

The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “1976/03/26 - American Cancer Society's Courage Award, White House” of the Frances K. Pullen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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SUGGESTED REMARKS FOR GENE LITTLER PRESENTATION
Friday, March 26, 1976

I know how much the President would like to be here today, because he admires Gene Littler as a man and as a golfer. We've spent many Sunday afternoons watching Gene's famous golf swing, and we've been thrilled in the past year to watch his triumphant comeback after a serious cancer operation.

Gene, you are known as the gentleman golfer-- a description of admiration from your fellow professionals. You are truly a champion on and off the golf course, and I'm very pleased to present this award for courage-- which you so truly deserve.

* * *



Gene Littler Presentation

I know how much the President would like to be here today, because he ~~admires~~ admires Gene Littler as a man and as a golfer. We've spent many Sunday afternoon[s watching Gene's famous golf swing, and we've been ~~so~~ thrilled in the past year to watch his triumph comeback after ~~his~~ ^{a serious} cancer operation.

Gene, ~~I know~~ you are known ~~in your professional~~ ^{the} as ~~a~~ gentleman golfer---a description of admiration from your fellow ~~professionals~~ professionals. You are truly a champion on and off the golf course, and I'm very pleased to present ~~an~~ ^{this} award for courage--- which you ~~truly~~ ^{so} truly deserve.

(Presentation)

For Immediate Release
Friday, March 26, 1976

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY TO MRS. FORD

Mrs. Ford will present the American Cancer Society's Courage Award to Gene Littler, golfer, at 3:00 PM in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Mrs. Ford is National Honorary Crusade Chairman of the American Cancer Society. She will be joined by Mr. Thomas Ulmer, Chairman of the Board; Mrs. E. Morgan Montgomery, Vice President of the American Cancer Society and Mrs. Gene Littler for the presentation.

#

Press pick up in West Wing Lobby at 2:45 PM

Kay

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MRS. FORD

EVENT: Present Courage Award to Gene Littler

GROUP: American Cancer Society

DATE: Friday, March 26, 1976

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: Diplomatic Reception Room

GUESTS: Gene Littler, 1976 Recipient, Courage Award
Mrs. Gene Littler
Curt Littler, 22 year old son of Gene Littler
Suzanne Littler, 19 year old daughter of Gene Littler
Thomas Ulmer, Chairman of the Board, American Cancer Society
Mrs. Thomas Ulmer
Mrs. Eleanor Montgomery, Vice President, ACS
Lane Adams, Executive Vice President, ACS
Mrs. Lane Adams
Mr. Irving Rimer, Public Relations Director, ACS

BACKGROUND: The Courage Award is given annually by the American Cancer Society to someone of distinction who has had cancer and who has courageously faced the disease and who is an example to others. This year's recipient, the famous golfer Gene Littler, faced what was once one of the most deadly forms of cancer. He had a melanoma which is a critical form of skin cancer. Because of early diagnosis, prompt treatment and the medical benefits for the world of research, he won his battle against cancer. He then went back to his profession of golf and emerged the victor in major tournaments.

The President had originally been scheduled to do this in the Oval Office but will now be traveling to California.

NOTE: -Open press coverage
-The group will have toured the White House prior to the presentation
-Refreshments will be served following the presentation



SEQUENCE:

- 3:00 p.m. You will be escorted to the Diplomatic Reception Room by Susan Porter when your guests have assembled.
- 3:02 p.m. After shaking hands with them, you will move to the fireplace for the presentation of the Courage Award to Gene Littler.
- 3:05 p.m. You will present the framed certificate to Gene Littler. You may wish to read the certificate.
- 3:10 p.m. At the conclusion of the presentation and photographs, at your invitation refreshments will be served.
- Mingle with guests.
- 3:25 p.m. Return to family quarters.


susan porter
March 26, 1976



SUGGESTED REMARKS FOR GENE LITTLER PRESENTATION
Friday, March 26, 1976

know how much the President would like to be here today.

