



Red Dirt Forum

Red Dirt Forum is an online monthly publication that features American Southern voices of poetry, fiction, and cross genres. It also features contemporary musicians and/or bands and author interviews. We are dedicated as well to publishing voices that speak volumes regarding issues of social justice at the grassroots and global levels.

Submission Guidelines: Send submissions to redirtpressandforum@gmail.com(<mailto:redirtpressandforum@gmail.com>) stating in header this is a submission for *Red Dirt Forum* and attach your work in Word format with full name and email in top left

corner on first page of submitted work. You may submit up to three poems, two pieces of fiction. If we wish to see more, we will let you know. No word count, but please be judicious in submission of works. Include author bio, 75 word count, maximum.

Content

Forum Chat: Amy Wilson interviews poet Philip Raisor +

A Place in Tennessee, Essay, Julia Nunnally Duncan +

Forum Chat: Amy Wilson interviews poet and translator Abdelrehim Youssef +

In Passing, Story, Yasser El-Sayed +

Golf and I are Back Together, Essay, Allen Mendenhall -

Golf and I are Back Together

Essay by Allen Mendenhall | May 2023

Golf and I were separated for fifteen years. Now we're happily, romantically reunited. How, you ask, does a couple disengage for so long only to return to each other desperately, passionately, with the ardor and fervor of aroused youth?

Few utterly broken relationships resulting in bitter breakups experience that improbable second chance. Yet golf and I, notwithstanding trials and tribulations, painful parting and emotional scarring, have reunited. Here's our inspiring story.

Golf, as you know, is much older than I. She's been around. Her first lover, apparently, was the Scottish King James IV.

She and I met when I was only eight. She seduced me, enchanted me, pulled me close to her bosom and lovingly cultivated our complex relationship through highs and lows, joys and tumult. An older, more mature woman can teach a young man curious things. Her hormones peak late whereas his peak early. The match is, in that respect, for a matter of time at least, perfect.

I played golf well as a junior, winning multiple Atlanta Junior Golf Association tournaments, as well as the Atlanta National Junior Club Championship several times, and I competed in tournaments hosted by the Southeast Junior Golf Tour. I carded my first under-par round in the eighth grade, before I started high school. I recall shooting 74 from the tips when I was a barely fertile 13. Grown men admired my swing on the driving range—some of them, I suspect, recalling the virility they once enjoyed themselves—and I boasted to them in the locker room about pronation and supination, supple positions I'd learned from Ben Hogan's salacious *Five Lessons*.

That all changed in high school when I took a mistress, a flesh-and-blood human being, which is to say, a girlfriend. She, a popular cheerleader, was jealous of golf. She made me choose: her or my clubs. I couldn't have both.

I selected the human. Golf and I slowly, painfully drifted apart. I stopped playing her. She, hurt, her needs unmet, stopped tempting me with her delicious charm. We rekindled the flame briefly—during my last semester of college—but it didn't work out. I quit her completely.

That was in 2005. Then, in 2017, a remarkable thing happened. I decided to build a house on a golf course lot overlooking a pulchritudinous par three, the green guarded by a sprawling lake over which, each dawn, an auburn sun rose with sublime majesty. There, beside the rocky shoreline and muddy banks, amid refracting rays of light from sparkling water, as the geese and ducks cackled with wild abandon and the lush ground luxuriated in the soft spray of daybreak sprinklers, lay the smooth and verdant fairway, so fertile and epidermal that the flagstick stood erect even in high winds.

I recall, after I moved in, taking in that enthralling view, the hole like a bathing beauty, my lustful eyes unable to look away. In a suddenly soundless moment, I accepted responsibility for my failures, decisions, and mistakes, and imagined my life with golf in it again.

Had our mutual anger and suffering occurred merely during a season of sorrow and heartbreak, reflecting circumstances beyond our control that weren't intrinsic to our relationship? Had I turned away from her because of my insecurities and bitterness, my fear that I would never play at the high level I envisioned for myself? Were my resentment and contempt misdirected or misplaced? Could I accept the fact that I would never become a professional, never know what it feels like to crush a drive

340 yards or pitch and putt before roaring crowds at Augusta National? Might I overcome anxiety and self-loathing if I were open and honest with golf about them, describing to her, my once darling partner, my deepest vulnerabilities and desires? Had I ever found true happiness apart from her?

Humbled, and with a renewed sense of purpose, I decided, right then and there, to seek healing and forgiveness. I dusted off those old irons that I'd owned since 1994. Sure, the company that made them was out of business, and the graphite shafts were more suited for a fishing pole than a golf club. But they were mine and had served me well in my adolescence.

My return to the driving range wasn't pretty or triumphant. I struggled to elevate the ball. I hooked and sliced and even shanked the ball from time to time. I remained determined, though, to prove to golf that I was serious about changing and would work through *any* problems, however difficult, to ensure the full restoration of my feelings and commitments.

Golf and I are back together again, I'm pleased to report, and our passions couldn't be hotter. I'm now playing at a four handicap; my low index is 1.8, achieved during a 2020 streak when the economy closed for the pandemic. I've got new clubs, clothes, and shoes, a spring in my step and a tanned face. I've started working out. I feel healthy and happy. Golf and I are, by all accounts, affectionate partners with a promising future.

The only problem is, how to tell my wife?

About the author: Allen Mendenhall is a writer and attorney who serves as an associate dean of the Sorrell College of Business at Troy University. (AllenMendenhall.com(<https://allenmendenhall.com/>)).

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This inaugural issue includes music lyrics by StumbleEast bandmates Kevin Hall and Jay Tracy, poetry and prose by William Bernhardt, Vaibhav Saini, Julia Nunnally Duncan, and others.

(<https://reddirtpress.net/book-catalog/red-dirt-forum-issue-2>)

Red Dirt Forum | Issue 2(<https://reddirtpress.net/book-catalog/red-dirt-forum-issue-2>)

This issue includes music lyrics and an interview with Shawna Russell, an author interview with Lara Bernhardt, poetry and prose by Nancy Dillingham, Carl Sennhenn, Suzanne Hudson, John Dorroh, Patricia Taylor, Joe Formichella, William Bernhardt, and others.

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Red Dirt Forum | Issue 3(<https://reddirtpress.net/book-catalog/red-dirt-forum-issue-3>)

Issue three contains works by Fred Chappell, Joseph Bathanti, Julia Nunnally Duncan, Yasser El-Sayed, Bruce Craven, and others.

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The Music issue includes work by George Perrault, Rajashree Koppolu, Susan Zurenda, Alec Solomita and others.

Red Dirt Press, LLC

Shawnee, OK 74804

405-765-3126(Voice/Fax)

[reddirtpressandforum@gmail.com](mailto:redirtpressandforum@gmail.com)

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