

HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Since 1933, Heinleins have made golf their life's work

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HANOVER TWP. — This is a story about a family entrenched in the golf business for almost 80 years now.

So deep-rooted in golf are the Heinleins that one of them died on a course he helped build while another got married on a second course built by his ancestors.

"It's the only thing we know how to do," said Mike Heinlein, the 58-year-old co-owner/superintendent of Ponderosa Golf Course.

Officially, four generations of the Heinlein clan have made golf their life's work. In a few years when a few of the Heinlein youngsters are old enough to draw a paycheck, a fifth generation figures to continue the family tradition.

It all started back in 1933 when Michael John Heinlein and his sons Herbert and Harold built an 18-hole course on the family farm in Moon Township. They named their new course Bon Air.

Then in 1965, Herbert and Harold built an 18-hole course in Hanover Township. Developed on historic property where native American Indians used to battle settlers in the 1770s, the second course built by the Heinleins was called Ponderosa.

In the 1970s, Harold Heinlein and his two sons (Don and Jim) took control of Bon Air while Herbert Heinlein and his two children (Mike and Jan) began managing Ponderosa.

The Heinlein association with Bon Air ended in 2005 when the course was sold to Moon Township and renamed Moon Golf Club. But Mike Heinlein believes that Ponderosa will remain in the family for years to come.

Two of his four sons work full-time at Ponderosa: Michael John, 31, and Matthew, 29. Mike Heinlein's youngest son Benjamin is a senior at California University of Pennsylvania. He's majoring in golf course management and figures to be the head pro at Ponderosa some day.

Meanwhile, co-owner/pro shop manager Jan Fischer, 71, has a son, 39-year-old Ray Fischer, who works at Ponderosa.

They all pitch in and take care of all the duties ranging from cutting grass to setting flagsticks to even occasionally cooking in the kitchen.

"They can't do anything

else," Mike Heinlein said with a laugh when asked why he believes the fourth generation of Heinleins will remain in the golf business. "They're like me. Except for (my son) Benjamin, there was no college, no furthering of our education after high school. All they know is golf. Like me, they got an education on the golf course."

Even at an early age, the fifth generation is starting to get involved. Ray Fischer's two children — 8-year-old Madison and 5-year-old R.J. — do small chores at Ponderosa. Likewise for Matthew Heinlein's two kids, 7-year-old Mason and 5-year-old Marissa.

"Well, I pretty much grew up on the golf course," said Ray Fischer, who, like his uncle and two cousins, lives in a house on the Ponderosa property.

"I've been working here for 23 years. I started when I was 16. My Uncle Mike taught me everything about the golf business. The pay isn't always great. But it's what we do and we take great pride in it.

"I think we have an outstanding public golf course. We've put in an awful lot of work into it over the past couple years. It may be a little hilly. But it's challenging