaked out in my nervous teenage voice.

He smiled and paused for a long moment as we walked. "I think it's just great," he finally said. "It belongs here."

Only later did I learn that Nicklaus had his own history at Pinehurst. His father, Charlie, had been by his side when he won the 1959 North & South Amateur tournament, when Jack was still just a chubby amateur on the brink of stardom. And Nicklaus walked the same fairways watching his son, Jack II, win the same tournament more than a quarter century later.

Likewise, Palmer and his father, Deacon, spent many hours together in Pinehurst. The son returned often while playing for Wake Forest University's golf team during the 1940s and 50s, even once winning the Southern Conference Championship on No. 2.

In September 1974, Nicklaus and Palmer had returned together—Palmer in a light blue suit, Nicklaus in a red one—to become among the first members of the World Golf Hall of Fame. President Gerald Ford spoke at the ceremony that day. In the crowd sat my newlywed parents. History was happening in Pinehurst, and they wanted to be there to witness it.



FOR THE GOLFER

How and when the eight Pinehurst Resort golf courses came to be

COURSE NO. 1: Built in 1898
Designers: Dr. Leroy Culver (first 9); John D. Tucker (second 9)

COURSE NO. 2: 1901 (second 9 completed in 1907)
Designer: Donald Ross

COURSE NO. 3: 1910
Designer: Donald Ross

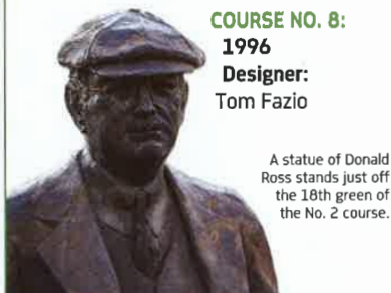
COURSE NO. 4: 1919
Designer: Donald Ross

COURSE NO. 5: 1961
Designer: Ellis Maples

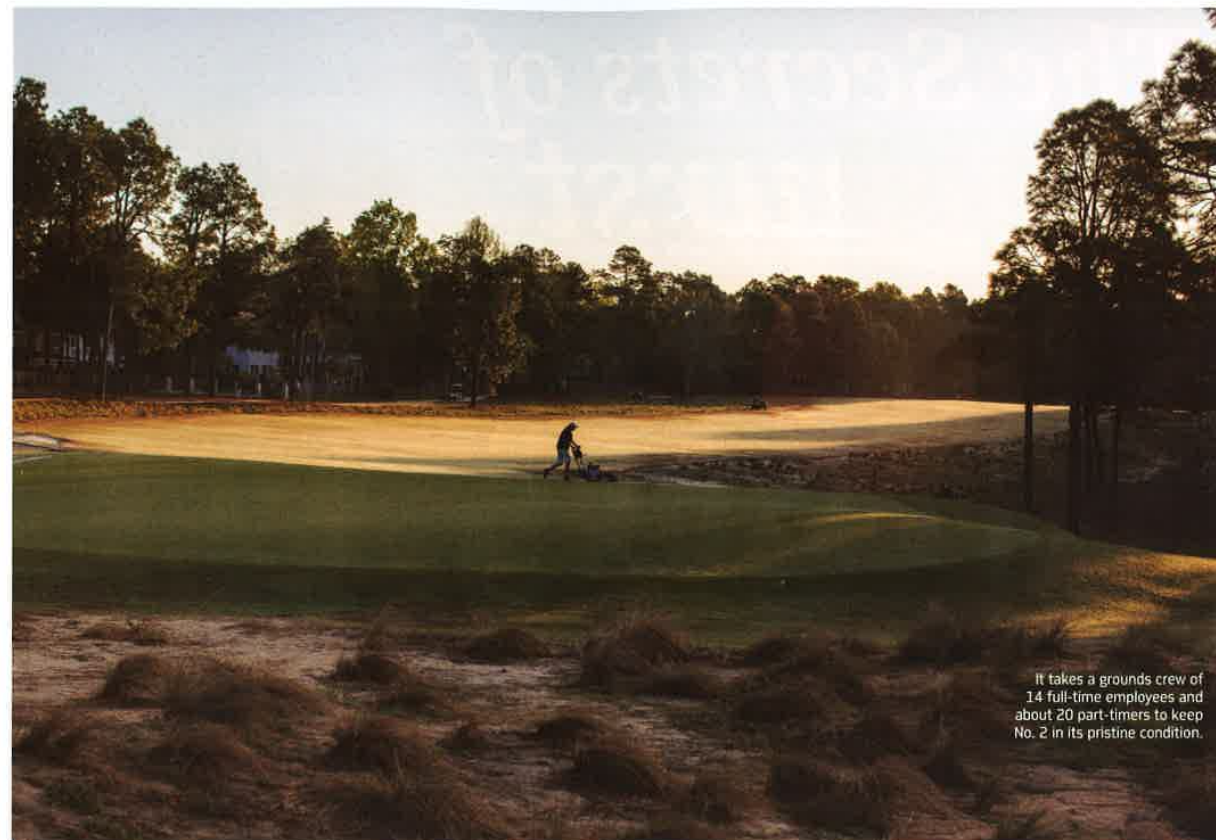
COURSE NO. 6: 1979
Designers: Tom and George Fazio