I know how much the President would like to be here today, because he ~~admires~~ admires Gene Littler as a man and as a golfer. We've spent many Sunday afternoons watching Gene's famous golf swing, and we've been so thrilled in the past year watching Gene's famous golf swing, and we've been to watch his triumph comeback after his cancer operation. thrilled in the past year to watch his triumphant comeback here, ~~now~~ you are known ~~as a~~ as a gentleman after a serious cancer operation.

golfer--a description of admiration from your fellow ~~professionals~~

Gene, you are known as the gentleman golfer--professionals. You are truly a champion on and off the golf course, a description of admiration from your fellow professionals. and I'm very pleased to present an award for courage-- You are truly a champion on and off the golf course, which you truly deserve. and I'm very pleased to present this award for courage--
(Presentation)
which you so truly deserve.

#

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Mrs. Ford -

When I learned you
were presenting Gene Little
the Courage Award on Friday -
I remembered this background
info I had on him - He
was invited to the Irish
dinner but refused because
of a previous commitment.
Golf Digest is the "golf
magazine published by
the New York Times -
Mark



GOLF DIGEST

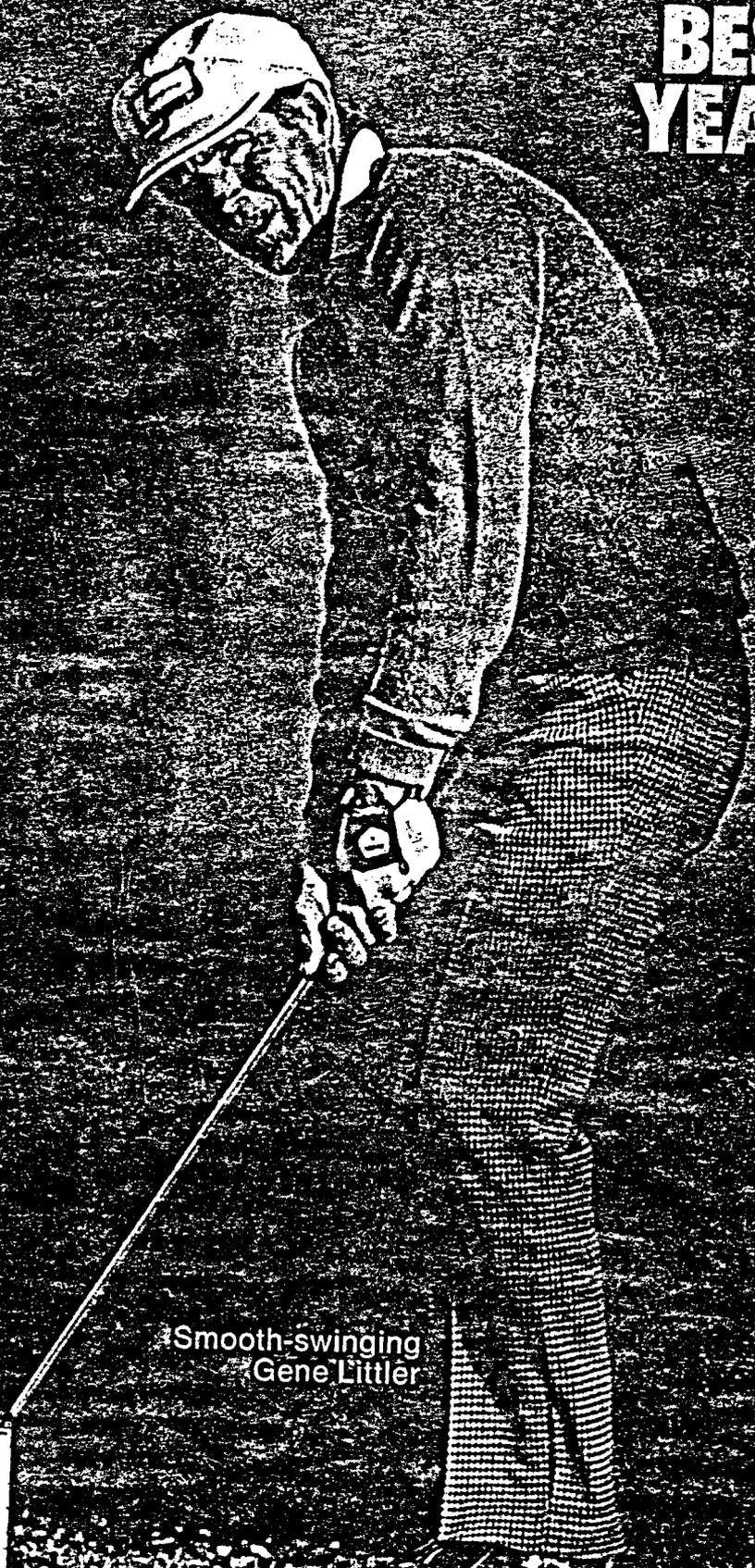
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A DRAW
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YOUR CLUBS
REPAIRED**

