A Theory of Golf's Mulligan:

David Mulligan, the Bambino,

and a Byrd

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Cover illustration:

Logo of the Mulligan Restaurant (Hollywood, Florida) whose 1972 menu featured the story of how golf's "mulligan" came to be named after David B. Mulligan in Montreal. (*Miami Herald* [Florida], 30 July 1972, p. 247)

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Introduction

Figure 1 D.B. Mulligan. National Hotel Reporter, *9 March 1923, p. 1.*

The Canadian hotelier who is reputed to have been the originator of the golf practice of "taking a mulligan," David Bernard Mulligan (1869-1954), and the immortal baseball great George Herman ("Babe") Ruth (1895-1948) – alias "the Bambino" and alias "the Sultan of Swat" – both played golf at the famous Winged Foot Golf Club around the time that Mulligan claimed to have first used the expression there.

It is not known, however, whether they ever played golf together.

Babe Ruth was a genuine devotee of the Royal and Ancient game, and he played a great deal of golf at Winged Foot, especially in advance of the U.S. Open held on Winged Foot's "west course" at the end of June 1929.

Figure 2 Crouching inside the ropes with cigar in mouth, Babe Ruth watches eventual champion Bobby Jones play a shot at Winged Foot during the second round of the US Open on Friday, 28 June 1929.

Ruth played both the west course and the east course, and on at least one day in June of 1929 (when he was out of the Yankee lineup due to illness), he played them both.

I suspect that it was while playing golf at Winged Foot in the late 1920s or early 1930s that "the Bambino" learned two things:

first, that in friendly, informal matches among some of the members at Winged Foot, a strange practice had arisen (entirely outside the rules of golf) of not counting a player's first drive of the round if he or she regarded it as inadequate and instead allowing it to be played over;

second, that this practice – which Winged Foot members smilingly called "taking a 'Mulligan'" – had been named after one of the men who played golf there.

Curiously, however, the first known published reference to the practice of "taking a mulligan" does not occur in connection with Winged Foot at all.

And it does not even occur in the New York area, but rather in Detroit, Michigan. As Peter Jensen Brown points out, a version of the phrase was used in a newspaper article in 1931 (see "Hey Mulligan Man! – A Second Shot at the History of 'Taking a Mulligan,'" Early Sports and Pop Culture History Blog, 8 May 2017. I am indebted to Brown's extensive, excellent research on this topic. https://esnpc.blogspot.com/2017/05/hey-mulligan-man-second-shot-at-history.html)

Figure 3 M.F. Drukenbrod. Detroit Free Press, 18 February 1958, p. 21.

The phrase appeared in an article by M.F. ("Druke") Drukenbrod (1888-1958), a Detroit sportswriter from the 1920s to the 1950s (he reported in 1931 for the *Detroit Free Press* but later became golf editor for the *Detroit Times*). He used the mysterious new phrase "given a 'mulligan'" in his account of a pro-am match at Detroit's new Rammler Golf Club. The tournament's two-person teams comprised, on the one hand, the best of the local golf professionals, such as Tommy Armour ("The Silver Scot" who had won both the 1927 US Open and the 1930 PGA Championship, as well as that summer's 1931 Open Championship, held for the first time at Carnoustie) and, on the other hand, amateur golfers who were high achievers in other sports, such as baseball:

Figure 4 Tommy Armour (1896-1968), circa 1927.

Second place went to a brand new combination – Tommy Armour, Tam O'Shanter professional, who had as his partner Sammy Byrd ….

Playing from scratch, they had a best ball of 68.

Byrd proved himself a fine golfer by equalling Tommy's individual score of 71, which was tied only by one other player, Al Watrous of Oakland Hills.

Byrd's long driving was one of the day's features.

He played in a foursome which included Clarence Gamber, the hard hitter from Forest Lake, as well as Armour, and the ball player outhit both of them from the tees….

Byrd carried the creek on the eighth with his second.

He gave Tommy two other birdies, one on the 290-yard 14th, where he was one of the few to reach the green.

Gets Another Chance

All were waiting to see what he would do on the 290-yard 18th, with a creek in front of the well-elevated green.

His first drive barely missed carrying the creek and he was given a "mulligan" just for fun.

The second not only was over the creek on the fly but was within a few inches of the elevated green. That's some poke!

*(*Detroit Free Press*, 13 October 1931, p. 16)*

Figure 5 Sam Byrd (left) and Babe Ruth. St. Petersburg, Florida, March 1929. Oakland Tribune *(California), 26 March 1929, p. 37.*

Who was this prodigious driver of the ball – some amateur golfer named "Sam Byrd"?

And how had the term "mulligan" come to be deployed as he played his drive over again for fun in Detroit on 12 October 1931?

Byrd was "Tommy's guest" – he was "the New York Yankee outfielder" (*Detroit Free Press*, 13 October 1931, p. 16).

Ah! Sam Byrd was one of Babe Ruth's teammates!

Now I see: Ruth had learned of the "mulligan" at Winged Foot; Byrd had learned of "the 'mulligan'" through Ruth; and it was Byrd, of course, who asked for a "mulligan" on the 18th hole in Detroit so he could show that – despite his first drive – he was indeed capable of hitting the ball 290 yards through the air all the way to the green.

The Montreal Mulligan

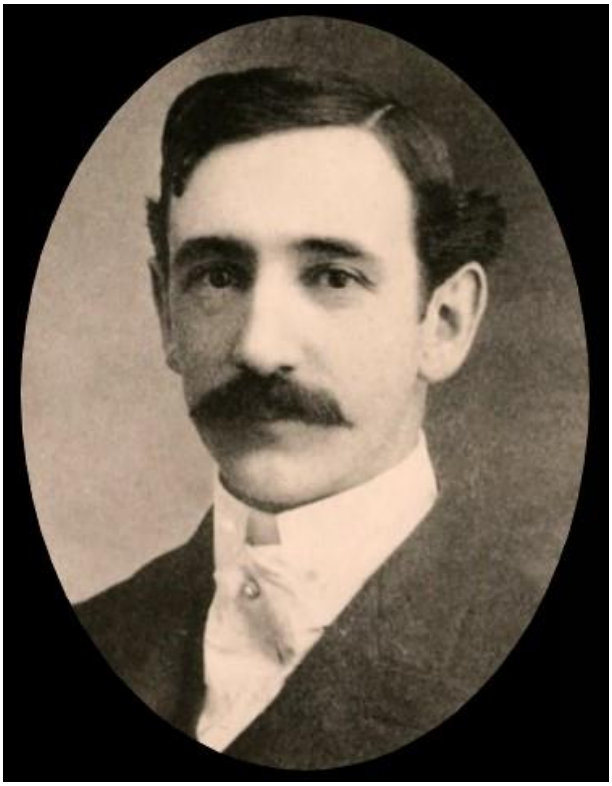

Figure 6 David B. Mulligan, late 1800s.

By 1923, David Mulligan's exceptional thirty-year career in the Canadian and American hotel industry had taken him from his hometown of Pembroke, Ontario, to Chicago, St. Louis, Ottawa, New York, and Winnipeg.

At the beginning of 1924, however, Mulligan resigned his position in Winnipeg as general manager of the Canadian National Hotels system to become manager of the Windsor Hotel in Montreal.

He immediately left Winnipeg where, for the better part of a decade, "since retiring from lacrosse activities," he had become "quite prominent at the Winnipeg [Golf] Club with his skill as a golfer" (*Free Press Evening Bulletin* [Winnipeg, Manitoba], 5 July 1923, p. 10).

Mulligan won the club's first handicap tournament of the year in 1918 at age 49, participated at age 52 in the Canadian Amateur Championship held in Winnipeg in 1921, and regularly served on the club's executive committee. As a token of its regard for him, the club organized a farewell banquet for him when he left the city in 1924 and presented him with a cigar humidor.

An intense golf enthusiast since taking up the game, Mulligan of course continued to play golf after he arrived in Montreal, becoming a member of the Summerlea Golf Club from 1924 to 1927 and the Laval-Sur-Le-Lac Golf Club from 1928 to 1931 (designed by Willie Park, Jr, the clubs' golf courses were a thorough test of golf). During these years, he represented his clubs in inter-club competitions within the Montreal area, and in 1931, he represented Laval in the Canadian Senior Championship in which, after the first round, at age 62, he was "the leading Montrealer," tied for fourth place in a field of 100 golfers (*Montreal Star*, 3 September 1931, p. 41). Alas, the promise of the first round was not realized and he would finish the tournament tied for fourteenth.

