



ANCC FOUNDATION Did You Know?



Golf Shop Fires

The ANCC Golf Shop* experienced fires on two occasions, one in 1934 and the second in 1968 in the aftermath of the Martin Luther King assassination. The following describes these two incidents as reported in the local press.

November 1934 Fire

On November 9, 1934, a fire destroyed part of the Club's golf workshops. As reported in the *Washington Post*:

Fire of undetermined origin destroyed the warehouse, paint shop, and considerable equipment at the Army-Navy Country Club yesterday morning. The damages were estimated by officials at \$5,000, which was not covered by insurance. The fire was first discovered by an employee, Herbert Baserman, of 1100 block, North Washington street, Alexandria. Firemen from Jefferson, Clarendon, Arlington, Ballston, and East Arlington responded. With much effort the firemen confined the flames to the one building, saving another frame shop adjoining.¹

MLK Arson Fire, April 5, 1968



The following details the damage and response to the firebombing of the Arlington golf shop on the evening of Saturday, April 5, 1968, during the widespread unrest following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968.

Press Reports

As reported in the April 7, 1968, edition of the *Sunday Star*:

Looting, Arson Continue, Some Easing Is Reported 5 Are Dead, 781 Injured in District

Despite the presence of 11,500 federal troops reinforcing District police, looting and arson continued in the District early today....

...

¹ "Flames Wreck Country Club," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1934, p. 7.

Golf Shop Burned

In nearby areas, the golf shop of Arlington's Army-Navy Country Club burned into ruins at 8:30 last night--apparently the work of Molotov cocktail-hurling arsonists. Arlington Fire Inspector Philip Puretil said, "I think it was a Molotov cocktail thrown right through the window."

When firemen arrived at the golf shop, located near the edge of the club's grounds at 17 Street, Arlington, adjoining a suburban Negro area, the entire wood-frame structure with a glass-front was ablaze.

Though firemen had the fire under control by 9:00 p.m., the building was a total ruin. Admiral Edward King, Army-Navy board chairman, told reporters that the building had been empty for several hours before the blaze and that the club had been closed before dusk....²

The following day, *the Washington Post and Time Herald* reported:

Suburbs Calm After Fires

A peaceful Palm Sunday followed a widely scattered and sporadic--and for the most part minor--incidents yesterday in Washington's anxious suburbs.

The incidents, beginning about 8 p.m. Saturday and continuing into the early morning hours, included fire bombings in Arlington and Montgomery counties and the wounding of a Prince Georges County police officer by a sniper.

The only major firebomb damage occurred at Arlington's Army-Navy Country Club. The \$140,000 pro shop there was destroyed by what officials said were several Molotov cocktails.

...

In Arlington, 11 firebombing incidents were reported over the weekend. One of the firebombs ignited a blaze that leveled the pro shop at Army-Navy Country Club in Arlington on Saturday night.

A \$140,000 damage figure was placed upon the burned-out building and its contents, which included expensive golfing and sports equipment....

Arlington police last night charged two men with conspiracy to commit arson at a 7-Eleven store in the 2400 block of South Shirlington Road in the Green Valley section.

According to Commonwealth's Attorney William J. Hassan, one of the suspects was attempting to light the wick of a gasoline-filled bottle while his companion held it when police stopped them. Charged were James Boyde Parker, 24, of the

² West, Woody, "Looting, Arson Continue, Some Easing Is Reported," *Sunday Star*, April 7, 1968, p. A1, A7.

1200 block of South Rolfe Street, a laborer for the county government, and William Raines, 24, of the 2400 block of South Kenwood Street, a laborer at the Buckingham Apartments. Both are Negroes. They were arrested shortly after 10 p.m.³

The Club Responds

On April 9, 1968, the Executive Committee convened in a meeting called by the Chairman, Admiral King, “as the result of the unstable situation in the Washington area, and a number of telephoned threats directed to the Club,” to consider what the Club should do to protect its property from looters, arsonists, vandals, and other trespassers on Club property.” Mr. William Hassan, a member of the Club who was also the Commonwealth Attorney for Arlington County, advised that County authorities considered the telephoned threats credible. Mr. Hassan also advised that two “highly likely” suspects for the burning of the pro shop had been apprehended on Sunday, April 7, as they were about to set fire to a 7-11 store, and that both had long criminal records.