**THE CROSBY:
GREATEST
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Smooth-swinging
Gene Littler

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Golf Digest

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WHY GENE LITTLER HAD HIS BEST YEAR



By **NICK SEITZ** Editor

Phil Rodgers, a stubby, sometimes irascible veteran, is the resident guru of the men's professional golf tour. He is acutely knowledgeable about the game and is blessed with a photographic memory that surpasses videotape because it has a third dimension. Other players come to Rodgers for help when they're playing badly, knowing he can remember exactly how they were swinging when they were playing well—a year ago, five years ago, 10 years ago. In many cases Rodgers understands his fellow pros' games better than they understand their own.

Rodgers and Gene Littler live in the San Diego area and are long-time friends, and Rodgers was the first person I wanted to talk to about Littler's unexpectedly great season. Less than three years after undergoing two grave operations for cancer—operations that laid waste much of the muscle structure of the upper left side that traditionally has been considered crucial to the golf swing—Littler in 1975 won the Crosby, Memphis and Westchester tournaments in the U.S. He finished in the top 10 in eight tournaments this year and earned almost \$200,000. Considering how much the competition has improved since he joined the tour 20 years ago, it has to be his best year yet, to the delight of the

millions of people in golf who admire the quiet quality of the man.

I found Phil Rodgers after the first round of the Tournament Players Championship in Fort Worth. In a demonstration of guru wisdom, he had fled the broiling, 110-degree heat of the practice range to take up a position near the cold-drinks box in the air-conditioned locker room.

Rodgers pointed to several salient reasons for Littler's magnificent 1975 record, including changes in equipment, changes in attitude and even, to some extent, changes in Littler's classic swing. The changes reflect an incredible willingness to adapt and expand in a 45-year-old athlete, let alone one who was told by his doctors he'd never again tee it up in competition. "But the biggest difference I see is in his short game," Rodgers said. "Follow him around and you'll see what I mean. He's much more consistent at getting it up and down."

Since the temperature the following afternoon had subsided to a mere 105 degrees, I willingly if irrationally took leave of the press lounge (temperature 70 degrees, cost of refreshments zero) to pick up Littler as he made the turn. I arrived at the ninth green to witness his short game facing a knotty test.

The ninth at Colonial is a 405-yard par-4 with a moat protecting the green. Littler's second shot had cleared the water but was deep in the rough to the left of the green.

He was only about 35 feet from the cup, but it was cut immediately behind a deep bunker.

Littler flipped a wedge shot almost straight up in the air, stopped it just 10 feet beyond the hole and made the putt to save his par. Rodgers' words came back to me: "He's much more consistent at getting it up and down."

On the 416-yard 10th hole, uphill through overhanging trees, Littler missed the green short and to the left and had a chip shot of at least 100 feet. He rolled it dead a foot from the hole and tapped in for a par.

On the 11th hole, a wearing, 609-yard par-5, he was under the high lip of a greenside bunker in three. He splashed his sand shot 15 feet from the hole and made the putt for a par.

On the 12th hole, a dogleg-left 419-yarder, he was in the deep bunker in front of the green in two and, you guessed it, lobbed out and one-putted for another par.

At this point I was conveniently close to the clubhouse and left the course, the better to keep from suffering heat prostration. I took with me a new appreciation of Gene Littler's scrambling ability. Best known for the smoothness of his full swing, which presumably would get him in trouble only once every generation or so, he had just staged a magic show that saw him wriggle out of dire predicaments on four straight holes.

"I now have a fuller repertoire of



gimmicks to get the ball around the course," Littler says of his scrambling. He speaks softly and well, flavoring the words with a laconic wit. "Maybe the public doesn't realize that all the top players have to be able to save par frequently. Jack Nicklaus is powerful, but he's also one of the best up-and-downers on the tour in years and years and years. Consistently. That's why he almost never shoots a bad round. He's a great player, but there's more to the game than striking the ball purely. You can hit the ball just so well. You might go two strokes up on the field because you hit the ball better during a round, but if you recover and putt better than the other guys you could gain a half dozen or more shots. That's why it pays to practice the short game more than the long game."