Figure 7 Micheal Donald Grant. Montreal Star, *2 March 1929, p. 15*.

When he arrived in Montreal in 1924, Mulligan was looking for a golf club to join and so his twenty-year-old second cousin, M. Donald Grant (1904-1998), kindly introduced him to a good number of the clubs in the Montreal area. The two of them were in Montreal together for just the 1924 golf season, after which Grant went to New York (at Mulligan's suggestion) to learn the hotel business. Over the course of the 1924 season, young Grant took Mulligan to most of the best golf courses, picking him up at Mulligan's place of work in Mulligan's own car and driving him "to wherever we were going to play, whether it was the Country Club [of Montreal] at St. Lambert, Beaconsfield Club, Kanawaki, [Mount] Bruno, or Royal Montreal" (*New York Times* 1977)

In 1918, Grant had been one of three swashbuckling teenaged golfers admitted to intermediate membership at the Country Club of Montreal to augment membership numbers since so many of the regular members had been called away to serve in the war effort during World War I.

Figure 8 Dr. Arnold W. Mitchell, circa 1930. Montreal Star, *7 March 1934, p. 2.*

The two other musketeers joining Grant at the Country Club were Arnold. W. Mitchell (1902-71) and John H. ("Johnny") Patton (1902-83). Mitchell, Patton, and Grant were the three young guys who played with Mulligan in a regular foursome during the 1924 season.

Mitchell would eventually become a dentist and honorary president of the Canadian Professional Golfers Association of Quebec, Patton would eventually become a purchasing agent for a steel company and Country Club president, and Grant would eventually become a stock broker and chairman of the New York Mets, but in 1924, their lives lay all before them.

Patton recalled that this "foursome … would assemble after work at Place d' Armes" and drive to the Country Club in Mulligan's car (*Montreal Gazette*, 17 May 1973, p. 43).

Figure 9 Johnny Patton. Montreal Star, *11 May 1931, p. 26*.

Patton and Grant agree that the car used to drive to the golf course belonged to Mulligan. But Grant claims that Mulligan asked him to drive the car to the golf course, and that it was just the two of them in the car. Patton says that Mulligan drove the four of them to the golf course. These claims can each be true, of course, if they simply describe different drives on different days.

Patton says that it was a bumpy drive to the Country Club of Montreal and that it was the roughness of the ride that shattered Mulligan's nerves and led to bad first drives. Implying that there was nothing particularly off-putting about the drive to the Country Club, Grant says that Mulligan arrived in a frazzled state at any golf club they visited because he had just five hours away from his shift at the hotel to play his round of golf: this constraint required Mulligan to change out of his suit and into his plus fours and socks while they were driving in the car, with Mulligan all the while urging Grant to drive faster and faster.

All between twenty and twenty-two years of age, Grant, Patton, and Mitchell were very good golfers: they expected to shoot par scores more often than not.

Fifty-five year-old Mulligan was shooting scores in the mid-80s.

All things being equal, none of them was prone to mishitting the first drive of the day, but things were not equal. Grant recalled that Mulligan "was a very fast dresser and when he would reach the first tee, because of his rushing, he would invariably top his drive" (*New York Times*, 1977). Patton recalled that "Mulligan's car jumped all over that planking [on the Victoria Bridge] while we were crossing, so he would rush to the first tee still feeling he was jumping up and down, and his first drive, nine times out of ten, would be a disaster" (*Montreal Gazette*, 15 August 1983, p. 34).

On other occasions, Patton told the story slightly differently:

> *Mulligan owned a big fancy car … and every Saturday afternoon, me and the other guys would meet him at the old Childs Restaurant on Peel Street.*
>
> *We'd all pile into Mulligan's car and he'd drive us to play golf.*

> *We were a noisy group and we'd make Mulligan so nervous that when it came time for him to tee off, he'd still be so upset, he's blow his drive*.
>
> *(*Montreal Gazette*, 22 July 1978, p. 53)*

Grant and Patton certainly agree that Mulligan regularly arrived at the first tee in a frazzled state. And in one of his versions of events, Patton agrees with Grant that Mulligan was frazzled because of his "rush" to get to the first tee (they both used this word).

Grant recalls that Mulligan "would invariably top his drive, then hit another. All his friends ever did about it was snicker and let him get away with it" (*New York Times* 1977). According to Patton, Mulligan was not only allowed a do-over; his playing partners encouraged him to hit again:

> *"Mulligan's ball," he explained, "would usually roll a few inches away from the tee*."
>
> *"Then we'd shout: 'take a Mulligan,' and we gave him a second chance*."
>
> *"The term sort of stuck," said Patton*.
>
> *(*Montreal Gazette*, 22 July 1978, p. 53)*

In another version of events as told by Patton, he says:

> *One day, after suffering another such humiliation, he went back to his bag, took out another ball and solemnly told us, "I'm taking a Mulligan*."
>
> *We never did, of course, but since he was the one with the car, we always let him have the privilege of hitting a second ball on that first tee*.
>
> *(*Montreal Gazette*, 15 August 1983, p. 34)*.

Now, it does not make sense that the first time Mulligan replayed his drive, he declared, "I'm taking a Mulligan." He had not yet established such a practice as his habit, and so there would have been no reason for him to name this unique event as though it were something done typically and regularly by him.

I presume that in this latter account of the event, Patton, in retrospect, simply confused what Mulligan probably said the first time he did this – "I'm taking another shot" – with what Patton recalled the group saying when it became a habit of Mulligan's: "take a Mulligan."

And so, Grant's recollection about what happened after Mulligan had made a habit of replaying his first shot strikes me as the most plausible account: "All his friends ever did about it was snicker and let him get away with it, until one day, one of our group … topped his drive, and [as] we were about

to leave the tee, he smiled and said, 'Wait a minute boys, I'm going to take a Mulligan'" (*New York Times* 1977).

Two of the three accounts above agree that in Montreal, it was someone other than David Mulligan who first referred to what he was doing as "taking a Mulligan."

What Happens in Montreal Stays in Montreal

After their foursome's first-tee hijinks in 1924, Patton and Grant each say that the practice of "taking a Mulligan" grew like wildfire – first in Montreal, then throughout Canada, and eventually throughout the United States

Yet there is no evidence to support this account of how the practice spread.

In Canada, there is no published reference to "taking a Mulligan" until 1935. And the first such reference occurs not in Montreal, Quebec, but rather in Windsor, Ontario – that is, directly across the river from Detroit, where the first North American discussion of being "given a 'Mulligan'" was published in October of 1931.

And so, Windsor's acquaintance with the practice of "taking a mulligan" may have an American rather than a Canadian source.

Figure 10 Basil ("Baz") O'Meara, circa 1954. Montreal Star *sports columnist.*

Accepting that in 1924, at least one member of the Montreal foursome teasingly referred to Mulligan's first-tee do-over practice as "taking a Mulligan," I can find no reference to "taking a mulligan" in any Montreal newspaper before sports columnist Baz O'Meara wrote about David Mulligan in an article published after the latter's death in New York in 1954. According to O'Meara: "There are many old time golfers around here who used to play with him and they remember him as a whimsical companion who invented the term 'taking a Mulligan' which was a second drive from the first tee" (*Montreal Star*, 28 December 1954, p. 26).

O'Meara's sentence is syntactically obscure: Montreal's "old time golfers" remember Mulligan as a whimsical companion, but it is not clear whether they remember him as the man who invented the term in Montreal or as the man who subsequently invented the term in New York. His sentence can be interpreted either way.

Even if the phrase "taking a mulligan" remained in the memory of some Montreal "old time golfers," it seems not to have entered the regular golf lexicon of members of the Country Club of Montreal, let alone the regular lexicon of golfers in Montreal, Quebec, or Canada.

Instead, the phrase “taking a mulligan” first became established in the United States – if we are to accept the authority of David B. Mulligan himself.

