

ENJOYING THE PRESIDENCY

By RODNEY BEAN

A WAYFARER on the Speedway in Washington at 8 o'clock one morning stopped for a few minutes to watch a tall, gray-haired man of athletic build, preparing to drive a ball from Tee 1 of the municipal golf links.

There were few players on the nine-hole course. The party of six, of which the tall man was the centre, attracted but scant attention. The wayfarer moved a few steps closer. One of the six raised a hand in warning—a signal to stop. The tall man addressed the ball with good form, as the golfers say, and concentrating the full power of his broad shoulders behind the swing of the club, sent the sphere sailing down the course for a drive of more than 200 yards. He "followed through" and stood poised for a moment, watching the flight of the ball.

"A beautiful drive, Mr. President," exclaimed one of the group. "You are in splendid form this morning."

The onlooker, overhearing the remark, rubbed his eyes and then gazed intently again at the golfer. The man who had signaled to him to halt, approached. "Who is he?" asked the wayfarer. "President Harding?"

"Yes," replied the other—he was a Secret Service agent. "And he's some little old golfer. He swings a wicked driver."

Surprise has been expressed that a President of the United States should elect to play frequently on the municipal golf links, which have been built along the Speedway with a few minutes' walk of the White House. Mr. Harding, however, seems to like the course. He has played there several times, in the early morning, and on a few occasions in the afternoon. The links are convenient, and the necessity for a trip to one of the private courses on the outskirts of the city is eliminated. Any one may play on the municipal links who has 25 cents to put up as a fee. The President always insists on digging down in his pocket and paying his quarter. Above all else, the President is democratic and resents favors. So the caretaker accepts the coin gravely and without protest.

On the morning to which reference is made the Presidential golfing party included the President, two United States Senators, the Under Secretary of State and two Secret Service agents. The White House Airedale was a spectator. The President was the life of the game. He

swapped stories with his companions as they hurried down the course, but none the less played with an earnestness that stamped him as the true golfer. It was a pleasure to watch his play, and just as evident that playing was a pleasure to him.

The contest proceeded briskly until one of the Secret Service men called attention to the fact that an important engagement would make it necessary to return to the White House. With an exclamation of regret that the nine holes could not be completed, Mr. Harding thrust his putter

he is determined also to get some fun out of the Presidency, even if he has to get up before breakfast to do it. And golf is not his only medium for enjoying life.

Sojourners in Washington who expect to find a man of serious mien and deeply lined face at the White House are in for a surprise. If they are fortunate enough to obtain an introduction, they meet a President who is human to the core; a man who relishes laughter and play whenever occasion permits, and who enjoys good fellowship and close con-

the crowds obtained in the opportunity of viewing the White House at close range. Whenever it is possible he likes nothing better than to join in the frolics. This attitude on his part is not a pose. It is real, as everybody knows who knows the President.

When receiving visitors Mr. Harding is not only affable but almost always smiling. Scores who have had the privilege of personal contact with him since he went to the White House are prepared to give testimony as to that. His friends

of the youngsters at the White House, laughed and joked with them, and, to their delight and amazement, subscribed \$50 for tickets.

There is more of the old Rooseveltian atmosphere about the White House today than at any time since the late President Roosevelt packed up at the end of his last term. The Colonel obtained keen pleasure from his correspondence with almost every class of citizens. So does President Harding. It was a happy day in the life of Roosevelt when a delegation of his Rough Riders called upon him

or some other unusual happening was being staged. President Harding also is finding pleasure in unusual happenings. A few weeks after his inauguration he received a delegation of Indians in their native costumes. He took time to entertain them and posed with them for the photographers.

Roosevelt played "harder," it is true. He was a younger and sturdier man. He rode spirited horses about his beloved Rock Creek park, a large tract of woodland which he caused to be developed because the rough beauty of the spot appealed to him, and miles of bridlepaths were necessary to meet the needs of so vigorous a body. He led panting diplomats on long hikes and, on one occasion, by arranging a game of follow your leader, forced the dignified German Ambassador, Count Speck von Sternberg, to ford one of the streams which winds through the Rock Creek woods. The famous "tennis Cabinet" had scant opportunity to rest wearied muscles. It was a period of strenuous work and strenuous play that has not been equaled in White House history.

While President Harding has not gone to these extremes, he is getting all he can out of life as President, in a somewhat quieter manner. The tennis court is again in operation, and, although he is a man of less vigorous physique than Colonel

Roosevelt, Mr. Harding plays a fast game. He has acquired the hiking habit, too. Up to this time his walks have been restricted largely to tours about the Speedway in the morning. These walks were initiated because his medical adviser, General Sawyer, recommended them. The President has a vigorous stride, which, because of his length of limb, tests the endurance of his companions. And he enjoys a baseball game—in fact, he may be called a fan. He agreed to open the American League season at Washington by tossing the first ball

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Mr. Harding Profits by Example.

into the golf bag and hurried away. President Harding is of the type of men who believe in getting a bit of joy out of life, even when grave problems are pending. He has been informed by his friends, among them the faithful Dr. E. C. Sawyer, now Brig. Gen. Sawyer, that the saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," applies to the President of the United States as well as to every other citizen of the land. Mr. Harding follows this philosophy. He has adopted a program of long working hours, during which he applies himself to the problems of State, but

tact with others as have few Presidents in recent years.