Littler's values have changed recently in this connection. Says teaching professional Paul Runyan, who has worked with him on his game, "For a long time Gene thought he had to perform perfectly to be a champion. But no one, not even the greatest champion, hits every shot perfectly. Gene has become more of a scrambler since he's had to."

The scrambler, of course, puts oppressive pressure on his putting stroke. It does little good to manufacture a fine recovery shot if you don't get down in one putt, and Littler's putting this year has been far and away the best of his million-dollar career. It is almost ordinary for him to knock in during the course of a day's work putts of 15, 25, 28, 18 and 35 feet, to pick a recent example.

He attributes the improvement to a new putter and a modification in his setup position. The putter, developed especially for him by Littler's "nutty inventor friend" Dale Taylor of Carmel Valley, Calif. features 11 bold, black lines running across the mallet head perpendicular to the face, giving it its name Zebra.

"Taylor is the guy who got me interested in buying and working on old Rolls-Royces," Littler says. "He told me it was easier to align this putter. I stayed at his home when I went up to play the Crosby in January, and he had a prototype of the putter. I took it to the course for a practice round on Wednesday. I putted all right with it, so I used it in the tournament. I putted super and won."

"I was able to line up those lines better than I'd been able to line up the face of the putter. I putted for more than 30 years lining up the face of the putter, and I haven't looked at the face of this one a single time. I just fake those lines and line them up and drive them right straight through to where I want the ball to go. Before, I was lining up left and missing a lot of putts left. The lines straightened me out."

Partly owing to the new putter, Littler has set up to putt differently this year. "I'd been a stand-up putter, but I can see the lines on this putter better if I set up more back and under," he says. "I'm lowering my right side, more as I

The mechanics of Gene Littler's smooth swing

Gene Littler's swing is an eye-catching example of the value of smooth tempo. Close examination reveals mechanical flaws that might bring a less gifted player to ruin. He is swinging a long iron here, aiming at the gap in the trees (as indicated on photos). Littler takes the club quickly inside (1), which results in a flat swing plane going back. He makes a fine shoulder turn and gets the club in excellent position at the top (4), but his first move down (5) looks to be a slight spinning of the shoulders which moves the club outside or above his backswing plane. Littler is "coming over the top" and it may be from this action that he gets a new feeling of right-sidedness, although his swing always has exhibited this characteristic. At this point, most players would allow the right side to overpower the left, with disastrous results. But Littler makes the change from backswing to downswing so smoothly—and keeps the left arm and side in such a firm, leading position—that he not only gets away with it but indeed arrives at impact in a superb striking posture. Through the ball, the clubhead is traveling directly down the target line and his left arm is fully extended, still leading the right. That's a combination that produces power and accuracy.



that Jack Nicklaus sets up this way."

Says Arnold Palmer, with no more than a touch of jealousy, "Gene seems to have everything rolling right at the hole." Palmer also has used the Zebra putter, which now is in mass production.

In addition to a new putter, Littler is carrying a full set of graphite-shafted clubs this year for the first time. He began playing graphite woods when he came back from the cancer surgery late in 1972, then added the irons at this year's U.S. Open.

"I know I drive the ball farther with graphite, but it's hard to say if it's 12 yards farther or 28 yards farther, because I switched to a graphite driver when I started playing again," he says.

"I don't hit the irons any farther, but I'm really enjoying them. I think the ball flies softer and more uniformly. The trajectory is higher. I think graphite irons would help the average guy. The shaft is lighter and there's more weight in the clubhead, so it's easier to get the ball up in the air, especially with the long irons."

Littler hasn't tried to swing his woods and irons any differently than he did before his surgery, but feels that, out of necessity, he is playing more with his right side. How does he reconcile that with the gospel-like modern teaching emphasis on left-side dominance?

"I always believed that golf was played primarily with the left side—

that you pulled the club down with the left-side muscles," he says. "But I am minus some big muscles in my left side now, and I have come to realize that either I never played that way or else golf is a much more right-sided game than I ever thought it was.

"Ben Hogan was so correct when he said that your left side sets up the swing so your right side can hit the heck out of the ball. That's really what happens in the best swings. You pull down with the left side to get in position to whale it with the right side at the bottom of the swing.