The Winged Foot Mulligan

In 1952, when interviewed while visiting his brother in Sudbury, Ontario, eighty-three-year-old Mulligan himself said that what established the phrase "taking a mulligan" in golf's lexicon was his own use of the phrase at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York (this interview was reprinted that year in *Golf Digest* as well as in many American newspapers):

Figure 11 L.G. Spindler, Herald Statesman*, 9 June 1926, p. 13.*

For years I played golf with the same foursome almost every Saturday and Sunday the year round at Winged Foot.

My partner was always L.G. Spindler, and our opponents were John Sexauer and Milt Kaylor.

One day while playing with this group, I hit a ball off the first tee that was long enough, but not straight.

I was so provoked with myself that on impulse I stooped over and put another ball down.

The other three looked at me with considerable puzzlement and one of them asked:

"What are you doing?"

"I'm taking a correction shot," I replied.

"What do you call that?" inquired Kaylor.

Thinking fast, I told him I called it a "Mulligan."

*(*Indianapolis News*, 20 May 1952, p. 26)*

We can see, then, that although the other three members of his Montreal foursome may have occasionally said in 1924 that they were "taking a Mulligan," Mulligan himself had not regarded this way of speaking as anything more than the teasing that his young companions intended it to be. In his own mind, that is, he thought of his first-tee do-over both in Montreal and at Winged Foot not as "taking a 'Mulligan,'" but rather as taking what he considered a "correction shot."

He seems to have used rifle marksmanship as an analogy to what he was doing in golf: if the bull's eye is to be hit, shooting at a target generally requires corrections of the rifle's sight gauge to take into account the effect (on the flight of a bullet) of variable conditions such as wind, temperature, humidity, air pressure, and so on. The marksman takes a practice shot at the target, observes the location of the strike relative to the bull's eye, makes a correction to the sight gauge, takes another practice shot, makes another correction, and so on, until satisfied that the sight is accurate.

On the occasion that Mulligan mentions above, he implicitly decided to treat his first strike of the ball, in retrospect, as just such a form of practice shot. He asserted the privilege of using that aberrant first shot to assess his aim that day. The power of the strike was sufficient ("I hit a ball off the first tee that was long enough"); the flight of the projectile was not as expected (it was "not straight").

Mulligan says that his coming up almost instantaneously with a name for his extra shot that day required "thinking fast."

Since he had already declared that he was taking a "correction shot," when asked by one of his companions what he called it, he could simply have said, "I call it what it is, 'a correction shot.'"

I suspect that what he calls "thinking fast" involved two fast thoughts: first, he thought of how, when he had done this in Montreal, he had been teased as "taking a Mulligan"; second, he thought that naming what was obviously a duffer's practice after himself would provoke his buddies to laugh at such a self-deprecating gesture. (Mulligan was renowned for his sense of humour, being justly regarded as one of the wittiest of after-dinner speakers in New York.)

The Winged Foot Foursome

Mulligan associated this self-naming event with a longstanding weekend match involving a regular foursome at Wingd Foot – the other three golfers being John Arthur Sexauer (1882-1970), Emmet Milton ("Milt") Kaylor (1889-1965), and Lorenz Gregory ("Spin") Spindler (1884-1947) – but precisely when this naming event occurred is not clear.

Mulligan's observation that the match involving these four men endured over many years does not mean that the mulligan naming event occurred late in the foursome's history.

Is it possible that the day that his bad first drive so provoked Mulligan that he immediately played another ball occurred in time for Babe Ruth to have learned of it and then passed knowledge of it along to Sam Byrd before October of 1931?

Born in Illinois in 1882, John Sexauer attended Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), graduating in the early 1900s. He moved to New York City and worked as a salesman for the Good Manufacturing Company from before World War I until the 1920s. He was also one of two founding partners of S & B Linseed Oil Company and also founded the J.A. Sexauer Manufacturing Company in 1921 (it manufactured plumbing supplies for industries).

Figure 12 Blanche Moody Sexauer at Winged Foot. Standard-Star *(New Rochelle, New York), 27 August 1938, p. 7.*

He was an active golfing member of Winged Foot by at least 1927, playing off a handicap of 9, but the best golfer in the family was his wife, Blanche Moody Sexauer, who won the Winged Foot women's championship three times by 1938. She served throughout the 1940s on the executive committee of the Women's Westchester Fairfield Golf Association and would later serve as vice-president of the United States Senior Women's Golf Association.

Together they founded the John A. Sexauer foundation in 1961, which made significant financial contributions to educational institutions and hospitals.

The Sexauers lived in Larchmont, less than three miles from Winged Foot.

Born in Tennessee, Milt Kaylor had come to New York City to work as a salesman for the Metal Package Corporation before World War I. In February of 1918, however, he enlisted for service in the United States Army Air Service (precursor of the Air Force). He served in France for a year as a pilot at the rank of 1st

Lieutenant. At the conclusion of the war, he was attached to the Ordnance Department. Returning to the United States in February of 1919, he resumed work for the Metal Package Corporation and moved to Larchmont.

The Larchmont bros, Kaylor and Sexauer, played as regular partners against equally regular partners Mulligan and Spindler.

Lorenze (also "Lawrence") Spindler was born in Illinois in 1884, the second child of German parents who had arrived in the United States just two years before. The family soon moved to Minnesota, where the children attended school. Having moved to New York, Spindler married Lilah McGuire in 1912 and ran his own business in the Produce Exchange, working as a salesman for breakfast cereals. By the late 1930s, he and Lilah (now also a "Saleslady" for breakfast cereals) had made David B. Mulligan's Hotel Biltmore their permanent home.

Figure 13 L.G. Spindler. Mount Vernon Argus *(New York), 10 June 1926, p. 6.*

Spindler was the youngest of the three golfers who played with Mulligan in his regular weekend foursome. Ane he was the best and most dedicated of them: he had played competitive golf on behalf of the various clubs of which he was a member from about 1910 onward. He began at Dyker Meadow Golf Club, then moved to the Fox Hills Golf Club by 1915, where he soon became club champion and teamed up in business with the Marine and Field Club champion Frank Barton, the pair gaining a good deal of publicity in the sports pages of New York newspapers by boasting that "they probably represent the best golfing firm or company in this section of the country" and announcing that "they stood ready to defend the claim" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1 February 1918, p. 22).

In the late 1920s, he still played off a handicap of six.

In 1923, Spindler moved to the Westchester-Biltmore Country Club and in short order became chairman of its Green Committee. In the fall of 1926 he became secretary of the Westchester County Golf Association, succeeding in this office John G. Anderson of Winged Foot, who became the Association's president (at that time, the association had 15,000 members).

Spindler remained a Westchester stalwart until 1930 (all the while serving as chairman of its Green Committee), but the question arises whether in 1927 he also became a member of Winged Foot, for we read the following report late that year: "The Westchester County Golf Association rang out the old and rang in the new at the Hotel Commodore last night.... L.G. Spindler, **of Winged Foot**, was re-elected secretary, the only member of last year's regime to continue in office" (*Mount Vernon Argus*, 27 October 1927, p. 16, emphasis added).

Spindler was often mentioned in newspapers as a member of Winged Foot between 1932 and 1937. And he was also mentioned as playing in tournaments at Winged Foot in 1930 and 1931.

Had he been a member of both clubs since the late 1920s?

Note that in 1935, David Mulligan joined the Westchester Country Club, although he was also a member of Winged Foot that year (in fact, he was a member of its Board of Governors), and so we know that belonging to two clubs in Westchester County was not unheard of amongst the residents of nearby towns such as Larchmont, Mamaroneck, and Rye.

Winged Foot Golf Club had 600 members in 1935 (*Mount Vernon Argus*, 30 April 1935, p. 12).

Spindler remained a very active secretary of the Westchester County Golf Association until the end of the 1930 season, and perhaps as such he received ex officio access to rounds of golf at Winged Foot (or perhaps because of the office he held, the club extended to him some sort of courtesy access to the course).

Yet whether or not Spindler – or even Mulligan himself – was a Winged Foot member in the late 1920s, these men might well have participated in 1928 and 1929 in a regular Saturday and Sunday foursome with Winged Foot members Sexauer and Kaylor as guests: "In the matter of guests, the Winged Foot governing board is liberal. Some seven thousand play there every year for green fees of three to five dollars, providing a net income of $32,000" (*Daily Times* [Mamaroneck, New York], 19 February 1929, p. 3).

