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Demarbleizing Bobby Jones

For Georgians the name Robert Tyre "Bobby" Jones is synonymous with golf; many uninitiated Americans learn as much each spring through CBS's telecast of the sport's first major event, the Masters. Even casual observers quickly discover that Jones, along with Clifford Roberts and Dr. Alistair Mackenzie, was a founder of Augusta National. Viewers are usually reminded about Jones's winning the Grand Slam (the U.S. Amateur, U.S. Open, British Amateur, and British Open in 1930), as well as his other notable golf achievements in the 1920s, the so-called Golden Age of American sports. What is always stressed, however, is his amateurism, the notion that he competed purely out of a love for competition and not for material gain. Moreover, it is almost impossible to watch ABC's coverage of the British Open without hearing commentator Jim McKay say that Jones never played the game more than six months out of any calendar year, putting his clubs away in November and not touching them again until April. Indeed, there is a lot of myth surrounding Jones's amateurism; commentators most often emphasize how unimportant golf really was to the Atlantan. He was a lawyer first and foremost, we are usually told, and golf was far down his list of priorities.

Above all, Jones is portrayed as a sportsman and a gentleman, an image rooted in his amateurism and the way in which he handled the final years of his life. In 1948 Jones was stricken with a rare spinal disorder called syringomyelia. He played his last round of golf that year and was soon reduced from walking with braces to using a wheelchair and eventually to being completely immobile. Through it all Jones publicly displayed remarkable steadfastness, even good cheer. He remained as active as possible until his death and became a symbol of individual strength and character. Such behavior, coupled with his amateur career and the rise

of the Masters tournament, made him golf's and, arguably, the entire sports world's greatest paragon.

Jones lived an admirable, extraordinary life, even for a famous athlete. Not surprisingly, golf fans have tended to "marbleize" him. As always, such efforts distort the record and, more importantly, unintentionally dehumanize the hero, in this case making Bobby Jones into something that he did not care to be, a "golf machine." The purpose of this piece is to highlight the historical record in two ways, by sketching Jones's background, life, and golf achievements, and then discussing some of the realities of his competitive career. Ultimately, I hope to put Jones into proper cultural and historical context. In some ways, this will serve to chip away a little of the marble. That, though, is a good thing, for Jones is much more valuable and admirable as a man than as a myth.

* * * * *

Georgia fans, in particular, know that the Jones family's rise to prominence did not begin with Bobby or with golf. In fact, it began with Bobby's grandfather, the original Robert Tyre Jones of Canton, Georgia, who would himself be worthy of a scholarly article, if not a book. Born in 1849 to William Green Jones and Emily Chafin Jones, R. T. (as he was usually called) grew up on the family farm near Covington, Georgia. It seems that from the beginning, R. T. Jones was a devoutly religious man; he joined the Presbyterian Church as an eighteen-year-old in 1867 and a few years later transferred his membership to the Baptist Church. His strapping 6' 5", 235-pound frame was baptized on the second Sunday of August 1870. The next year he

enrolled at Moores Business College.ⁱ

R. T. married in 1878; a short time later he and his new wife, Susan Walker, left the familiar surroundings of Covington for the hills of Canton. There he made a name and a lot of money for himself by opening a general store and eventually a textile manufactory. Within a few years, R. T. Jones was one of the wealthiest men in town.ⁱⁱ

But Jones became the leading citizen of Canton for more than just his substantial business interests; he never abandoned his religious faith and, indeed, served as the Sunday School superintendent of the First Baptist Church for more than forty years, teaching the largest adult class. He occasionally wrote articles for the local paper, the *Cherokee Advance*. R. T. revealed his Victorian, theistic world view in an October 1920 piece entitled "Christianity as Related to Business." "The first thing to be considered by the Christian in any line of endeavor is--how will this serve as a factor in God's Kingdom?" he admonished. It was not enough for a business "to simply succeed from a money profit standpoint"; it must also "glorify our Lord." In other words, if any business was to be truly successful, "Christianity should be the dominating power and . . . govern its operation."ⁱⁱⁱ

In sum, R. T. Jones was like so many other Americans of his generation. He was guided by a series of "absolutes" which were based on an unwavering Christian faith and a literal reading of the Bible. He fathered a large family which, along with church and business, became the focal point of his life. In all of his relationships, R. T. was fair and honest, but also disciplined and even stern. More than most southerners of his day, he did not have much use for people who disagreed with him and was not particularly open-minded about anything. R. T. Jones had a recipe for success which served him in very good stead: old-fashioned religion and hard work.^{iv}

R. T. could not bring himself to drink even a Coca-Cola; he certainly did not have much use for sports. That was one of the many sticking points between R. T. Jones and his eldest son, Robert Purmedus. R. P. was born in 1879 and was never comfortable with the fact that he had not been named after his father. Lewis Jones, Jr., recalled that the withholding of his father's name left R. P. with a sense of disappointment and personal inadequacy. It quickly became obvious that father and son were little alike in personality as well. Whereas R. T. was stern and serious, R. P. was affable, gregarious, and generally fun-loving. One might say that R. P. was more concerned about enjoying this life than was his father and much less concerned about preparing for the next one. R. P. drank, danced, and related adult jokes. In addition, Bobby Jones once described his father as an "expert in profanity."^v