"I feel more right-sided even though I don't think it would show in pictures. But my left side isn't all that weak. It's a fantastic commentary on the human body the way other muscles surrounding the area where I had the surgery have strengthened. I don't miss the ones I lost that much."

Other tour players who have watched him for most of his career, like George Archer, say they can see a stronger right-side role in Littler's swing. "He's pushing the club more with the right side from the top of the swing instead of pulling down with the left side the way he used to," Archer says. "I used to look at his swing and see a car pulling a trailer. Now I see the trailer pushing the car. Gene's always been an arms swinger. He has tremendous forearms—they're thicker than Arnold Palmer's. Maybe he developed them working

LITTLER'S TOUR RECORD

Year	Wins	Tour Money	Money Position
1954	1	\$ 8,327	28
1955	4	28,974	5
1956	3	23,833	6
1957	1	13,427	18
1958	0	12,897	27
1959	5	38,296	2
1960	2	26,837	8
1961	1	29,245	9
1962	2	66,200	2
1963	0	32,566	12
1964	0	33,173	15
1965	1	58,898	9
1966	0	68,345	7
1967	0	38,086	32
1968	0	61,631	26
1969	2	112,737	6
1970	0	79,001	22
1971	2	98,687	14
1972	0	11,119	135
1973	1	95,308	18
1974	0	102,822	20
1975*	3	182,883	5
	28	\$1,223,292†	

*Through October 15.

†This figure includes pro-am winnings and differs from our chart on page 108.

on his old cars."

Phil Rodgers agrees and remembers, photographically, that the medium-sized Littler was a good shot putter in high school, setting a school record. "He's not as strong with his left side since the surgery, but he can still hold a packed suitcase above his shoulder with his left hand," Rodgers says.

What message would Littler give the weekend golfer based on his intense experience with left-sidedness and right-sidedness?

"Well, I guess probably the worst





A new consistency at getting the ball up and down for pars has characterized Gene Littler's sensational season. His sand play and putting have been remarkable all year.



thing you can tell the average golfer is that you have to hit with your right side. But you have to hit with the right at the proper instant. This is where it gets tricky. It would be ridiculous for me to tell a guy to take the club to the top of his swing, delay his right-side action until he's almost to the bottom, and then hit it with the right side. He'd probably fall down. That move takes years of practice—you aren't going to find it on the first tee. I would never preach a delayed hit. I would tell the average golfer that the right-side hit is an involuntary move that follows from what precedes it. From the top of the swing, he should move the lower body first and leave everything else up there. But he should try to keep everything coordinated. That's the meaning of good tempo."

When Littler talks about tempo, the world drops what it's doing to listen, à la those television commercials for a Wall Street firm in which someone says to someone else in the middle of a crowded scene, "My broker is H. F. Burple, and H. F. Burple says . . ." and the silence suddenly becomes deafening as everybody cranes necks to eavesdrop.

Gene Littler swings a golf club with the same elegant style Sinatra brings to a song, Nureyev to a dance, Olivier to a Shakespearean role. The pace is courtly and pervaded with poise and control, and it doesn't vary from the first shot of a tournament to the last. For all the effort he seems to expend, Littler might be pouring a glass of milk before bedtime. If his swing were a piece of music, it would be a Strauss waltz.

It is too easy to assume that he came by his rhythmic action naturally. His inherent talent is considerable, but he consciously practices tempo by the hour and has evolved definite thoughts on how to improve it (see box). Essentially, he strives to be slow in two potentially dangerous speed zones: the takeaway and at the top.

It also is too easy to assume that, because Littler's tempo is aesthetically pleasing, he has a model swing mechanically. In truth, his swing is not one of the 10 or 12

GENE LITTLER'S TIPS ON TEMPO

- Swing all your clubs with the same tempo or pace. Swing your 2-iron as slowly as your 9-iron.
- Concentrate on smoothness and rhythm as you prepare for a shot. Take a couple of practice swings and then hit the ball with that same relaxed tempo.
- The first foot or so of your takeaway sets up good tempo. You have to be smooth there.
- The top of the swing is the most crucial area for good tempo. If you are going slowly just before you get there and just as you start down, your tempo won't be bad.
- When my tempo is good, I almost feel I'm swinging the club with my feet. Good footwork promotes good tempo. I've always liked the way Sam Snead seems to start his downswing with his feet. The top part of his body doesn't appear to move until after his feet start.
- Don't forget that a golf swing has to be greater than the sum of its parts. Sometimes we get so concerned with mechanical positions we forget we have to fit them all together smoothly.
- Tempo requires practice, like everything else in this game. I'll hit dozens of practice balls thinking about nothing but smoothing out my tempo.

best on the tour and never has been. His tempo is so good he has time to correct positional errors; his is a forgiving swing. "Gene the Machine" in reality should be called "Gene the Metronome."