Mulligan presumably formed his golf friendship with these men during the summers from the mid-1920s to the late 1920s during which he rented a summer home in Rye, which was about five miles from Winged Foot.

Note, however, that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Mulligan also had a connection to Winged Foot through his cousin, M. Donald Grant, for virtually the moment the latter arrived in New York, he

gained access to this golf club through his membership in the exclusive New York Athletic Club (NYAC).

M. Donald Grant Golfs Winged Foot

Mulligan's cousin M. Donald Grant had gone to New York at the end of the 1924 golf season and found work in the hotel business. In doing so, he is said to have forsaken the offer of a contract to play for the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. He later explained that he had gone to New York because of his cousin David's warning: "He told me that if I stayed in Canada, I wouldn't be able to keep my mind off hockey and other sports" (*New York Times*, 24 June 1977, Section S, p. 1). The son of a Montreal hockey star named Mike Grant who was elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1950, "Donnie" Grant had been an All-Star himself in the Montreal City League in he early 1920s, and he continued to play hockey in New York at a very high level: his team often played in Madison Square Gardens. (He also worked in New York as a hockey referee.)

The hockey team that he played for was that of the New York Athletic Club (NYAC), one of the city's most exclusive clubs, which extended memberships by invitation only.

As a member of NYAC, members of which had founded a separate golf club in 1921 called Winged Foot, Grant played at Winged Foot often. Although it was said that "practically every one of the 600 members of the golf club is also a member of the New York Athletic Club, from which the body of the Winged Foot Golf Club is an offshoot," it is not known whether Grant was a Winged Foot member in the mid- to late-1920s (*American Golfer*, vol 27 no 25 [13 December 1924], p. 26).

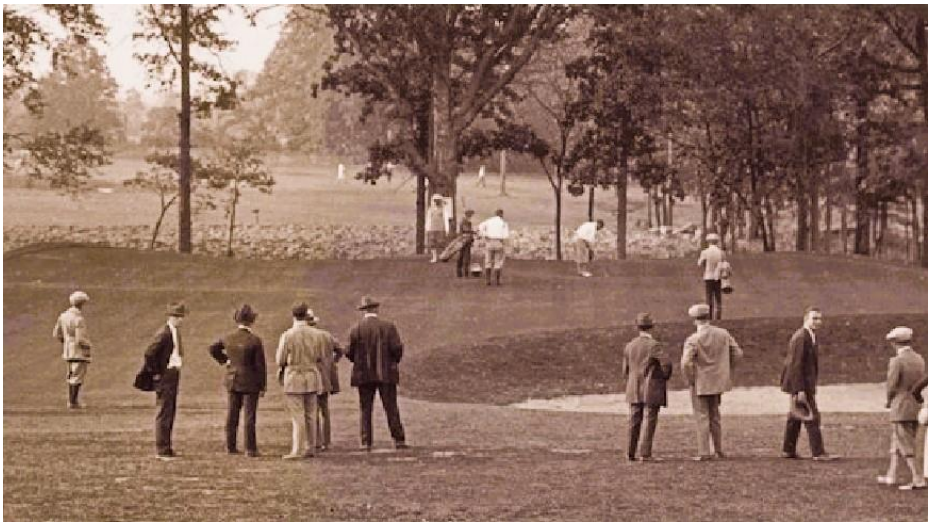

Figure 14 John G. Anderson putts at Winged Foot on opening day 1923. Photograph courtesy of Winged Foot GC.

Grant certainly played many rounds at Winged Foot from 1928 to 1930, competing in each year's NYAC match play golf championship held there. He made it to the semifinals in 1929, and he made it to the championship final in 1928, losing that match to John G. Anderson of Winged Foot.

A winner of more than fifty amateur competitions worldwide, Anderson was the 1924 and 1926 amateur champion of France, former amateur champion of Massachusetts, and runner-up in the US Amateur Championship in 1913 and 1915.

In the 1930s, Grant continued to play competitive amateur golf in the New York area, first playing out of the Lido Country Club in the early and mid-1930s, and then playing out of the Seawane Club. Also in the 1930s, he would be elected to serve on the governing board of the Metropolitan Golf Association.

So much for leaving Canada to escape thoughts of sport.

I presume that cousins Grant and Mulligan continued to play golf together in the New York area at least occasionally, if not regularly, from the late 1920s to the 1940s, whether at Winged Foot or at other clubs with which they were associated.

Did Charles Gordon Name the Mulligan?

M. Donald Grant recalled that the man who named the first-tee do-over a "Mulligan" was Charles Gordon:

> *because of his rushing, [Mulligan] would invariably top his drive, then hit another.*
>
> *All his friends ever did about it was snicker and let him get away with it, until one day, one of our group, named Charles Gordon, who later became one of the principal officers of the Oxford Paper Company, topped his drive, and [as] we were about to leave the tee, he smiled and said, "Wait a minute, boys, I'm going to take a Mulligan."*
>
> *Thereafter, all of us did it and it grew like wildfire!*
>
> *(M. Donald Grant, letter to the editor,* Golf Journal*, 1985)*

Grant implies that this event occurred in Montreal, but he must have been mistaken.

Born in Thorold, Ontario, in 1876, Charles Alexander Gordon moved with his family to Lapeer, Michigan, in 1880, where his parents Charles and Mary bought a farm. It was said that "the arduous work of a farm did not appeal to him," but Gordon seems to have been interested in some of the farm machinery (*Times Herald* [Michigan], 2 September 1940, p. 8). When he was thirteen years old, he began to investigate the principles of energy and motion and attempted to build a perpetual motion machine. The project took him eight years:

> ***Lapeer Clerk's Claim***
>
> *Lapeer, Mich., December 15 – (Special) –*
>
> *Charles A. Gordon, a clerk in the Hotel Abram of this city, has invented and perfected a perpetual motion machine.*
>
> *He will not divulge the mechanism of his invention, only to say that the motion to all present appearances is perpetual.*
>
> *The machine has been under construction for the last eight years and has been running for the last forty-eight hours with no indications of stopping.*
>
> *(*Detroit Free Press*, 16 December 1897, p. 3)*

Gordon had happily escaped the farm to become a clerk at a local hotel. His invention amounted to nothing, but his move from the farm to the city was the prelude to a bigger move and an unforeseen career.

He moved to Port Huron to work as a clerk for three years in the new Harrington Hotel, and then moved to Detroit to become a clerk at the Hotel Metropole. He next became chief clerk at the

Oriental, where he was promoted to the position of manager late in 1900. In 1901, he met in Detroit the manager of New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel: "The bright-eyed young Scotchman appealed to the manager and he offered Gordon a job in the hotel, which he accepted" (*Times Herald* [Michigan], 2 September 1940, p. 8).

He will have met David Mulligan for the first time at this New York hotel, for the two of them served alongside each other as Waldorf Astoria room clerks from 1902 to 1903, after which Mulligan left for Ottawa to assume proprietorship (alongside his brother) of the Russell Hotel early in 1904.

Gordon also left the Waldorf Astoria about the same time, but not for another hotel, but rather for another business: "Streetcar advertising was just being introduced and one day young Gordon was offered a job selling advertising. Having the vision to see that advertising was the coming thing, he accepted and made good" (*Times Herald* [Michigan], 2 September 1940, p. 8). This success enabled him in 1907 to marry a twenty-one-year-old stenographer named Lillian Margaret Kuhnle, the daughter of German immigrants.

And his success in advertising on streetcars led him to a new advertising business: he found employment with Perry Dame & Company, a mail order marketer of clothing for "women and misses." By 1915, he was the company's treasurer and general manager.

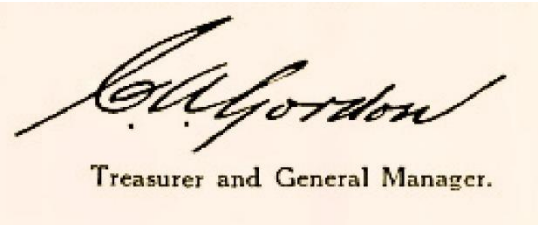

Figure 15 "New York Styles, Spring & Summer 1916," Perry Dame & Co, New York City, catalog no 65, p. 6.

