

BEST GOLF BARS / RON KASPRISKE

A golf landmark goes public



Left to right: Arnie in the Coast Guard, the bar, the spike-marked floor.

In the early days of Atlantic City (N.J.) Country Club, which opened in 1897, staff members would ring a bell to let golfers know the last trolley to town was about to depart. The sound didn't sit well with patrons of the club's 19th hole, who would have to choke down their beer and whiskey and grudgingly leave the bar. The bell doesn't ring anymore, but the overwhelming desire to stay remains.

The tap room, named one of Golf Digest's 50 Best 19th Holes (see *the complete listing at golfdigest.com/rankings*), is equal parts cozy hide-out and living museum. The club and bar have

been open to the public since 2007 (it's owned by Harrah's Entertainment Inc., which has four casinos in Atlantic City) and have played a large part in the history of golf in the United States.

Among the too many historical and interesting highlights to note, the term "birdie" was coined at the club in 1903. Babe Zaharias played the piano in the tap room after winning the 1948 U.S. Women's Open on the course. And Sam Snead entertained the room with his trumpet when the first senior-tour event was played there in 1980. Everyone from Bobby Jones to Joe Louis to Willie Mays to Joe Namath has played the course and then had a drink or two, says Kenny Robinson,

the club's historian. And that's a huge reason for the room's appeal.

"Everybody who played here, who was in this room? You gotta be kidding me. This place is fantastic," says patron Wayne Lorentzen, of Monroe, N.J.

Even a then-unknown golfer named Arnold Palmer spent a couple of summers at the club, when he was stationed in the Coast Guard in the early 1950s.

"Arnold's father had to call up [former PGA of America president] Leo Fraser, who owned the club, and ask him if his son could practice there," says Robinson. There's a great picture of Arnie at the club in his Coast Guard uniform (*above, left*).

Although you might not brush up against a celebrity during your visit, you can spend at least an hour looking at the photos and memorabilia on the bar's walls. The room is a classically designed, dark-wood bar, which comes as no surprise because the clubhouse is still the authentic building. The tap room has its original wood flooring—complete with spike marks. The floor is said to have come from timber used to make ships in marinas nearby.

There are few places with a better view. The bar's bay window offers a panorama of the golf course, Lakes Bay and the distant neon lights of Atlantic City casinos.



GO ASK KENNY

At ACCC, there's no better place to be during a rain delay than with Kenny Robinson. The club's historian and caddy-master, Robinson, 74, has worked at ACCC for 39 years. The former comedian has more stories than the bar has glasses.

THE TAB

ATMOSPHERE



CONVIVIALITY



SERVICE



THE HOUSE COCKTAIL

We begged, we pleaded, and we even attempted a bribe, but bartender Ed Kaminski would not reveal the recipe for the club's killer bloody mary. He did say you have to prep the glass with lemon juice and Old Bay seasoning. But then he clammed up.