

## THE UNEXPECTED PRIZE

By Fred Hobbs

From time to time in my 80-plus years of life I have been fortunate enough to win a few prizes, but only once was it a “biggie”.

Oh, yes, years ago at a company picnic I won a set of screwdrivers. It was welcome, because not being “handy”, the prize represented nearly the outer limits of my ability to create, repair or otherwise deal with any task that required the use of tools. And for some reason, on several occasions I have drawn a winning ticket good for wearing apparel such as t-shirt, a hoodie and even a jacket. My closet still contains a sweatshirt won in commemoration of “Elvis the Tribute, the Musical Event of a Lifetime.” Sponsored by one my public relations clients at the time, Harrah’s Casinos in Black Hawk and Central City, the extravaganza unfolded in Memphis on October 8, 1994.

In fifth grade I won a blue ribbon as the champion of a classroom “Spell Down.” (Now, I rely on the computer’s spell check, so I’m reasonably sure I could not win such a prize today.) Prizes for athletic achievement always eluded me, except if awarding a “booby” prize for the last kid picked for the neighborhood baseball game.

That was true at least until a sunny day in the Spring of 1947. My three older brothers invited me to caddy for them while they played a round of golf at a course in Longmont. I was just learning the game. They were all excellent players on their high school golf team and one, Sam, had potential to be a pro. They also had very little money to spare. And, I had none.

Consequently, on this occasion they decided to designate me as a caddy and, thereby avoid my greens fee. On hole number 3, however, noting that the location was not visible at the clubhouse, they let me take a crack at the 110 yard par 3 hole. Not being sure I could reach it with a nine iron, they suggested I use a seven.

I swung and the ball sailed toward the flag. We all thought the ball had rolled over the green, but as we approached the scene we couldn’t see it anywhere.

The ball was an old one with a couple of cuts in it, so my brothers decided to go ahead and putt out and if they didn’t find the ball, just forget it. As caddy, I was responsible for removing the flagstick from the hole. As I began to raise the stick, there it was...the ball, cuts and all. I had accomplished the most difficult of all golf shots, a hole in one!

My brothers insisted that the event should be recorded and celebrated. One slight problem. My name was not on the scorecard, as required for authentication. So Sam erased his name and wrote mine in. The golf course pro authenticated the event and gave Sam a certificate with my name on it good for a prize of a case of Wheaties, “the breakfast of champions” and a box of 24 bottles of Canada Dry Ginger Ale.

I suppose this is a small case of “situational ethics.” True, that public golf course was out a greens fee, but everyone agreed that no judge would ever give me a fine or assess hard time in the slammer. I *was* a legitimate “champion” and truly deserved my prizes.

So, I kept my certificate and the whole family enjoyed a few weeks of free cereal and bottles of pop!