As each year passed, he discovered that the company's success depended on offering a more and more comprehensive guarantee of satisfaction. Above his signature in the 1916 catalog, he wrote: "every customer must be satisfied, and we do not propose that there shall be a single exception" ("New York Styles, Spring & Summer 1916," Perry Dame & Co, New York City, catalog no 65, p. 6).

He later said that it was his experience in the advertising business that led to his interest in the paper industry. In 1916, he accepted a job as assistant to the president of the Nashwaak Pulp and Paper Company of St. John, New Brunswick, which had been formed in 1916 as a subsidiary of the Oxford Paper Company (Gordon would become Nashwaak's vice-president in the early 1920s). The company's head offices were in New York, where Gordon also held a position in the Seaman Pulp & Paper Company. He had so quickly established his value to this company that when he accepted a job offer elsewhere, the Seaman executives gave a dinner at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel as "a

testimonial" in his honour. The dinner was hosted by the company's president and vice-president. Gordon was "leaving August 1 to become assistant to … [the] president of Oxford Paper Company and a director in many other large corporations including railroads, shipyards, streetcar companies, gas," and so on (*Printer's Ink: the Weekly Magazine of Advertising, Management and Sales*, vol 104 [1918], p. 34).

All this happened in 1918, and as if that year were not already full enough for Gordon, he also registered for the military draft after the United States entered World War I. He was not eligible to do so, but nevertheless succeeded in registering by means of two patriotic fibs: first, he claimed that he was a U.S. citizen (although he remained a Canadian until 1924); second, he claimed that he was three years younger than he really was.

Gordon was always busy. He was a founder in the 1930s of the Book Paper Manufacturers Association. He was elected its chairman in 1936. He was also a director of New York Reality Corporation for many years and was a member of the American Arbitration Board. Still, the paper industry was all the while his love and his genius. He served on a dozen different industry, state, and federal committees throughout his career (particularly in the early and mid-1920s) promoting standards, tariffs, legislation, and so on, that were important to the paper industry. When he retired in 1945, it was said that "Mr. Gordon is one of the outstanding figures in the paper industry" (*Southern Pulp and Paper Manufacturer*, vol 9 [1946], p. 51).

Gordon, however, seems to have had no connection to Montreal. He briefly attended the tenth annual banquet of the Canadian Pulp & Paper Association in Montreal in January of 1923 (at which Stephen Leacock provided "mirthful entertainment"), and he passed through the city in 1928 on a private railway coach attached to regular trains to transport executives of the Oxford Paper Company to Quebec City and St. John, New Brunswick, "on an inspection tour of their business interests in the dominion," but he certainly did not live in Montreal in 1924 when David Mulligan was insisting to his young golfing companions that he deserved the privilege of first-tee do-overs (*Montreal Gazette*, 27 January 1923, p. 7; *Montreal Gazette*, 12 July 1928, p. 8).

Apart from the mysterious reference to Gordon in Grant's story of the origin of the mulligan, there is no sign of Gordon in Montreal in 1924.

At the beginning of that year, Gordon resided in New York City, where he applied for naturalization as a U.S. citizen in March. He was living with his wife Lillian and seventeen-year-old nephew

Charles Edwin Gordon (who would be brought up as an advertiser in his uncle's image) at 219 West 81st Street, which had been their residence for many years previously. He travelled in May to Rumford, Maine, site of the Oxford Paper Company's mill, where he attended the launch of a friend's yacht. He then went on a week-long fishing trip to Richardson Lake, Maine, where his group camped on Beaver Island. He seems to have been in Rumford again during the summer, where a local newspaper mentions that he was a guest at a social event in August. Later in the year, Charles and Lillian Gordon travelled to Europe, returning from Southampton via Cherbourg to New York on Christmas Eve.

In 1924, Gordon – then vice-president of both the Oxford Paper Company and the Nashwaat Pulp and Paper Company – was not hanging out on golf courses in Montreal with twenty year-old Donnie Grant and the twenty-two year-olds, Johnny Patton and Arnold Mitchell, waiting for an opportunity to tease David Mulligan with his smiling declaration: "Wait a minute boys, I'm going to take a Mulligan."

Figure 16 Members of the Deepdale Golf and Country Club on the steps of their clubhouse, 1926. William K. Vanderbilt, Jr, is seated 6th from the left. Charles a. Gordon may well be one of the members pictured here, but he has not been identified.

Gordon seems not to have played golf competitively, but he was nonetheless a lover of the game. He was a member of the Deepdale Golf and Country Club, an exclusive golf club with strictly limited membership founded in 1924 by William K. Vanderbilt, Jr, on his estate at Great Neck, Long Island (the golf course was laid out by Charles Blair Macdonald and his protégés Seth Raynor and Charles Banks). Gordon was also a member of the elite Links Club of New York founded by Charles Blair Macdonald in 1917 as a place where powerful members of the golf world could keep the true spirt of the game alive. In Florida, where he and his wife spent several weeks each winter

from the late 1920s until his death in 1966 at age ninety, he was a member of the exclusive Gulf Stream Golf Club founded in 1924 in Palm Beach.

And yet for all the exclusivity associated with his various clubs, Gordon was a frequent visitor to the Oxford Paper Company's mill in Rumford. His golf clubs were especially exclusive, but Gordon was nonetheless the "toastmaster" in 1929 at the banquet held at Rumford's Bethel Inn "which preceded the annual golf tournament of Oxford mill office employees" (*Lewiston Daily Sun* [Maine], 28 September 1929, p. 5).

Why Grant introduces Charles Gordon into the story of the Montreal origins of the "mulligan" is a mystery.

Sixty years after the events in question, had Grant confused playing rounds of golf with Mulligan in Montreal with playing rounds of golf with him at Winged Foot, where New York resident and golfer Charles Gordon had perhaps been a member of a foursome involving Grant and Mulligan in the late 1920s?

Although on Grant's telling of history, Charles Gordon invented the phrase "taking a Mulligan," if what Grant recalls was actually an instance of Gordon having used the phrase at Winged Foot, and if Mulligan himself is correct in claiming that he was the first one to use the phrase at Winged Foot, then what Grant recalled may have been the first occasion when someone other than Mulligan (that is, Charles Gordon) spoke up and claimed the privilege of "taking a Mulligan" at Winged Foot.

Sammy Byrd

New York Yankee outfielder Sam Byrd began his life in sport as a caddie.

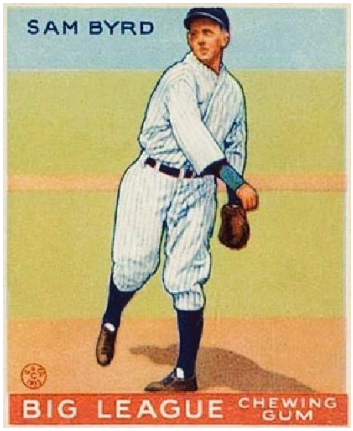

Figure 17 Sam Byrd (1906-81). 1933 baseball card.

He was born in Georgia in 1906, but his family moved to Alabama in 1911, residing by a golf course where young Sammy worked as a caddie and learned the game.

When a teenager, he was trained as a bricklayer by his father, but he was a natural athlete and would go on to play professional baseball, basketball, and golf. He received a minor league baseball contract in 1926 and was acquired by the New York Yankees in 1928, playing a few games for the club that spring, but not making the regular roster until 1929. The Yankees sold him to the Cincinnati Reds in 1935.

Byrd retired from baseball the next year (after playing more than 700 games in the big leagues) and became a golf professional – working as a head pro at a number of prestigious clubs and competing on the PGA Tour.

Figure 18 Sam Byrd (left) and Byron Nelson (right) holding the Wannamaker Trophy at the 1945 PGA Championship.

Byrd would defeat the stars of the day – including Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, and Jimmy Demaret – to win six tournaments on the PGA Tour, including the prestigious Texas Open title in 1945.

In the majors, his best Masters results were a third-place finish in 1941 and a fourth-place finish in 1942; in the PGA Championship of 1945 (which was conducted as match play at that time), Byrd lost to Byron Nelson in the championship final by a score of 4 and 3.

To this day, Sam Byrd remains the only person to have played in both a World Series and a Masters.