It was typical of President Harding that he should order the gates guarding the driveways leading from Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House thrown open to the public a few hours after he was inaugurated on March 4. It was characteristic, also, that he should order restored the ancient custom of staging an egg-rolling contest on the White House grounds on the Monday following Easter Sunday. He frankly enjoyed watching the children at play and observed the pleasure of

say he hasn't lost a jot of the happy disposition which won popularity for him among his co-workers in the United States Senate. There is always the twinkle in his eye. The happy remark which gives pleasure to others is ever ready.

He is a lover of children, and likes nothing more than the chance to talk over his own boyhood days. Recently he wrote a letter of encouragement to a group of boys who were interested in a ball to obtain funds for the construction of a swimming pool. The President was unable to attend, but he received a delegation

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out upon the diamond, not solely because it was a thing which he was expected to do, but because he wanted to have a good time at the game. He even kept a box score, following each play and joining in the applause. He didn't just hurry to the ball park, look on for a few minutes, and then hurry away. He stayed to the bitter end.

The incident of the swimming pool supplied an illustration of one side of the President's character. A 12-year-old boy, John D. Wackerman by name, was mightily interested in that pool and was anxious that there should be a large attendance at the ball, which was under the auspices of the women of the Community House. He obtained a piece of paper and a pencil, and, despite the remarks of his companions that no attention would be paid to his appeal by so great and busy a man as the President, mailed a note to the White House pleading with Mr. Harding to attend.

"I told the boys," he wrote, "that I did not believe any President would not let the boys go without a swimming pool when he could let us have it by paying 50 or 75 cents for a ticket to a ball. If you come everybody will come and we can have our swimming pool, so please come. P. S.—Please write me a letter and let us know. The fellows are so discouraged to think we can't have a pool."

It was a busy day at the White House, but the letter was unusual enough to attract comment. The President heard about it, put aside other business for the moment, and dictated this reply:

My dear John:

I received your letter this morning, saying that the boys were very much disappointed because they had heard I could not attend the ball in the interest of your swimming pool fund. I am exceedingly glad you wrote to me about this, John, because I do not want the boys to think I am not interested in their getting a swimming pool. I have used swimming pools myself, in my time, and there are one or two swimming pools in the creek out near Caledonia, Ohio, that I would like to get into again right now, if it were possible.

You tell the boys that I hope the ball will raise all the money that is needed to provide the pool, and that if some of you will come around to the White House with some tickets, I will buy some, whether I can attend or not.

Yours for the Swimming Pool,
WARRREN G. HARDING.

It wasn't just a bluff, either, as the Wackerman youngster was prepared to explain when he strode out of the White House grounds a short time after receiving the letter. He was the proud possessor of a fifty-dollar bill and a twenty-dollar bill. President Harding had interrupted an important conference with the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Mellon, to talk about swimming pools. The President gave the fifty-dollar bill, and wouldn't consider taking any change. Mr. Mellon furnished the \$20.

The President received recently a delegation of veterans of the Rainbow Division and talked with them on the man-to-man basis of the proud record they had established in the war. On another occasion he presented the Congressional Medal of Honor to Chief Gunner Robert E. Cox. He held a little get together meeting with the Knights of Pythias on his return to the capital from a recent trip to New York. As a member of Canby Lodge No. 51 of Marion, Ohio, he was introduced as "Brother Harding."

"My membership in the Knights of Pythias," he said, "is one of my

proudest possessions. I have always cherished its teachings as an inspiration for good and as a dedication to honesty, liberty and justice. I am a firm believer in fraternal organizations. They go far toward the making of better citizens and finer nations."

Another organization which claims President Harding as a member is the National Association of Horseshoe Throwers. A delegation called at the White House not long ago, offered him the job of Honorary President because of his exalted position and his proficiency at the game, and presented to him a silver horseshoe. The President has a pronounced weakness for this old-fashioned sport. His last contest was at Marion during the closing days of the campaign.

The White House has been a more accessible spot since President Harding's inauguration than for many years. The Paulist Choristers sang there recently, and a concert was given in connection with the reception to the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The President is partial to the theatre, too. Since his election he has attended both musical shows and the more serious drama. As a rule, the President and Mrs. Harding are accompanied by a member of the Cabinet or family friends.

"Society" in Washington exhibited interest recently when the President and Mrs. Harding dined informally at the New Willard Hotel with Controller Crissinger and Mrs. Crissinger. Other guests were Brig. Gen. Sawyer, Mrs. Sawyer and Charles W. Dawes. The President is not formal when he doesn't have to be. He is having his fun as well as his responsibilities and worries in the Presidency.