R. P. was no slacker, however, and he easily understood the value of formal education. So he took classes at the University of Georgia and Mercer University before studying law and passing the bar exam. While in college, R. P. engaged vigorously in athletics, especially baseball. He even flirted with the idea of pursuing a professional baseball career; when R. T. learned of it, he supposedly threatened to disown his son. On one occasion, a baseball authority noticed R. P.'s prowess on the ball diamond. R. T. simply responded, "You could not pay him a poorer compliment."^{vi}

Like so many other young people at the turn of the century, R. P. Jones simply rebelled against the formalism of his father's generation. He genuinely respected and admired his father, but their world views were very different. It was only reasonable that, given the opportunity, R. P. Jones would move from Canton. The opportunity came in 1901, just after R. P. finished his

education and got married. That year his wife, Clara Thomas of Auburn, Alabama, gave birth to a son named William. The child was frail like his mother, and he survived less than three months. By the fall, Clara Jones was pregnant again and, believing that Atlanta would be a much safer place than Canton to bear a child, convinced her husband to move to the big city. R. P. Jones thought that Atlanta, a burgeoning center of southern commerce, was a very good place to begin his law practice and so accommodated his wife's wishes. Before the year was out, the couple was living in Atlanta.^{vii}

In March 1902 the Atlanta Constitution quietly announced: "A little son has come to brighten the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jones." Two days earlier, on the 17th, Robert Tyre Jones II was born. (He would later refer to himself as "junior" out of respect for his father.) Like William, he was weak and sickly. O. B. Keeler, Bobby Jones biographer and close friend, aptly described Jones's early childhood as "not much of a start." Indeed, Little Bob (as everyone called him to distinguish him from his father, who became known as Big Bob or The Colonel) was afflicted with a variety of stomach-digestive problems that made it impossible for him to retain solid foods. Jones later wrote that for the first few years he was never out of the watch of his understandably hyper-protective mother or the family's black nurse-maid, Camilla.^{viii}

By 1907 R. P. Jones was doing well enough in his law practice, including work for Coca-Cola, that the family moved from their house on Willow Street to an apartment on affluent West Peachtree Street. The Joneses also spent most of the summer of 1907 in the country, leasing several rooms in a large house that was adjacent to the East Lake Club. East Lake, owned by the Atlanta Athletic Club (AAC), had one of the country's finest golf courses. Big Bob and Clara Jones immediately took to the links that summer, as did their five-year-old son.

A fellow renter named Fulton Colville introduced Bobby Jones to the game. Little Bob was too small to hit around the big course, so he and some friends laid out a pitch-and-putt affair in front of the house.^{ix}

The following year Big Bob joined the AAC's Board of Directors, and every summer thereafter the family lived at East Lake. With each passing year, Little Bob gained strength and balance. Although he enjoyed swimming, tennis, and baseball, he soon decided that the links was his favorite place, and there were few days in the summers after 1908 that he was not seen on the East Lake course. Family friends and fellow club members George and Perry Adair once told reporters that Little Bob "virtually 'lived on the links.'"^x

The game came relatively easy for young Jones; in fact, a convincing case may be made that he was the most naturally-gifted golfer ever. In 1911 he won the AAC's junior championship, and by 1915 he had won several other local events and had played in his first Southern Amateur Championship. Although he was eliminated in the second round, Golfers Magazine considered the thirteen-year-old Jones the "sensation of the tournament." Later that summer American Golfer declared that "in the course of a few years in which [Jones] can gain the necessary experience . . . he will develop into one of the very best golfers in the country."^{xi}

In 1916 Jones confirmed the confidence of golf writers by winning the Georgia State Amateur Championship and faring remarkably well in his first national competition, the U.S. Amateur held at the Merion Cricket Club outside Philadelphia. It was at Merion that Jones first stepped onto the national stage, and a big step it was. He advanced into the third round, defeating a former national champion in the first round and the reigning Pennsylvania state

champion in the second. Jones lost his third-round match with defending champion Robert Gardner but took the Chicagoan to the thirty-third hole. "Not even Bob Gardner, who is the last word in courage, could outgame the little fellow," noted the *New York Times*.^{xii}

Thus began one of the greatest golf careers ever. Like so much else in Jones's life, his competitive career had a certain symmetry about it. For example, he started and finished it at Merion, winning the final leg of the Grand Slam there in the fall of 1930. He also won his first U.S. Amateur title at Merion in 1924. By 1917 fans were well aware of Jones's hot temper; the worst manifestation of it occurred at St. Andrews during the 1921 British Open, when an angry, frustrated nineteen-year-old Jones picked up his ball and quit, figuratively "tearing up" his scorecard. Six years later, however, Jones returned to St. Andrews to win his second British Open, and it was at the mecca of golf that Jones won his only British Amateur and the first leg of the Grand Slam. Indeed, few athletic careers contain so many dramatic coincidences.^{xiii}

Jones's career is also interesting because on the surface it appears to be two careers in one. From 1916 through 1922, Jones failed to win a major tournament, and from 1923 through 1930, he enjoyed rare dominance, winning thirteen major championships, including five U.S. Amateurs, four U.S. Opens, three British Opens, and one British Amateur. Using the Biblical allusion that was popular in sportswriting of the period, O. B. Keeler wrote that Jones, like Egypt as recorded in Genesis, endured seven lean years and thrived throughout seven fat years. Though oft-repeated, Keeler's description breaks down on several levels. For one thing, in the Genesis account the seven fat years preceded the seven lean years, and, for another, Jones experienced eight fat years, not seven.^{xiv}