As a golfer, Sam Byrd attracted Babe Ruth's attention during the Yankees' 1928 spring training camp:

Surprising Sam Byrd

Sam Byrd, recruit outfielder of the New York Yankees, is able – if he wants to – to turn up his nose at everybody on the team, even Babe Ruth. Sam can spot them several strokes on a golf course and still take their money.

Figure 19 Babe Ruth and wife Claire in front of the Jungle Hotel Country Club, 1930.

When the Yankees reached training camp at St. Petersburg, Fla., this year, infielders Koenig and Gazella hied themselves to the Jungle Golf Club for a round of golf.

Byrd, a raw rookie, somehow managed unobtrusively to go along.

But he had no clubs.

At the first tee, Koenig was generous.

"Like to take a shot?" he said.

Byrd allowed he would. Straightway, he knocked the ball 250 yards down the middle of the fairway.

Koenig and Gazella looked at him in the manner of persons who have witnessed a remarkable accident.

"Better play out the hole," they said.

Byrd agreed and made par. After that, his partners wouldn't let him stop. They wanted to see him crack.

He didn't, though. When they left the eighteenth green, he had turned in a 74, using strange clubs on a strange course. Par was 69.

The next day, Byrd shot a 72. Koenig and Gazella sang his wonders, and Babe Ruth, who plays in the low eighties, spoke up.

"I'd like to take this guy on," he said.

The match was arranged. Young Sam beat Big Babe 5 up, turning in with a 76 to the Babe's 81.

"Next year," says Byrd, "I'll bring my own clubs here and par this course."

*(*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 29 April 1928, p. 39)*

Golf having been taken up by a large number of players on every major league baseball team by the mid-1920s, the Yankees played their golf at the Jungle Hotel Country Club (originally the St. Petersburg Country Club) on an eighteen-hole A.J. Tillinghast design.

At the close of the Yankees' 1928 spring training camp during which Byrd and Ruth first played golf together, Byrd was kept on the Yankees' roster for just the first five weeks of the season, after which he was released to Albany's minor league team. In 1929, however, he played the entire season with the Yankees. He was expected by many to become the league's Rookie of the Year. He never fulfilled these early expectations, becoming instead a utility outfielder. In his six years with the Yankees, he would replace Ruth so often as a pinch runner (to do the latter's base running, especially late in Ruth's career) that he became known as "Babe Ruth's legs."

Figure 20 Left to right: Sam Byrd, Babe Ruth, Lyn Lary. The Jungle Country club 1st tee, March 1929. Oakland Tribune *(California), 26 March 1929, p. 36.*

While with the Yankees, Byrd was one of Babe Ruth's regular playing partners at Yankees' spring training sessions. Circulated coast-to-coast in the spring of 1929 were photographs of the Jungle Country Club first-tee scene shown to the left: Byrd (left), Ruth (centre), and new Yankees shortstop Lyn Larry are about to play a match. One version of this photograph was captioned: "In addition to showing Sam Byrd, rookie outfielder of the Yanks, the finer points of the [baseball] pastime, Babe Ruth takes pride in giving the youngster tips on how to use a niblick on the links" (*Standard Union*, 20 March 1929, p. 17).

Was this the day that Ruth hit a foul ball and said something like: "Wait a minute, boys, I'm going to take a mulligan"?

Sam Byrd, Babe Ruth, and Lyn Lary would later play in the 1929 Yankees golf championship:

> ***Yank Golf Title At Stake Today***
>
> *The title of the champion golf player of the New York Yankees will be at stake today at the Jungle Country Club when Babe Ruth, Lyn Lary, and Sam Byrd tee off in an 18-hole battle.*
>
> *All three of the champions are rated the leading divot diggers of the squad, Ruth probably leading in driving while Byrd is said to be an excellent performer with the mashie and niblick. Lary, the Pacific coast sensation, is an unknown quantity when it comes to golfing but must rate in fast company to play with the Bambino.*
>
> *(*Tampa Bay Times*, 10 March 1929, p. 17)*

At the end of spring training each year thereafter, Byrd and Ruth would engage in a match play contest to determine that year's Yankees' golf champion:

> ***Byrd Beats Babe Ruth; Golf Champion of Yanks***
>
> *St. Petersburg, Fla. – (UP) – Sam Byrd, substitute outfielder, is the golf champion of the New York Yankees.*
>
> *He beat Babe Ruth yesterday four up in 36 holes of competition. Byrd shot a 73.*
>
> *(*Daily Item *[Port Chester, New York], 10 March 1930, p. 10)*

Ruth lost the Yankees golf championship to Byrd every time they faced each other. sports writers were fond of noting that "Sammy Byrd [is] one of the few ball players who can beat Babe Ruth at golf" (*Ludington Daily News* [Michigan], 13 March 1931, p. 6).

During their years of playing golf together, I expect that the Bambino had occasion to introduce Byrd to the Winged Foot practice of "taking a mulligan," and so I suspect that it was Byrd who introduced this practice to Detroit golfers at the pro-am tournament in October of 1931 – asking for a mulligan to show that he could indeed drive the 18th green, and then having to explain, of course, what a "mulligan" was, thereby introducing a new word into the Detroit golf lexicon.

Detroit and Windsor Mulligans

Detroit sportswriter Drukenbrod sat down with Byrd during the latter's stay with Tommy Armour in October of 1931 and discussed with him at length the differences between baseball and golf. The writer was particularly interested to ask Byrd why baseball players can perform at the highest level before a bawling and baying crowd of thousands while golfers cannot perform at a high level without silence:

> *He pointed out one feature of baseball which may surprise many persons. Most ball players don't hear the noise coming from the stands; at least they are not conscious of it….*
>
> *He said the same may be true of golfers in years to come, but he doubts it because their game requires the maximum of concentration and any noise or confusion will detract from that essential.*

Figure 21 Detroit Free Press*, 18 October 1931, p. 16.*

> *"With the possible exception of billiards," Sammy said, "there is less latitude in stroking or hitting in golf than in any other game. The small ball and small hitting surface on the club account for much of this. A ball player can connect [with the baseball] with the handle of his bat and yet get a hit, but a golfer hasn't a chance if he is a fraction of an inch off line. To get this accurate hit, the greatest of concentration is necessary and there must be no disturbing incidents."*
>
> *(*Detroit Free Press*, 18 October 1931, p. 16)*

Drukenbrod writes: "To make certain that Sammy really was a golfer, we asked him what he would do to anyone who shouted as he was about to drive or putt, and he said, 'I'd crown him with my biggest niblick'" (*Detroit Free Press*, 18 October 1931, p. 16).

Or perhaps if someone disturbed his concentration as he was about to drive, Byrd would ask to be "given a 'mulligan'"?

Drukenbrod had used the phrase "given a 'mulligan'" five days before his interview with Byrd and he had done so without explaining what the phrase meant. He had simply recorded what he heard, printing the word "mulligan" in quotation marks to signal to his readers that he recognized that it would strike them as a neologism. As though he had made a mental note that he should explain the word "mulligan" more fully some day, he mentioned Sammy Byrd's "prodigious wallop" again in May of 1932, and this time he added an explanatory phrase: "He was given a 'mulligan,' or another chance" (*Detroit Free Press*, 11 May 1932, p. 13).

I doubt that the topic of 'taking a mulligan" came up when Drukenbrod and Byrd sat down for their conversation about the relationship between baseball and golf. Drukenbrod appears not to have been familiar with the practice at Winged Foot of "taking a mulligan" only on the first tee. He clearly understands the idea of being "given a 'mulligan'" to mean being given "another chance" – and another chance on any tee shot. If I am correct in presuming that it was Byrd who asked to be "given a 'mulligan'" on Rammler's 18th tee, he was clearly invoking the new practice of "taking a mulligan" in the loose sense of the term that is quite general today.