During this meeting, the Executive Committee defeated a motion to close both the Arlington and Fairfax sites for the remainder of the day--with signs to this effect posted, and with members on the golf course and tennis courts told to leave--by a vote of three to two but passed a motion identical to the first but without members being told to leave. The Clubhouse closed at 1300 hours, with signs to this effect posted at the Clubhouse and at “the Pentagon gate.” An announcement concerning the closing of the Club was also distributed to the local radio and television stations.

At the Board’s meeting on April 24, 1968, Admiral King reported that the culprits who fire-bombed the pro shop had been apprehended in connection with another burning, and that they “were not associated with the Club.” Admiral Schoech, who had been asked by Admiral King to study the adequacy of the security at Arlington and Fairfax, advised the Board that the guard force at Arlington would remain at its current level indefinitely, and that no guard had been posted at Fairfax because no problems had been experienced there. After Mr. Hassan “warned of increasing destruction in that area due to roving vandals and recommended reconsideration,” the General Manager “was instructed to talk to the Fairfax police and take suitable action based on their report.” Colonel Schoner brought up the “detracting effect of a 24-hour open-door policy” on insurance which would favor our putting a guard at Fairfax.”

Repairing the Damage

At the Planning Committee meeting on April 12, 1968, General Curtin and the Club’s architect/engineer, William Peake, reported that the golf pro shop had a total of about 3,110 sq. ft. of damaged area, exclusive of its unenclosed porch. The pro shop was insured for \$45,000 and insurance would cover up to 90% of this amount. Until the shop was restored, golf activities would be conducted out of a trailer similar to the Tennis trailer. Members who lost golf

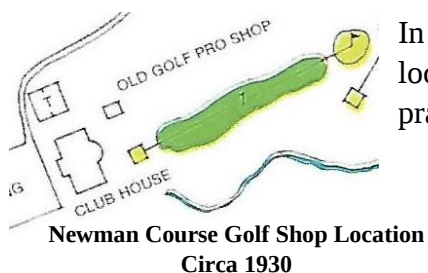
³ Barnes, Bart, “Suburbs Calm After Fires,” *Washington Post and Time Herald*, April 8, 1968, p. A7.

equipment in the fire were to submit a claim through their own insurance company first, and then, if they do not get adequate redress, to the insurer of the pro shop. The Planning Committee instructed the General Manager to put a notice in the Bulletin to encourage members with lost clubs to replace them through Mr. Tobash, whose loss in the fire was about 20% of the value of the items in the pro shop.

At the Board's meeting on April 24, 1968, Admiral King reported that while the insurance company's response had been very satisfactory, the Golf Pro's inventory loss was in excess of the insured amount. Renovation of the pro shop was scheduled to be completed by July 1.

As of the Planning Committee meeting on May 29, 1968, the Club had signed a \$33,000 contract for rebuilding the pro shop, to be completed by July 1 and paid for by insurance. On June 28, 1968, the Planning Committee noted that the reconstruction of the pro shop was well under way. The revised completion date was July 15 and the contract had been increased to \$34,000. On September 5, 1968, the Planning Committee noted that the reconstruction of the pro shop was complete, at a final total cost of \$37,000, including \$3,000 for carpet. The Club and the insurance adjustor were currently in a dispute over \$1,700 of this cost; it was "most probable that despite our vigorous efforts, the Club will be faced with assuming this cost. On November 25, 1969, the Finance Committee authorized the General Manager Dailey to settle a member's claim for damage to her golf clubs in the Pro Shop fire in April 1968 at \$.40 on the dollar.

*In 1934 the golf shop was located adjacent to the Newman course's first tee behind the original clubhouse.



In 1968 the golf shop was located in vicinity of today's practice putting green.

Red #1
Golf Shop
Location 1968



Golf Pro Shop after fire on April 6, 1968. (photo ANCC)



Another view of the Golf Pro Shop fire damage. (photo ANCC)