Beyond those somewhat nit-picky observations, Keeler was wrong on a more substantive

ground; that is, there was really nothing lean about Jones's career between 1916 and 1920. He progressed nicely as a competitive golfer during that period, narrowly losing the U.S. Amateur in 1919 at Oakmont to local favorite S. Davidson Herron. Only seventeen when he lost to Herron, he had not yet entered a U.S. Open, which he did a year later at Inverness in Toledo, finishing a respectable eighth place. Golf insiders realized both Jones's potential and lack of experience; in December 1919, the New York Times ranked Jones the number-two amateur in the country, behind Herron but ahead of Charles "Chick" Evans and Francis Ouimet. The 1921 and 1922 seasons were understandably disappointing for Jones, who could not "break through" in the National Amateur, despite steadily improving his U.S. Open record during those years. By then the expectations to win were tremendous; those expectations, though, clouded what had been a steadily and naturally progressing golf career.^{xv} The turning point came at the 1923 U.S. Open, which Jones won after an exciting playoff with Bobby Cruickshank. For the next eight years, the Atlantan was never without a national title, and he capped his competitive career in 1930 with the Grand Slam. That achievement, however, may not have been his greatest on the links; it certainly does not underscore his dominance of the period as does his U.S. Open record. In eleven U.S. Opens, Jones finished out of the top ten only once (eleventh place at Oakmont in 1927), and in his nine starts between 1922 and 1930, Jones bagged four victories and four runner-ups. He simply dominated the tournament for nearly a decade.

And he did it all without compromising sportsmanship; indeed, Jones would have won the 1925 U.S. Open had he not been so determined to uphold the rules and so considerate of his opponents. Jones called a penalty on himself in that tournament for a rules infraction which no one but he witnessed. The one-stroke penalty made the difference, because he finished the

tournament proper in a tie with Willie MacFarlane and lost the thirty-six-hole playoff by one stroke the next day. Final tallies through the 108 holes of the 1925 U.S. Open: MacFarlane, 438; Jones, 439. Keeler later reported that when Jones was praised for his honesty, the amateur golfer replied, "You'd as well praise me for not breaking into banks. There is only one way to play this game."^{xvi}

Having "completed the cycle" (as some sportswriters initially described the Grand Slam), the twenty-eight-year-old Jones announced his retirement from competitive golf in November 1930. Few people were surprised; for years Jones had seemed uncomfortable in the limelight, and he was tired of putting his family through the travel and rigors of a competitive career. Jones had married Mary Malone in 1924; in early 1931 the couple's third and last child was born. Moreover, Jones had graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1922, had taken a second bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1924, had enrolled in classes at Emory University in 1926, and had passed the Georgia bar exam late in 1927. In 1928, following a three-year stint in real estate, Jones began practicing law in between golf events. In other words, he had a growing family, one of the finest formal educations of any athlete ever, and plenty of interests and career paths other than golf. So, Jones "cashed in" immediately after his retirement by signing a motion-picture deal with Warner Brothers for an estimated \$250,000 and then declared that he would not pursue professional golf.^{xvii}

Nonetheless, it became obvious, as the Professional Golfer put it in early 1931, "that Jones and golf in one form or another are destined to be inseparable." Jones later admitted that he became "deeply involved in enough golf projects to preclude, at least for many years, my taking any serious interest in other activities." Such "golf projects" included designing and

endorsing a line of golf equipment for A. G. Spalding & Brothers. Soon after, Jones began his longest lasting and most famous golf project, the creation of the Augusta National Golf Club and its annual tournament, the Masters.^{xviii}

The Masters was successful because it was Bobby Jones's tournament. Without him, the club and tournament would not have happened. The early events were viable largely because of his own entry; between 1934 and 1948, when he became too ill to play, Jones competed in the Masters. Co-founder Clifford Roberts believed that the success of the inaugural event depended on Jones's presence, and he convinced the Atlantan to come out of retirement once a year and to play against the nation's best amateurs and professionals.^{xix}

Although it is an episode in his career that is often overlooked or at least glossed over, in 1934 Jones made a semi-serious comeback effort. The record shows that he practiced long and hard, and that he harbored sincere hopes of winning the inaugural Masters. But despite the crowd's rebel yells and the use of his mother's edition of his famous putter, Calamity Jane, Jones could do no better than a 294, ten shots behind winner Horton Smith. When it was over, Jones said, "I have no idea of returning to open competition. I hope to have this masters' tournament become an annual affair, and I will limit my competition to playing in it for the fun I get out of it." In 1935 Jones finished in twenty-sixth place, fifteen shots behind Gene Sarazen and Craig Wood. The following year he shot a non-competitive course-record 64 and was quoted at 6-1 odds prior to the event. But he posted a dismal 306, good enough only for thirty-third place. By then it had become painfully clear that Jones had lost his putting touch, and that not even he could compete once a year and seriously challenge the nation's top players. Yet most people probably concurred with the Atlanta Constitution's Ralph McGill: "I can't see where it was a

comeback. Comeback from what? Jones wasn't coming back in the sense that he was seeking to regain anything. He had beaten the world. He had everything."^{xx}

Despite Jones's lackluster showing in the early Masters, the period between 1931 and 1948 was probably the happiest of his life. In those years he became the game's most revered figure. Providing legal advice to friends and family, Jones spent most of his time developing his interests in Augusta, in A. G. Spalding & Brothers, and in his increasingly profitable Coca-Cola distributorships. When the public called, Jones graciously responded; in 1936 he served as a consultant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration. Jones aided the New Deal agency in its construction and refurbishment of more than six hundred municipal golf courses. The Great Depression had little effect on the Jones family, who moved into a beautiful mansion named Whitehall at 3425 Tuxedo Road. Bob and Mary Jones furnished their eighteen-room home in elegant style with European antiques, Waterford chandeliers, and Aubusson rugs. It was the perfect dwelling for a retired athlete who fancied himself a southern gentleman.^{xxi}