More evidence of this loose sense of the term emerged in the Detroit area before another year had passed:

> ***Golfer Calls Shot as He Scores Ace***
>
> *A.E. Dixon asked for a "mulligan" and got a hole-in-one.*
>
> *A "mulligan" in golf is a practice shot or an extra shot….*
>
> *On the 136-yard thirteenth hole, he dropped his shot six feet from the pin. [His two companions] complimented him on the shot.*
>
> *He said, "That's nothing. Give me a 'mulligan' and I'll put it in the hole."*
>
> *They gave him permission to play another ball and he did just as he said he would. He holed out.*
>
> *Dixon's ace was the fourth scored in the Detroit district this season, but probably the first "mulligan" hole-in-one ever made here.*
>
> *(*Detroit Free Press*, 24 April 1933, p. 15)*

In Detroit, the practice of "taking a mulligan" must have been well-known by 1932, for this newspaper and these golfers refer familiarly to the practice at the very beginning of the 1933 golf

season. They must have been familiar with the idea of "taking a mulligan" by at lest the 1932 season. Yet it is still such a new idea that the writer confidently supposes that in a city that recorded 162 (reported) holes-in-one in 1932, this "mulligan" hole-in-one will have been the first of its kind *(Detroit Free Press*, 9 September 1933, p. 13).

In September of 1933, when the *Detroit Free Press* published an alphabetical list of the area's holes-in-one that season, it added a unique note to the only entry under the letter "D":

> ***D***
>
> *A.E. Dixon, 136-yard thirteenth at Oakland Hills south course April 23.*
>
> *(A mulligan.)*
>
> (Detroit Free Press*, 9 September 1933, p. 13)*

Note that the sports editor feels no need to explain what a mulligan is.

And yet for all this familiarity in Detroit with the idea of "taking a mulligan," there seems to have been no sense of David Mulligan's restriction of "taking a mulligan" to the first shot of the round.

By 1934, we begin to read of "mulligan" tournaments. At Detroit's private Red Run Golf Club, there was a "mulligan handicap tournament" in June of 1934 and a "'Mulligan' handicap tournament" in June of 1935 (*Detroit Free Press*, 17 June 1934, p. 19; 24 June 1935, p. 14). It is interesting to see that the word "Mulligan" is placed in quotation marks and capitalized in 1935, but not in 1934.

And then the term crossed the Detroit River to the Canadian city of Windsor, Ontario, where, in July of 1935, we find reference to a "Mulligan tournament" at the Lakewood Golf Club: "Sunday, a Mulligan tournament was held at Lakewood and a number of the members made good use of the 'mulligan' on each hole in addition to half of their regular handicap" (*Windsor Star*, 16 July 1935, p. 22).

Particularly interesting is the use of the word by a Detroit member of Windsor's Lakewood Golf Club during a round of golf on 24 July 1935:

> ***Sports Gossip***
>
> ***By Vern DeGeer***
>
> *Latest, and probably most welcome, of the aids to the hard-working divot diggers of golf is the "mulligan stroke." In common with thousands of the devotees of a high slice and the low hook, this column firmly believes Old Man Mulligan rates a purple shrine in the House of Par.*

The "mulligan stroke," in case you haven't heard of it, is something that the hundred-shooters have been seeking for many years but weren't sure how to go about producing.

The "mulligan" is the stroke you wanted to make ... and tried to make ... instead of that fluttering shot that flipped and flopped over the nearest fence or the tall grass like a bird with a broken wing. So you can drop another ball, toss that bad stroke into the discard, and try again.

You are privileged, under the rules as introduced at Lakewood Golf Club this season, to take one "mulligan" on each hole. That is to say, once on each hole, you can play a poor shot over again without penalty.

Perhaps the second effort isn't any better. Often it is worse. Then it's your hard luck and a "mulligan" wasted.

Figure 22 Frederick C. Sebulske (1892-1959). Detroit Free Press*, 12 May 1926, p. 18.*

It is doubtful if the "mulligan" rule was ever worked to greater advantage at any time and on any course, and by any person, than yesterday afternoon at Lakewood by Fred Sebulske, president of the Cadillac Brewing Company of Detroit. Fred is a veteran member at Lakewood and one of the originators of the "Bohemian Day" program, an annual event which had its 1935 outing yesterday.

Fred paraded to the first tee late in the afternoon with five other heavy-waisted, ambitious club wielders. He was elected to blast the first tee shot. And what he accomplished in the way of a full swing probably couldn't have been disputed by Joe Kirkwood, most famous of golf's trick shot artists.

Teeing his shot high in the air, Fred swung from his shoe-tops with all the force his 225-pound frame could muster. He cut right under the little white pill. It climbed lazily through the air to an altitude of perhaps four feet and dropped almost at his feet.

"It's a hit, it's a hit," screamed Bill Messerschmidt, who was watching the Kirkwood shot. "Touch all the bases; touch all the bases."

"A hit, hell," roared back Sebulske, "it's my mulligan, that's what it is."

With that, he teed up another ball and smacked this one down the fairway, past the 200-yard marker.

And that, folks, is what a mulligan does for golf.

*(*Windsor Star*, 25 July 1935, p. 26)*

If the *Windsor Star* columnist's representation of the conversation is correct, Sebulske spoke of his first stroke (not his second stroke!) as his "mulligan" stroke: "it was my mulligan." That is, he does

not say, "I'm taking a mulligan," but rather that he already has. It seems that the concept of taking a mulligan was still so new that the idioms we use today had not yet settled into place.

These 1935 items in the *Windsor Star* are the first references to "taking a mulligan" that I have found in Canada.

Kickers and Alibis

What had arrived in Detroit and Windsor was a new golf word – "mulligan" – but not a new idea. And the new word seems to have been used almost immediately for an old idea.

Several years before David B. Mulligan arrived in a frazzled state on the first tee of any Montreal golf course, there were variously named golf tournaments in which participants were allowed to replay strokes without adding them to their score. The earliest of these tournaments were called "Kickers Tournaments" and "Alibi Tournaments" (or sometimes "No-alibi Tournaments"). One of the meanings of "to kick" was "to complain." These sorts of tournaments were conceived as a way to deal with a club's perpetual "kickers": those who complained that they would have scored much better if only they had played this stroke or that stroke better. One finds tournaments of this sort mentioned in newspapers by at least 1921.

At New Jersey's New Brunswick Country Club, for example, this kind of tournament was scheduled as part of the club's 1921 fixtures list:

> *Kickers' tournament*.
>
> *In this event, players are allowed to replay one shot on each hole, which must be done immediately after the unsatisfactory shot is made*.
>
> *No shots can be played over after reaching the green*.
>
> *(*Central New Jersey Home News [New Brunswick, New Jersey]*, 27 May 1921, p. 23)*

The next year, in Bemidji, Minnesota, there was a similar tournament:

> ***Country Club To Hold Alibi Tournament***
>
> *An alibi tournament is to be staged at the Bemidji Country Club golf links Sunday*.
>
> *This tournament will be a handicap medal competition and each player is allowed five extra strokes which can be used in case of bad strokes and can be taken over without penalty by using one of the alibi strokes*.
>
> *This does not apply to the putting greens*.
>
> *(*The Pioneer *[Bemidji, Minnesota], 17 June 1922, p. 5)*

In Nebraska, the Lincoln Country Club defined its alibi tournament in more generous terms: "In an alibi tournament, every entrant is allowed to take one shot over again on each hole, if he wants it" (*Lincoln Journal Star*, 23 June 1923, p. 4).

By 1923, "alibi tournaments" and similar "kickers' tournaments" had been played in such geographically diverse states as Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, and New Jersey. It seems unlikely that the first mention of this kind of tournament in 1921 represents the occasion when it was invented. A New Jersey golf writer observed in 1913 that "'Freak' competitions that give the 'duffer' almost equal chances with the best players are becoming popular at club events all over the country" (*Atlantic City Gazette-Review* [New Jersey], 22 November 1913, p. 5). Clubs were being creative to try to engage weaker players in competitions. As early as 1907, the Crescent Athletic Club at Bay Ridge, New York, came up with a novel "kickers tournament" that allowed golfers to replay an entire round:

> *The "Kickers" held forth yesterday on the links of the Crescent Athletic Club ….*
>
> *On general appearance, the "Kickers" tournament resembles any other eighteen holes, medal play. It differs, however, in the all important fact that those who "kick" can have another try to-day to better their record*.
>
> *(*Brooklyn Daily Eagle *[New York], 30 June 1907, p. 50)*

Playing an entire round of golf over again because of one's "kicks" regarding several misplayed shots in the original round will have struck some as an inefficient way of redressing the shots in question. It will not have taken long for someone to have figured out that allowing the problematic shot to be replayed immediately was the most efficient way of organizing such a tournament for "kickers."

