

Wally Wicker | *He Pulled Ben Hogan to Victory*

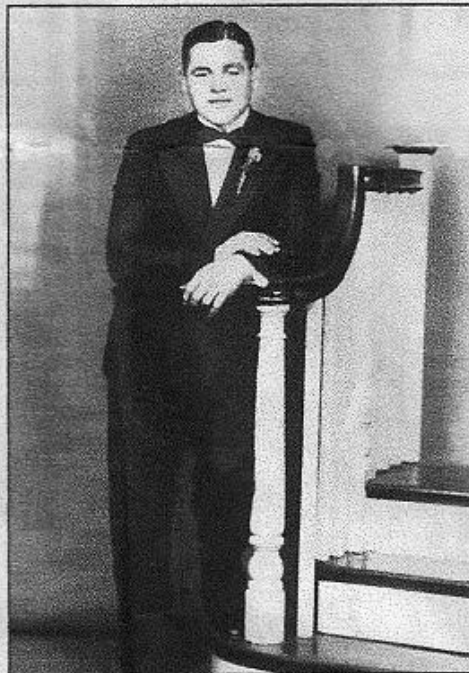


Sixteen years after the first U.S. Open came to Merion, the Golden Anniversary USGA National Championship

was played in June, 1950. As was the custom, local caddies complimented the host clubs' caddie corps to reach the desired number for the 150 players. The best of the best were sent from other clubs in the Delaware Valley area.

Ben Hogan arrived late the week before the Open and chose Nick Ciccio from a blind draw. Nick, a scratch golfer, respected the game and would not walk on a golf course unless he was dressed in long pants. His full-time job was at Standard Pressed Steel, and he caddied on the weekends at Whitemarsh and North Hills. An occasional night shift gave

him additional weekday loops. His four brothers were avid golfers as were his sixteen first cousins. Nick lived in Glenside, and he caddied until the 1970s.



Nick Ciccio

I recently met with Ciccio's daughter Connie DiLisio and her husband Sam. Ciccio's grandson Sam DiLisio, along with his wife Dina and daugh-

ter Isabella (who is Nick Ciccio's great-granddaughter, an accomplished golfer in her own right who would make Nick proud) were also present. The meeting relived Connie watching her father on a newsreel of the Open on a "neighbors six-inch TV screen." Meeting the family brought to light a famous comment made at the 1950 U.S. Open. I had confirmed the comment in an early 1990's interview with Ben Hogan, but I had no idea who said it. Now we know. While exiting the 13th green in the Open's Saturday afternoon thirty-six hole stamina struggle, Ben Hogan pulled his writhing body up the short incline. He said to his caddie, "Take my bag and put it on the rack. I can't finish this round." Nick Ciccio looked over his shoulder and said, "Mr. Hogan, I don't work for quitters. I'll meet you on the next tee." Hogan did not have time



to ponder his response as Nick was well ahead of him by now... mentally pulling Ben Hogan to eventual victory. His daughter Connie said, "That was just like Dad." Isabella said, "That is how I envision him and he pulls me along when I am playing and practicing."

The 13th hole Hogan exchange can now put a name to the other combatant. Golf and Merion are indebted to Nick Ciccio, a person whose lifestyle never let him quit or let his players quit either, and also to a man who never walked on a golf course unless in long pants.

Pete - Thought you might find this interesting. I teach Isabella.

Joe, is Joe Data who won the Philadelphia Open and the Philadelphia PGA