When World War II broke out, Jones again felt compelled by duty. Unlike the majority of public figures, Jones refused to sit on the sidelines or spend his time playing exhibitions to raise money. Instead, he fought for a position in the armed forces and then fought for his country in Great Britain and northern France. Jones never spoke much about his military career--he served as an intelligence officer and took part in the invasion of Normandy--yet when the Atlantan left the service in 1944, he had been promoted from captain to major to lieutenant colonel and had earned the World War II Victory Medal and Army of Occupation Medal. He did not serve on the front lines, but his record was nonetheless admirable, particularly given his

age and the legitimate excuses available to him for avoiding military service.^{xxii}

A few years after the war, Jones's life took an abrupt turn. In the summer of 1948, he began experiencing regular neck and shoulder pain, as well as difficulties in the movements of his right hand and leg. He endured several operations, but by the end of 1950 Jones realized that his condition would only worsen. In 1956 he was diagnosed with syringomyelia, a spinal disorder that seems similar but is actually quite different from Lou Gehrig's disease.^{xxiii}

Jones spent the last twenty years of his life in constant pain, yet he always kept a stiff upper lip in public and even expressed surprising good cheer. In 1949, for instance, he told one reporter, "Now I can stand around the first tee and make a nuisance of myself by giving golfing advice to my friends. And the funny part is they cannot get back at me since I can no longer play." A few years later, however, Jones privately confessed to good friend and fellow golfer Alexa Stirling: "I fight it every day. When it first happened to me I was pretty bitter, and there were times when I didn't want to go on living, [but] I decided I'd just do the very best I could."^{xxiv}

But as his body deteriorated, Jones's public image grew stronger. By 1950 the Masters was on the eve of major tournament status. Coincidentally, the country elected General Dwight D. Eisenhower to the presidency in 1952; Ike loved golf and Augusta, and he was also a good friend of Jones and Roberts. A few years later the youthful professional Arnold Palmer began competing at Augusta, helping to elevate the Masters and to establish golf as a televised sport. The rise of the Masters, the election of Eisenhower, and Jones's relationship to both strengthened the Atlantan's position as golf's idol. His presence at Augusta for the green-jacket closing ceremonies of the Masters became popular television viewing by the late 1950s, allowing golf fans around the globe a glimpse of their hero.^{xxv}

Jones's everyday life in the 1950s and 1960s was less dramatic and quite challenging. Each day around 11:00 a.m. his chauffeur would drive him in his tan Cadillac to his law office at the firm of Jones, Bird, and Howell in downtown Atlanta. Once inside the building on Poplar Street, Jones would spend several hours answering mail or conducting an interview. He corresponded with friends, players, golf writers, and family, especially cousin Lewis Jones, Jr., who was in charge of the Canton businesses. Sometime between 4:00 and 4:30, Jones would be driven back to Whitehall. He sustained that routine until the last year of his life.^{xxvi}

By late 1970 Jones could no longer make regular visits to his office. Within six months, he became essentially bed-ridden, except for a few hours each day when he was propped up in a chair. In early December 1971 Jones's heart finally collapsed to an aneurysm, a byproduct of years of laboring under syringomyelia. On the 15th, he asked his wife to call her priest, and later that day he converted to Catholicism. On December 18, 1971, Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., died quietly at the age of sixty-nine. He was buried at Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery on the 21st in unseasonably warm air and under gloomy skies. The funeral was private; only the immediate family attended. More than one reporter noted that it was an ironic way for one of America's most lauded athletes to finish his life. But, as Bob Jones III assured everyone, "That's the way dad wanted it. He didn't want any great fuss."^{xxvii}

Throughout the following days, the golf world mourned. Eulogies came pouring in from around the world. Some discussed Jones's outstanding competitive career, but many more reflected on his immense public stature and character. The New York Times took the opportunity to repeat one of Jones's favorite axioms: "First come my wife and children. Next comes my profession--the law. Finally, and never as a life in itself, comes golf." The Atlanta

Constitution and Journal simply observed that Jones's "golf fame [was] transcended by human qualities." Fellow golfer Ben Hogan, whose record was most often compared to Jones's, summed up the Atlantan: "Jones was a winner. But anyone can be a winner. It was the way he won that made him stand out above all others." Paul Gallico, former sportswriter and longtime friend, may have put it best: "He was a gentleman, and he loved his friends He was the best golf player the world has ever known."^{xxviii}

* * * * *

Since his death, the life and times of Bobby Jones have been told and retold, usually by golf commentators or journalists. Because of his outstanding, unprecedented record and personal triumphs, Jones's story has often been mistold, miswritten, and exaggerated. Myths, some of which were passed along as early as 1923, have attached themselves to the collective memory of Jones. To be sure, like most myths, the Jones stories are exaggerations of the truth; they do have some basis in reality but are in the end essentially false. While Jones was a rare and truly admirable public figure, mythologizing him is not only unnecessary but ultimately does him an injustice.

