



Mike Beckerich among his stacks of books at his Classics of Golf headquarters in Nyack, N.Y.

Mike Beckerich: Passionate Publisher of Golf Books

By *Mike Moretti*

Mike Beckerich, a member at Knickerbocker Country Club, has achieved much in his life, but he has always kept his eye on the ball — the golf ball, that is.

He has played golf around the world, owned several businesses, was a four-term president at the USGA founding club club St. Andrew's G.C. in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., and since 2002, has been the proprietor of Classics of Golf, the premiere publisher of golf books.

He was also the inspiration behind the Dave Anderson Library at Knickerbocker, named for the famed New York Times sports columnist.

Recently, Classics of Golf, based in Nyack, N.Y., hard by the Tappan Zee Bridge, has released five books to add to its collection of 69 golf books.

The latest in the collection include a beautiful coffee-table style book on Erin Hills, site of the 2017 U.S. Open Championship, by noted writer Gary D'Amato, featuring photos by acclaimed photographer Paul Hundley; *Fit For Golf For Life* by Randy Myers, Director of Fitness for the 2016 U.S. Ryder Cup Team; *Anatomy of Greatness, Lessons From the Best Golf Swings in History* by GolfChannel's Brandel Chamblee; *The Life & Times of Donald Ross*, the famed golf architect, by Chris Buie, and *Unfriended* by Ted Bishop, 38th President of the PGA of America.

"The five books speak for themselves. They are all drawing great reviews. All of these books hold a lot of weight in their presentation and completeness," said Beckerich, who as publisher help mold the books into the finished product that is available to the public.

Myers has credited Beckerich by saying: "My publisher pulled this through. I have a book I'm extremely proud of."

Chamblee, who is now working on a short-game book, said Beckerich was most helpful in making his book better.

Beckerich stumbled upon his career as a publisher of golf books after selling his environmental engineering company in 2001. The next summer, he visited the pro shop at The National Golf Links of America in Long Island and noticed a book for sale that he had long wanted to read, *Scotland's Gift Golf*. A friend then relayed the information that this book is just one of many that are included in the Classics of Golf library.

"Three weeks later, I bought the company. My wife, Maryann, said, 'Some guys buy a book. You buy 80,000 books.'"

Classics of Golf was founded in 1982 by Herbert Warren Wind, the dean of American sportswriters, and Robert MacDonald. It has long been known for high quality books with top authors like Jack Nicklaus, Bobby Jones, Byron Nelson, Bernard Darwin and Wind. The USGA annual presents the "Herbert Warren Wind Award" for best golf book of the year.

"It is my honor and privilege to keep Mr. Wind's mission alive. A lot of people have thanked me for doing this. In my mind, it is a service to the game of golf," said Beckerich, who lives in Piermont, N.Y., on the banks of the Hudson River.

"I really think I am the last golf book publisher standing. Simon & Shuster and other well diversified publishers do golf books, but they are few and far between. I have access to the best people in the business who enjoy working with me," said Beckerich, 66.

Between 2002 and 2015, Classics of Golf published only three books, but added 20 books as reprints with the help of Robbie MacDonald, Wind's original partner. As part of the company's commitment to keep in print and diligently distribute golf's literature and history, it makes golf club and course history books available through its website, www.classicsofgolf.com

These books are often hard to find and published in limited quantities. "Robbie was thrilled I'm keeping Wind's vision alive."

Larry Hassett, the graphic designer who oversaw the production of the Erin Hills book as well as a club history of Mountain Ridge Country Club in Caldwell,

and a new course to come on Newport, R.I., Country Club, to name a few, is working with Classics of Golf in 2017 on two new book projects.

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"Putting the two of us together makes for a very powerful team. Many clubs are approaching their 100th anniversary and a lot of centennial books will be in the offering," Beckerich said.

Golf insiders have noticed Beckerich's contribution to the sport through Classics of Golf and other ventures.

"With Mike's pursuit of Classics of Golf, I feel he does it more for the passion and his love of golf of it than the business of it," said fellow Knickerbocker member Phil Fabrizio of Fair Lawn, a frequent participant in NJSGA events

"He has a passion for the subject matter and people and the stories along the way. Mike obviously loves history of the game and golf architecture and loves stories about the golfers. It's a perfect thing for him to be involved in. It's about what golf has meant to him in his life.

"He doesn't need to do this. But he loves being a resource. Things like the Dave Anderson Library at Knickerbocker

and helping the NJSGA set up a library is extremely fulfilling for him. He likes being at a granular level with people who talk his language and appreciate the things he does in the subjects that Classics of Golf cover.

"He gets deeply involved and typically, his intensity and his passion make these things happen. When he has an opinion, it's well informed and well thought out," Fabrizio said.

Beckerich is a native of The Bronx and attended Iona College on an academic scholarship. He graduated as an accounting major and worked eight years as a CPA. In 1988, he joined St. Andrews and was named president in 1996. He took his first golf trip to Scotland in 1992.

He had always had a first love with baseball, "but from that point on, I had a golf historian's mind. I'm extremely well read. I remember being in the locker room at Muirfield and being overwhelmed by who had sat there.

"In golf, there are hundreds of those places. I wanted to be there and see all of them."

In 1991, he founded an environmental laboratory. As a CPA, he had become a specialist in alternate energy, and his company specialized in stack testing and air emissions. When Congress passed the clean Air Act of 1990, he was on the cusp of a developing industry which complemented the lab activities.

"I understood the licensing processes. That allowed me to be successful. I hired experts and chemists and managed them like a CPA firm. We provided professional services," Beckerich said.

While president of St. Andrew's he oversaw the restoration of the clubhouse, the golf course and the surrounding grounds. Many members have expressed the thought that these complicated and expensive projects (\$15 million) were brought everything in on time and on budget," he noted.

"I had an out-of-body experience at the time. I was working my butt off, running two companies, overseeing the golf course renovations and raising three children. Whatever I do, I'm an activist, and I don't try to hide it."

It should also be mentioned that Beckerich's home includes a baseball collection that must be seen to be appreciated.

"I'm a very lucky guy," he said. 🌐