COURSE NO. 7: 1986
Designer: Rees Jones

COURSE NO. 8: 1996
Designer: Tom Fazio



A statue of Donald Ross stands just off the 18th green of the No. 2 course.



It takes a grounds crew of 14 full-time employees and about 20 part-timers to keep No. 2 in its pristine condition.

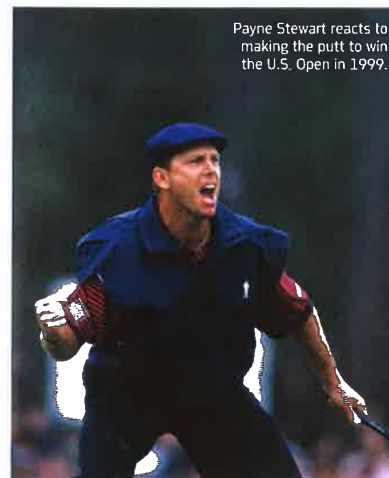
There's something poetic about the fact that after the most recent U.S. Open here in 2005, No. 2 underwent a major renovation—not one meant to modernize the course, but an overhaul meant to return it to an earlier era, to restore Ross's original, scruffier, more natural vision for the place, like a landscape plucked from his native Scotland. In Pinehurst, the past is present again.

My father sold that green International truck decades ago, and although we still meet in Pinehurst for holidays, we no longer make our summer journeys together. My grandfather long ago retired from the printing business. He doesn't fish the local ponds anymore, and his faulty eyesight gives him fits on the golf course. But he still tees it up most Tuesdays and still tends to his pristine yard a few miles from No. 2. My grandmother died in her sleep last summer, but the memory of her rumbling laugh and unwavering kindness and homemade biscuits still wakes me some mornings with a smile.

When the best male and female golfers in the world return to the Sandhills this June for back-to-back U.S. Opens, many

people will think about the legends of Pinehurst. The TV commentators will talk of Ross and his Mona Lisa of a golf course. They will recount Hogan's life-changing breakthrough. They will replay Payne Stewart's winning putt in 1999, probably too many times to count. They might even dig up footage of Nicklaus and Palmer going head to head on a perfect spring day in 1994.

But when I see those familiar images



Payne Stewart reacts to making the putt to win the U.S. Open in 1999.

WE STILL MEET IN PINEHURST FOR THE HOLIDAYS, BUT WE NO LONGER MAKE OUR SUMMER JOURNEYS TOGETHER.

flash across the television screen, I will be thinking of long ago evenings hitting wedges with my father in the infield of an empty horse track, of the sound of church bells ringing as a boy dreamed on the nearby putting green, of my grandfather quietly watching a junior tournament from the shadows of the pines, of my grandmother at her kitchen table at dawn. I will be thinking about fathers and sons, about the blessings of childhood, about how quickly time goes by. And I will be thankful that there is still a place like Pinehurst, where the best of the past remains frozen, always, whenever you need to come home to it. 📧

Brady Dennis, a Hickory native, is a staff writer for *The Washington Post*. He can be reached at brady.dennis@washpost.com.