There are many misconceptions about Bobby Jones's competitive career, some of which are occasionally and regularly broadcast by so-called golf experts who ought to know better. Two of the most common are that in his prime, when he was winning major events, Jones played little more golf than the average weekend hacker, and that Jones played the sport purely for the love of it and not for any personal material gain. Both misconceptions are rooted in Jones's

amateurism, the quality in his career that provided the foundation for his public appeal.

The first myth is the easier of the two to debunk. The historical record, particularly newspaper and golf journal accounts, is clear: in the period between 1915 and 1930, Jones rarely went more than a few weeks, much less as long as six months, without playing a round of golf. In other words, the suggestion that he was a six-month, half-time, or weekend golfer who could put his clubs in the closet in November, pick them up in April, and then go out and win a U.S. Open is misleading and wildly inaccurate.

In fact, Jones played far more golf as a youngster than did most professionals. From an early age, he had access to East Lake, one of the finest, most challenging layouts in the country, and, according to his friends, "virtually 'lived on the links.'" Few professional golfers in the 1920s, men like Walter Hagen or Gene Sarazen, who had working-class, immigrant backgrounds, could say as much about their childhoods. That good fortune allowed Jones to play the game for hours during his formative years, developing balance, rhythm, timing, and skill that would last a lifetime. Indeed, from 1914 through 1918, when Jones entered college, he played as often as he liked and, in addition, competed in numerous tournaments and charity exhibitions.^{xxix}

The 1919-1924 seasons, Jones's college days, were little different. To be sure, he studied hard and made excellent grades. He even structured his golf schedule around academic requirements (a rarity in contemporary collegiate athletics). Jones only traveled abroad once during that period, in 1921 when he embarrassed himself at the British Open. Yet Jones played for the Georgia Tech "Golden Tornado," an unofficial golf squad, and, although not a member of the university's team, he traveled with the Harvard University linksmen, playing many practice

rounds and scheduled exhibitions. Indeed, some credited his "break through" victory at Inwood to his long hours of practice on the north's fast, bent-grass greens. When Jones emerged from Harvard in 1924, he probably had played as much golf as any other twenty-two-year-old in the world.^{xxx}

The amount of golf that Jones played did change during the last seven years of his career, and it reached both extremes; that is, in his competitive prime Jones had periods where he played a lot and other periods in which he played the least number of rounds in his life. Commentators never mention it, but Jones spent the winters of 1925 and 1926 playing golf with the professionals in Florida. In 1926 he played his famous seventy-two-hole match against Walter Hagen, the leading professional of the era. Jones did not simply visit Florida for a week to play that match; he lived there for the winter, promoting real estate, especially the Whitfield Estates Golf Club in Sarasota for the Adair Realty and Trust Company. He also played dozens of exhibitions and entered several open events, including the Florida West Coast Opens of 1925 and 1926. Rumors even circulated prior to the 1926 winter season that Jones would team up with Tommy Armour, his usual exhibition partner, and compete in the short-lived Professional Winter Golf League. Of course Jones never went that far, but he did play his share of winter golf.^{xxxi}

It is true that in the winters of 1927, 1928, and 1929, Jones played much less golf. During those seasons, he probably averaged no more than a dozen rounds, or one round per week between the months of December and February. O. B. Keeler claimed that Jones played only two and a half rounds in the winter of 1927. Given Jones's performance in the U.S. Open that year, Keeler may have been telling the truth. Those winters probably gave rise to the "clubs in the closet in November and not touched again until April" stories. Yet even in the late 1920s,

Jones played winter golf, albeit sparingly and much less than usual. And as all Jones fans know, the Atlantan took the 1930 season very seriously, playing more practice rounds and entering a couple of professional winter tournaments to tune up his game. Finally, it is worth repeating that for at least six months out of every year between 1915 and 1930, during the spring and summer, golf was indeed Jones's priority, and he played a great deal of it.^{xxxii}

What does all of this mean? Was Jones not such a naturally gifted golfer after all? Did he play just as often as the professionals? It is all a matter of perspective. Jones worshippers, for example, would argue that there is little difference between leaving the clubs in the closet from November to April and playing only a few rounds between December and February, as Jones did in 1927, or playing only a dozen rounds in that three-month period, as Jones did in 1929. Some golfers, particularly those who know the difference between a perfectly timed, balanced swing and a loose, inefficient one, might argue otherwise. In any case, it is true that during the 1927-1929 seasons Jones played much less golf than the professionals he was beating in the U.S. Open, which would suggest that Jones had extraordinary balance, timing, body control, and physical abilities necessary to play golf; in light of that and his tournament record, it is fair to conclude that Jones was indeed a natural golf genius, probably the most naturally-endowed golfer ever.

Even Jones, though, said that it took him at least "a month's hard practice" to prepare for an event. Indeed, he never claimed to have taken six months off, to have picked up his clubs, and to have so easily beaten the world's best golfers. It seemed that way at times, so sportswriters began referring to Jones as "the Atlanta golf machine"; only a machine, not a mere man, they implied, was capable of such performances. Jones never liked being compared to a

machine, and he probably would have found many of the statements made about him by today's commentators ridiculous, specifically concerning his amount of play.^{xxxiii}

Another common misconception concerning Jones is that he played the game purely for the love of the sport and competition. The truth is that Jones never did accept any prize money. It is also true that Jones did not endorse golf equipment or other products before November 1930. Neither did Jones give lessons. In those ways, Jones was a simon-pure amateur.