Does a Rose Smell as Sweet When Named a Mulligan?

Michigan had a "kickers tournament" as early as 1923:

> ***A "Kickers' Tourney"***
>
> *A "kickers" tournament began today at Battle Creek Country Club which contained several interesting oddities.*
>
> *The principal attraction in the event is the fact that on each hole, one shot may be replaced. This shot must be made immediately after the unsatisfactory shot has been made.*
>
> *No shots may be replayed after reaching the green.*
>
> *(*Battle Creek Enquirer *[Michigan], 11 August 1923, p. 3)*

Precisely this kind of tournament would be held in Detroit in 1934 and 1935, but it would be called a "mulligan tournament."

Some clubs renamed the "Kickers tournament" and the "Alibi Tournament" a "Replay Tournament." In 1934, the Southwood Golf Club of Winnipeg, Manitoba, came up with yet another name for the same old idea:

> ***Southwood Country Club***
>
> *The "Ida" Sweepstake will take place Saturday.*
>
> *This tournament is to squelch alibis and subdue the remarks often heard in the locker room that "I'da broken 80 –" and so on.*
>
> *Each entrant in the A Class has the privilege of recalling without penalty three strokes during the round.*
>
> *B Class can recall five strokes.*
>
> *Players may recall any strokes whatsoever up to three for As and five for Bs during the round but must, of course, announce at the time that he is using this privilege.*
>
> *(Winnipeg Tribune, 22 June 1934, p. 13)*

A similar "Ida" logic was used in a tournament in Windsor in 1935, but it was called a "mulligan tournament."

In following the renaming of "Kickers' Tournaments," "Alibi Tournaments," "Replay Tournaments," and "Ida Tournaments" as "Mulligan tournaments," we may be tracing the success of David B. Mulligan in naming the do-over stroke after himself at Winged Foot. For, if my hypothesis is correct,

Sammy Byrd introduced the name "mulligan" into Detroit as a new name for the familiar do-over stroke associated with "Kickers' Tournaments" and "Alibi Tournaments." And then the word "mulligan" came to be used by some clubs for these kinds of tournaments.

In due course, this loose use of the "mulligan stroke" concept was returned as such to Mulligan himself in New York by at least 1941 – whether through newspaper reports or through the reports of hotel guests that Mulligan made it a point of personally welcoming to his establishments.

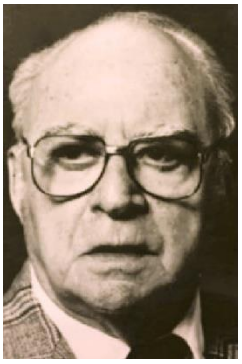

Figure 23 William George ("Bill") Westwick (1909-1990).

Note that in October of 1941, David Mulligan himself organized a Mulligan tournament at Winged Foot.

He seems to have talked about this tournament with *Ottawa Journal* columnist Bill Westwick (Mulligan continued to be a presence in Ottawa, visiting his old home in the summer during the 1940s to play golf with old chums). And we can see from his work on this event that regardless of how Mulligan discovered the fact, when he learned that his name had become associated with a much looser definition of "the Mulligan" than he had originally intended, he not only accepted this new development, but embraced it and energetically encouraged it:

> ***First Annual Mulligan Tournament***
>
> *In New York these days, considerable publicity is being given the inauguration of a new type of golf tournament which will set a precedent in Metropolitan golf circles. It will be termed the annual Mulligan tournament, and the man who started it is none other than Dave Mulligan, who came down from Pembroke to become one of the most popular sportsmen ever around Ottawa.*
>
> *The fact that Dave is president of the Biltmore Hotel in New York is well known, but he's become better known lately in golfing circles as the first to recognize the long cherished ambition of every golfer to make up legitimately for some of those dubbed strokes.*
>
> *Not long ago, Walter Hagan and Bobby Jones were playing golf with the Duke of Kent, and when his Royal Highness talked about [receiving] strokes from these noted stars, one of them told him they'd give him a "Mulligan."*
>
> *What the original relationship of the name may have been with golf we don't know, but Dave is credited with the current blending of the name with the game, and it's going to be something entirely new on the Metropolitan golf schedule next year.*
>
> ***The Rules Are Quite Simple***
>
> *Unable to fathom why some chairmen of tournament committees in the past haven't realized the long felt want of a golfer to rectify a dub while at the height of his anger, Dave*

Mulligan has inaugurated at the Winged Foot Club this weekend what is regarded as the first Mulligan tournament on record.

The rules are simple. Each contestant will be entitled to one Mulligan (or second attempt at any butchered shot) on each hole. There will be no carry-overs. If one, for instance, does not need a Mulligan on any given hole, the competitor will not be entitled to two on the next.

*(*Ottawa Journal*, 11 October 1941, p. 29)*

We know that Mulligan's assertion that his "Mulligan Tournament" was unique and unprecedented is poppycock.

Figure 24 D.B. Mulligan. Montreal Gazette*, 21 August 1948, p. 3.*

But the very fact that he made such a claim reveals his determination to foreground and promote his personal association with the new looser sense of "The Mulligan."

After this, Winged Foot regularly organized Mulligan tournaments for club members during the 1940s and 1950s. In particular, they became a regular feature of women's play at the club, with Mulligan himself commissioning in 1948 a cup for the Class A winner of Mulligan tournaments for women: "The cup was donated by David Mulligan, originator of 'the Mulligan' in golf, who was a luncheon guest" (*Daily Times* [Mamaroneck, New York], 19 May 1948, p. 6).

Mulligan was happy to attach his name to a tournament, to engrave his name on a trophy, and to bequeath his name to a practice that mitigates the embarrassments of golfers to this day.

Conclusion: Say My Name

What's in a name?

As we know, Montreal stories about David Mulligan claim that he developed the habit, as frazzled misfortune required, of taking the first drive of the round over again, and not counting the first stroke. Some of his playing companions in Montreal apparently named this practice after him. "Take a 'Mulligan,'" they suggested when he duffed one. "I'm taking a 'Mulligan,'" they said, on the rare occasion when they duffed one.

But saying Mulligan's name in Montreal did not stick.

Instead, according to the man himself, it was when Mulligan named a first-tee do-over after himself at Winged Foot that the name stuck.

And stick it did, as subsequent history affirms.

It seems that the question of naming the do-over after himself was important to Mulligan. As we know, he had promoted a "Mulligan Tournament" at Winged Foot in 1941 and claimed that he had thought it up all on his own (although before this there had already been at least twenty years of identical "Kickers' Tournaments" and "Alibi Tournaments," not to mention at least seven years of "Mulligan Tournaments").

Figure 25 Horace Heidt (1901-86), 1937.

And David Mulligan's friends seem to have recognized that he was proud of his connection with the concept of "The Mulligan." In 1938, for example, one of his playing partners at Winged Foot congratulated him in writing on his success in naming the first-tee do-over after himself.

This friend was Horace Heidt (1901-86), a pianist, band leader, and radio star whose band entertained in the 1930s on the NBC and CBS radio networks. He had two hits reach the top of the Billboard Chart in the 1930s.

As a gift for his golf partner David Mulligan, Heidt gave him a copy of the 1938 edition of the *Golfer's Year Book*, and he wrote on the title page:

To my golf partner, David Mulligan.

You fixed "The Mulligan" for driving, now originate an expression for putting.

Your bad putting partner,

Horace Heidt.

(Cited by Alex Morrison, "Golfing" [a syndicated column], The Daily Review *[Morgan City, Louisiana], 7 February 1964, p. 3)*

This passage is all about the power of naming: David, you fixed in place the phrase "The Mulligan" for a do-over in driving so successfully that the practice has been accepted; now come up with an equivalent phrase that will allow forgiving a bad putt.

And what a good name Mulligan was!

When one says the name "Mulligan," one is not saddled with the label "kicker," or the reputation of one who whines a complaint. When one says the name "Mulligan," one is not forced to plead an "alibi." The name implies a precedent: an Irishman did this before me; I do this over again in his name. Say the name and you will get out of jail free.

Surely, "Old Man Mulligan rates a purple shrine in the House of Par."

Say his name: Mulligan, patron saint of duffers.