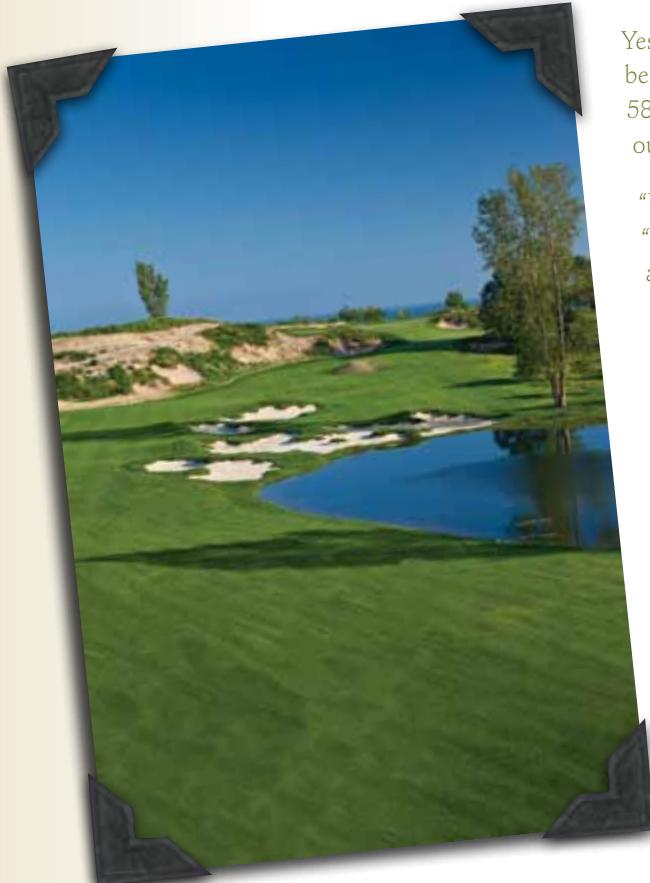


GREAT LAKE STORY

CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE JOURNAL OF JOAN WILLET
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Yesterday Rose phoned from her public relations office in Grand Rapids just before noon here in Chicago. After hearing Scott was out shopping for my 58th birthday (a.k.a. picking up the new Sun Mountain golf bag I'd ordered), our only child gave me the best gift of all.

"Was just wondering whether you prefer 'Grandma' or 'Nana,'" she said, "because I'm expecting a new client who will be requiring introductions around March 16 next spring."

Now, I want to say it was this WONDEROUS day that inspired our desire for a second home in Southwest Michigan — that our search for a retreat beyond Chicago's congestion was centered around our beloved daughter, her even more adored pastry chef husband (try his orange sponge cake), and our soon-to-be, couldn't-wait-to-see first grandchild.

But that would be a lie.

ON COURSE FOR FINDING HOME

One month prior to Rose and Ben's big news, Scott and I had been snailing along the Dan Ryan. A little game of Guess Where I'd Rather Be evolved into plans for a weekend golf getaway. Driving back, rested and rejuvenated, we'd reached an unanimous vote: It was time to invest in a destination escape of our own.

Of course we still relish life in our skyscraper condo, just blocks from the Navy Pier. Having both retired last year, in fact, we've been embracing all of the Windy City's big-city dynamic, from museums and the planetarium to restaurants and the symphony, from the Art Institute's lions to the Bears at Soldier Field.

But after 20-plus years of living downtown, we'd also been dreaming of greener pastures. Of wooded trails and open beaches. Of savoring wines and just-picked berries, exploring galleries and finding antiques.

Of connecting in a community with heart, and conversing at sunset without saying a word.

Of teeing up a whole lot more!

And now, with a grandbaby soon in need of our spoiling, we both knew what community closer to Rose and Ben was calling us to stay for more than a weekend. Between them, these sister cities offered everything we'd yearned for outside of Chicago.

BENTON HARBOR/SR. JOSEPH

Backtrack to Aug. 10, 2010. Scott and I are in a friendly crowd fringing the 10th hole at The Golf Club of Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor, just 90 minutes east of Chicago.

To celebrate the Grand Opening of this first and only public Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course on Lake Michigan, The Golden Bear himself is joined by close friends Johnny Miller, Arnold Palmer and Tom Watson for a champions' charity round.

After Palmer's putt drifts back down to his shoes and Miller blames the green's design, Nicklaus cracks and sinks an uphill, high-speed, 100-foot putt that's become legendary.

Since then, Scott and I have been returning to Harbor Shores to play this scenic, challenging course. And we're looking even more forward to seeing how in 2012 and 2014 Senior PGA championship players handle its dramatic, master-planned settings — along rivers and through woodlands and up into Lake Michigan's blissful dunes, where the wind's always a challenge.

We never tire of playing here in Benton Harbor.

But just as we needed to experience Nicklaus's lustrous fairways for ourselves, we've come back now to tour and learn more about what surrounds them. Harbor Shores offers four maintenance-free real estate communities, all interwoven with 12-plus miles of walking and biking trails, and all within a stroll of either the Paw Paw River or Lake Michigan.

Our first stop will be walking a few of The Fairways' 29 signature homesites — and venturing deeper into this custom community designed especially for golfers like us.

Joan and Scott Willet's exploration of The Fairways at Harbor Shores continues in the Fall Issue of Michigan BLUE. To learn more visit www.mibluemag.com.



Photos courtesy Harbor Shores Resort