On the other hand, in 1927 Jones began writing a series of syndicated newspaper articles for which he eventually received some \$25,000. The year before, moreover, he accepted a Pierce-Arrow sedan from the city of Sarasota, a gift of thanks for his help in promoting the young city. To be sure, other amateur athletes had accepted gifts and signed similar writing contracts, and neither act violated the USGA's amateur code. Still, those opportunities and gifts would not have been bestowed on Jones were he not a top amateur golfer.^{xxxiv}

In January 1928 Jones received resounding adulation when he returned a gift of \$50,000 to the citizens of Atlanta. Civic boosters had given Jones the money a few months earlier to recognize his contributions to the city and to help him purchase a house. The USGA advised Jones that his acceptance of the gift would not be in the best interests of amateur golf, and Jones agreed. Had he so desired, he could have resisted the authority of the USGA. Other amateur athletes, especially in tennis, defied their ruling bodies. The fact that Jones did not reveals a lot about his personality. Conservative by nature, he found it fairly easy to submit to golf's authorities and traditions.^{xxxv}

Yet the Atlantan was hardly a financial simpleton. Jones understood perfectly that his unique and strong public image rested on his amateurism. If he exercised discipline in the short

run and turned back the \$50,000, he would later be in a position to retire and make much more money. Jones obviously had no way of knowing just how successful he would be, but even in 1928 he was confident of his ability to cash in. In fact, Jones already had compiled an impressive competitive record and there was no reason to believe that he would not continue to dominate his sport. So as a young superstar, he was in a position to profit any time that he wanted to. Most importantly, if Jones waited and turned down the \$50,000, he would maintain his spotless image, the respect of the public, and the admiration of the USGA. The entire episode underscores Jones's impeccable judgement, financial and otherwise.

The returned \$50,000 gift contributed to an estimated \$250,000 motion-picture deal. Eventually, Jones also made thousands of dollars from his contract with A. G. Spalding & Brothers, the sale of his autobiographies, a series of radio interviews, and Augusta National. It is, then, patently false to suggest that as an amateur Jones profited little from his sport; in fact, he probably made much more money from golf in the long run, having played as an amateur, than he ever would have made in the short run as a professional, accepting purse money and thus transforming--or diluting--his image. Walter Hagen, the nation's top professional and exhibitionist, is widely considered to be the first golfer to make a million dollars. True, but Hagen was never offered a \$250,000 contract for anything, much less for a dozen film shorts a year after the stock-market crashed.^{xxxvi}

Some would have us believe that all of this happened to Jones by accident--that he unwittingly came into all of this money. A few continue to argue ludicrously that, despite all of his golf dealings, Jones did not really profit from the sport. Some fans seem almost incapable of believing that the Atlantan could ever have been motivated by economic self-interest. Those

notions provide comfort in a contemporary era in which there are seemingly no pure amateurs, not even in the collegiate ranks or in the Olympics, and in which professional athletes sign multi-million-dollar contracts before playing a single game. If comforting, though, such an image of Jones is dishonest.

The mythologizing of Jones has been understandable and probably inevitable, given his life and accomplishments. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate for at least two reasons. First, Jones never made any pretenses to perfection--moral, ethical, athletic, or otherwise--and it is simply unfair to burden him with such an image. Second, the myths obscure the man, who in reality reveals much about his times and still generally offers an admirable example.

In 1927, just as he was rising to superstardom, Jones confessed to a reporter, "of course, it's nice to have people say nice things about you, but honestly, when New York papers make me out such a glowing example of moral discipline I don't know what to make of it." The most remarkable quality of Jones's character was his humility; he had a rare sense of his importance in relation to others. He was never accused of being rude or inconsiderate or a braggart. Jones's most bitter rival was Charles "Chick" Evans; the Chicago amateur grew to despise and envy Jones, but the worst thing that he ever accused Jones of was signing a contract with Warner Brothers a few weeks before he retired (a charge, incidentally, that was never substantiated). Not even Evans suggested that Jones was an egomaniac.^{xxxvii}

Because of his sense of humility, Jones did not want to be considered a paragon--which in some ways he really was not. He made inconsistent statements. For example, in the summer of 1929, having just won the U. S. Open, Jones told reporters that he was going to give Calamity Jane a rest for a couple of months and focus on his law practice until the U.S. Amateur in the fall.

Two days later he shot a 66 at East Lake, and over the next three weeks, he played in no less than six publicized exhibitions. Like every other amateur athlete of the period, he was sometimes disingenuous about his standing.^{xxxviii}

Beyond that, Jones engaged in several of the traditional vices. In the 1920s he drank regularly, if usually not heavily, and thus, in the age of Prohibition consistently broke the law. Despite popular belief, not everyone did that. There were plenty of traditionally-valued Americans who shunned the alcohol that Jones so easily consumed. He also liked to gamble. Jones was not addicted to either vice, but, as a chain smoker, he was thoroughly addicted to tobacco, and although he eventually learned to control it, Jones had a fiery temper, as well as his father's proclivity for profanity.^{xxxix}

In addition, Jones was characteristically conservative on social questions. In recent years, Augusta National and the Masters have come in for a lot of criticism for their perceived exclusivity and insensitivity to black Americans. It is not fair to saddle Jones with all that has been wrong about Augusta and the Masters, and neither is it accurate to credit him with all that is admirable about the club and its tournament. The truth is that by the mid-1950s, when the Masters became a major tour event, Jones was becoming physically weaker by the month, so Clifford Roberts assumed power, shaping the club and tournament for good and bad. Moreover, there are absolutely no incidents of racial hate in the lives of R. T., R. P., or Bobby Jones; if never unmindful of their superior racial status, the Joneses were very popular among blacks they knew personally.^{xl}