He takes the club away from the ball abruptly to the inside of the target line, until it's about horizontal. Then he lifts it almost straight up to the top, in tandem with a big hip turn. The upshot is that he tends to come over the ball with his right shoulder on the downswing. If he were to try swinging the club under Hogan's famous imaginary pane of glass that represents a perfect plane, there would be broken glass all over the place.

Through the ball, Littler turns a bit too rapidly to the left with his lower body, the left knee stiffening rather than staying flexed for maximum power. Sam Snead swings in a similar pattern, but Snead is stronger and can hang on with the left hand better through the ball.

If you aren't careful, of course, you can sound like the class dunce second-guessing a swing like Littler's. That kind of talk is best saved for late-night cocktail-lounge discussions about the ideal swing that none of us will ever see on this particular planet.

Littler is the first to admit his swing form isn't what he'd like it to be—and still believes he struck the ball more purely as an amateur than he has since—but the telling point is that he gets outstanding results.

The story is told of the day perfectionist Littler was disconsolate on the practice range after a round in the Hawaiian Open, and asked another pro to give him a lesson. Littler complained that he had been outdriven by 40 yards all day, hadn't hit a shot on the face of the club and probably ought to be looking for an easier way to make a living. The other pro sympathized with him and, somewhat hesitantly, asked what Littler had shot. Moaned Littler, "67."

Says Steve Reid, a former peer of Littler's now working for the tour office, "Gene isn't a pure striker of the ball like Hogan, but he makes up for it with great self-control. He loses his temper—I've seen him

ram a club through the bottom of his bag after a bad shot—but he doesn't let himself get upset to the point it bothers his game. He's smart enough to realize that minor irritations will pass. He keeps an uncluttered mind and reasons his way through."

Since the cancer surgery, Littler's attitude is even more philosophical. "I have a little different perspective on life now," he says. "I'm not as afraid to make a mistake. I shoot at the flag a lot more than I used to. I've been very guilty in my career of thinking negatively. I was all right as long as I was playing well, but when I slumped a little I didn't think I could play at all. Now I think much more positively. My son got me interested in psychocybernetics and I took a course called PACE that helped me a great deal. I've learned that a better mental outlook is what separates the *really* good player from the good player."

For the newly positive Littler, the future is today. Speculation about his health varies wildly on the tour. You can hear, to put it perhaps too bluntly, that he is cured of cancer, or you can hear that he does not have long to live. The most popular opinion, usually attributed to one medical source or another, is that survival is problematic for five years after the type of surgery Littler had, but after the five years you don't have to worry.

"I hear that one a lot," Littler

says, "but I don't know where it comes from. My doctors have never told me anything like that, and they've been candid with me. I feel very well right now and I'm just living my life for today. I'm on sort of a health kick, not eating any white-flour or white-sugar products. Otherwise I live normally—I've always taken pretty good care of myself. As long as I feel this good, I have to be optimistic. I could learn tomorrow that I have cancer, but so could any of us.

"I feel very fortunate to be able to play golf again, and I'm paying more attention to the game. I used to come home from the tour and work with my cars and never practice. I would have to go back on the tour to get myself back in shape. Then about the time I was back in shape I'd be coming home again, because I've always wanted to be with my family. It became a vicious circle. Now I spend time at home working on my game, and my play is sharper over-all as a result.

"I used to say, 'Give me five more good years and I'll be off this tour so fast.' I started saying that about 15 years ago. I don't say that anymore. Maybe I'm on a little bit of a mission, trying to give some of the people who face the illness I did a little lift. I'm going to play as long as I can play well."

Everyone in golf hopes that will be a long, long time for Gentleman Gene Littler. ■