That said, Jones did not lend public support to progressive civil rights policies. He campaigned for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and seemed satisfied with Ike's social

conservatism. In truth, Jones never seemed anything but comfortable in the New South's segregated society. Still, if the Atlantan held values and engaged in behavior that were less than admirable, he seems to have understood that much better than his legions of worshippers.^{xli}

Bobby Jones was simply a product of the era in which he came of age. Since at least the mid-1960s, professional historians have discarded the interpretation of the 1920s as being a frivolous interlude between the deadly serious World War I and the onset of the Great Depression. Scholars of the period have concluded that it was a much more important and complicated decade than once believed. It was a period in which Americans struggled to assimilate a generation of intense socio-economic development marked by the rise of an urban, modern society. Many Americans were caught between the old and the new, wanting to preserve the best of the past, while carefully moving into the future. The generation that cheered Jones on to victory was plagued by a sense of insecurity and ambivalence, the result of rapid change.^{xlii}

Placed in his proper historical context, Jones reflects the temper of his times. His lineage and background were emblematic of broader changes in social thought. Through grandfather R. T. and father R. P., Bobby Jones received a mixture of Victorian and modern values. His father, like so many other American youths in the 1890s, had essentially rebelled against the moral absolutism of R. T.'s Victorian age. Both men and their generations heavily influenced the life and thought of Bobby Jones; indeed, his commitment to family, education, duty to country, personal modesty, and, of course, amateurism and sportsmanship, are all indicative of the traditional values of his grandfather's generation. On the other hand, his willingness to violate Prohibition, his heavy smoking, and his decision to organize so much of

his life around a sport, even if as an amateur, are manifestations of the modern values of his father's generation. Racial views were representative of the generations and cultures of every Jones.

There is too much myth surrounding Jones, particularly his competitive career. One may argue that the myths do more harm than simply misrepresent history. Ultimately, the "clubs in the closet" stories and the unwillingness to acknowledge Jones's natural and savvy economic motivations idealize the Atlantan to an unhealthy extreme. The Jones image often loses touch with reality. His humanity is glossed over, which leads to a trivialization of his accomplishments in some cases and, in others, a belief that the admirable behavior which Jones modeled and the positive values he held are too lofty for ordinary mortals. Ultimately, Jones becomes a symbol or a monument, revered but somehow unreal and essentially irrelevant to everyday life.

Must we say that Jones never touched his clubs between November and April? Is it not enough to say that he had significant interests apart from golf, and that he was not consumed with winning? Must we imply that Jones was without any sense of commercial interest? Is it not enough to say that he exercised remarkable financial discipline and understood that there were more important things in life than making money? Must we suggest that Jones was above moral reproach? Is it not enough to say that he was honest, faithful to his family and friends, humble and considerate of others, and that he reflected much of what was good and some of what was bad in his times and the larger society?

Bobby Jones is too important to be dismissed and too complex to be trivialized. His life and legacy are a rich example to a contemporary society that all too often seems plagued by

infidelity, shameless self-promotion, and an obsession with expediency, winning, and material gain. We should not be careless of his memory; we should be its honest caretakers.

NOTES

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- i. Interview with Lewis Jones, Jr. (first cousin), Canton, Georgia, July 31, 1997.
 - ii. Ibid.; interview with Robert T. Jones, IV, Atlanta, Georgia, October 14, 1997; The Story of A Man, A Town, and A Mill (Canton Textile Mills, 1949). Lewis Jones lent me a copy of this brief book, a work that commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Canton Textile Mills and the life of Robert Tyre Jones, Sr.
 - iii. Ibid.; Canton Cherokee Advance, October 29, 1920.
 - iv. Interview with Lewis Jones, Jr.
 - v. Ibid.; letter to Mrs. Robert Ingram, February 13, 1970, roll 2, Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., Collection, United States Golf Association's Golf House Library, Far Hills, New Jersey (hereafter "RTJ").
 - vi. R. P. Jones obituary, Atlanta Constitution-Journal, July 16, 1956, Bobby Jones File, Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta Georgia (hereafter "BJF"); St Paul Pioneer-Press, July 8, 1930; O. B. Keeler, Boys' Life of Bobby Jones (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1931), 5.
 - vii. Richard Miller, Triumphant Journey: The Saga of Bobby Jones and the Grand Slam of Golf (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), 29.
 - viii. Ibid.; Atlanta Constitution, March 19, 1902; Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., Down the Fairway

(N.Y.: Blue Ribbon Books, 1927), 20; Keeler, Boys' Life, 1-2, and "How Bobby Jones Got Started," American Golfer, 23 (5 June 1920), 4.

ix. Jones, Down the Fairway, 22-5.

x. Philadelphia Inquirer, September 8, 1916.

xi. "The Southern Championship," Golfers Magazine, 27 (August 1915), 54-5; "From the South," American Golfer, 14 (July 1915), 273-6.

xii. New York Times, September 8, 1916, 9.

xiii. For the best discussion of Jones's ignominious St. Andrews collapse, see Sidney L. Matthew, Life and Times of Bobby Jones: Portrait of a Gentleman (Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 1995), 120-1.

xiv. Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., Golf Is My Game (N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1960), 93.

xv. Pittsburg Press, August 16-26, 1919; New York Times, November 30, 1919, X, 4.

xvi. Keeler, Boys' Life, 204.

xvii. Atlanta Constitution, November 18, 1930; Matthew, Life and Times of Bobby Jones, 200.

xviii. "Jones Joins Spalding," Professional Golfer of America, 12 (July 1931), 22; Jones, Golf Is My Game, 193.

xix. Steve Eubanks, Augusta: Home of the Masters Tournament (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1997); Curt Sampson, The Masters: Money, Power, and Golf in Augusta, Georgia (N.Y.: Villard Press, 1998); Clifford Roberts, The Story of the Augusta National Golf Club (N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976).

xx. Atlanta Constitution, March 28, 1934.

xxi. New York Times, April 28, 1936, 1; May 1, 1936, 29; May 3, 1936, IV, 8; "Bobby Jones' Home Site of Decorator Show House No. 8," newspaper clipping in BJF.

xxii. One may piece together the basics of Jones's military service through various documents on rolls 5 and 6 of the RTJ. See also newspaper clippings in BJF and Miller, Triumphant Journey, 218.

xxiii. See Richard Gordin, "Robert Tyre Jones, Jr." (doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1967), 167-70; Miller, Triumphant Journey, 22-48; John A. Anson, Edward C. Benzel, and Issam A. Awad, eds., Syringomyelia and the Chiari Malformations (Park Ridge, IL: American Association of Neurological Surgeons, 1997).

xxiv. New York Times, October 19, 1949, 44; Alexa Stirling, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met," article, BJF.

xxv. There are approximately four hundred pieces of correspondence between Eisenhower and Jones; most of it is located at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, and the rest is housed at the USGA in RTJ. The letters generally deal with such things as birthday wishes, bridge games, or golf advice, but they do suggest that a significant degree of familiarity existed between Jones and Eisenhower. (Eisenhower papers will hereafter be referred to as "DDE.") See also, Eubanks, Augusta; Sampson, The Masters.

xxvi. Letter to Police Chief Herbert T. Jenkins, May 13, 1965, roll 1; letter to Officer Hoyt Duncan, April 5, 1965, roll 1; letter to Edward Dewey, March 3, 1958, roll 1, RTJ.

xxvii. Atlanta Constitution and Journal, December 19, 1971; December 21, 1971.

xxviii. New York Times, December 19, 1971, 60; Atlanta Constitution and Journal, December 19, 1971; Augusta Chronicle, December 20, 1971. For an excellent collection of personal reflections on Jones, see J. Edmund Welch, "Robert Tyre (Bobby) Jones, Jr.: His Victories Over Golf and Physical Afflictions," a paper presented at the North American Society for Sport History and located in BJF.

xxix. Philadelphia Inquirer, September 8, 1916; Jones, Down the Fairway, 19-85.

xxx. Atlanta Constitution, May 8-9, 1919; New York Times, October 11, 1922, 16; October 14, 1922, 9; February 10, 1923, 17; February 26, 1923, 11; May 22, 1923, 16.

xxxi. Joe Kelly, "Golf in the Promised Land of Ponce De Leon," Golf Illustrated, 22 (January 1925), 14; "Jones and Adair," Southern Golfer, 6 (15 February 1925), 40; "Palmetto Dedicated," *ibid.*, (1 March 1925); New York Times, February 28, 1925, 10; March 3, 1925, 17; Nan O'Reilly, "Bobby Jones to Play in South," Professional Golfer of America, 6 (November 1925), 15; "Hagen Again West Coast Winner," *ibid.*, 6 (April 1926), 14; "Tournament Notes," Golf Illustrated, 24 (February 1926), 24; Atlanta Constitution, March 24-25, 1926.

xxxii. Jones probably played the least during the winter of 1927. O. B. Keeler claimed that the Atlantan played "precisely two and one-half rounds of golf between November 20 and February 20 and was going to [law] school steadily every weekday." See Keeler, "Bobby Shows the Home Folk," American Golfer, 30 (May 1927), 17. During the winter of 1929, according to Grantland Rice, Jones played six or seven rounds; Keeler put the number at ten; see Rice, "They Can't Stop Jones--Yet," American Golfer, 32 (August 1929), 11; and, Keeler, "The Challenge of Horton Smith," American Golfer, 32 (August 1929).

xxxiii. New York Times, January 24, 1928, 33.

xxxiv. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1927, 12; Sarasota (Florida) Herald, August 1, 1926.

xxxv. Atlanta Constitution, November 19, 1927; New York Times, January 8, 1928, XI, 1; "Rob Jones Explains," Professional Golfer of America, 8 (February 1928), 20.

xxxvi. Matthew, Life and Times of Bobby Jones, 200; Atlanta Constitution and New York Herald-Tribune, November 18, 1930; Walter Hagen with Margaret Seaton Heck, The Walter Hagen Story, (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

xxxvii. New York Times, July 23, 1927, 9; July 31, 1927, VIII, 2.

xxxviii. Atlanta Constitution, July 5-31, 1929.

xxxix. New York Times, July 23, 1927, 9; July 31, 1927, VIII, 2; interview with Charles Elliott, July 31, 1997, Covington, Georgia.

xl. Eubanks, Augusta; Sampson, Masters.

xli. New York Times, October 31, 1951, 18; "Bobby Jones Treasurer of Ga. Citizens for Ike," newspaper clipping in BJJF.

xlii. Stanley Coben, Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lynn Duménil, The Modern Temper (N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1995); Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930 (reprint, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990); Paula Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the Twenties (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1977); William E. Leuchtenberg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).