

# *Prologue*

**I** hurried into the upstairs bedroom and searched for my appointment book. The rented St. Paul, Minnesota home had tan, nubby-silk wallpaper and hand-carved mahogany ceiling moldings. A whirlpool rose from one corner of the bedroom, its surrounding Italian marble having collected more dust than footprints the past year. A picture of a beautiful female sales executive I had met recently brightened the room.

Two golf trophies from the NCAA and USGA Junior tournaments that I had won years earlier sat in a corner. An expensive painting my father gave me of downtown London, where I was born prematurely, looked out of place. Rain and fog today obstructed a panoramic view of the Mississippi River.

The bedroom had become somewhat of a torture chamber. At least twice a week, when my tense body finally succumbed to sleep, the nightmare would return. Unlike murky dreams, the colors were vivid. Like an instant replay.

I had walked outside the Florida warehouse located in a run-down area northeast of Orlando's International Airport. It's where my father's Hanzel Golf and Sports employees assembled golf shafts and heads imported from the Orient. I needed a break from a stressful meeting.

“How can we be missing something that we are basing the future of this company on?” my 69-year-old father demanded from Reggie Silvera, the plant’s warehouse manager.

Silvera didn’t respond.

My father had told me Hanzel was working on developing something that would revolutionize golf club manufacturing. He wouldn’t elaborate much because of insider-trading allegations at another public company he once ran. My father wasn’t the first country club member who after a few drinks had shared his company’s private corporate information with friends.

Sweat poured from Silvera’s pudgy but handsome face. Silvera had a Greek father and Italian mother and came to the United States as a youth after living several years in Cuba. Thick black hair covered his stocky five-foot-eight body that women in the plant admired. Today, he looked as if he had been mixing concrete all afternoon.

Ford Alexander, my father and primary golf instructor, was an attractive man with the energy of people half his age. He built his business reputation for saving jobs by attracting major investors and rescuing struggling or bankrupt companies. He took over Hanzel Golf and Sports just after the golf company had filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection from its creditors last year. He became one of its largest stockholders. A turn-around specialist, my father had a knack for saving unsuccessful organizations. However, he also took some lumps with companies he couldn’t salvage.

Walking through the Hanzel Golf and Sports plant, I saw perspiration roll off workers’ faces and drench their clothing. Without air conditioning, electric fans and a few screened windows cut high in the metal siding provided little relief. I pushed open a side tin door. Heavy, warm air with horrible humidity clogged my lungs. Twisted wire fences enclosed the property. Sandy soil helped consume leaking fluids from a smattering of dented, high-mileage cars driven by plant workers. Solvent cans emptied from applying golf grips overflowed a

dumpster. Near world-renowned tourist attractions, the plant and its employees seemed so out of place. Workers primarily spoke Spanish.

I closed my eyes, sighed and stretched my neck. Then I heard a muffled scream. Stepping into the yard, I listened for another sound. A shriek led me around the corner. I saw a man forcing an attractive girl against the warehouse back wall. Tall and with braided, shoulder-length black hair, she appeared to be perhaps only a few years older than my 16-year-old daughter, Shelly.

As I crept along the building, I saw a tall Hispanic assailant holding part of a broken golf club shaft just below her chin. Her bra dangled outside a ripped white blouse. Having pulled up the girl's long blue skirt, the man had his back to me and his left hand up between her thighs. White bikini panties rested atop her shoes.

The petrified girl quivered as he cursed her. When I got closer, she noticed me and looked to her right. I reached down for a pipe and charged forward, swinging it hard into the rapist's left leg and knee. When the girl ran off and her ugly attacker screamed in pain, someone hit me from behind. It felt like a baseball bat. I collapsed. Doctors said I would have been killed had the person hit me an inch lower.

For months, I woke up in a cold sweat each time I recalled the sound of my head being smashed. A miserable, recurring headache often bothered me.

**A** warm breeze tugged at the flagstick on Lake Nona's ninth green. Dense humidity curdled the air. Looking across the nearby 18th fairway and lake skirting it, I watched a jet descend into neighboring Orlando International Airport. It appeared the aircraft almost touched the water as the sun fell in Florida's early March sky. I rummaged through my golf bag for a light sweater as the temperature fell from an afternoon high of 83 degrees. The scent of freshly cut grass teased my nostrils.

Stretching my body, stiff from hitting hundreds of practice balls the past few days, I walked away from Lake Nona's grand white clubhouse. The large clock atop the building indicated 15 minutes past six.

I loved my father's Florida golf hideaway, where nice linen napkins adorned tables even in the grill room overlooking the lake. A sign reminded golfers to remove their hats. Very British. Many top touring professionals such as Ernie Els, Nick Price, Annika Sorenstam and Sergio Garcia, plus teaching guru David Leadbetter, have called it home. Many golf publications have listed it in America's top 100, and the course held the World Cup, Solheim Cup and USGA Amateur Team Championship in its early years.

My father, Ford Alexander, leaned against the contoured-cement

railing outside the clubhouse, separated from the beautiful lake by the treacherous, 440-yard 18th hole. Watching four PGA touring pros finish on the front nine, we reflected on our four-day golf trip and waited for the valet to bring up our rental cars.

"Great round, Ford," acknowledged an older club member.

Walking the opposite direction on the elegant marble sidewalk, the member paused and said, "I don't know if it's harder to compute your company's stock price or your handicap. You'll be giving me six shots a side when that 69 gets into the computer."

"It's already posted," my father replied. "But I wouldn't give you six shots a side if you were on crutches."

"Maybe shooting your age today, Ford, will convince you to retire and move to Orlando for the winter," the member declared.

"I'd get bored taking money from you guys every day," my father joked.

"I've been to plenty of funerals," the older member responded, "but I don't recall ever seeing a U-Haul truck following the hearse."

I laughed, knowing well that my father had no interest in retiring. Business was a game, and money and stock prices helped him keep score. A Harvard graduate, my father had inherited \$53,000 from an uncle at age 26 and turned it into \$1 million by 35. He had made and lost millions of dollars since then.

Since my 13th birthday, my father and I had played \$2 nassaus, competing with cordial intensity. I remember the 10-foot putt I drained to beat him the first time when I was 14 as much as the long snake I made to win the NCAA individual championship. Although we heckled each other between shots, we were serious when we addressed the ball. My father stopped giving me a handicap advantage at 15.

At the end of each round, my father and I shook hands and gave each other a hug. The winner bought root beer floats. We made it beer after I had become old enough to legally drink. Despite all my missed cuts at national tournaments, my father still thought I should

be traveling the world as a touring pro. He understood, however, that I wanted a family and more freedom from a pro's often-grueling schedule. The trophies, newspaper clippings and hotel receipts didn't interest me.

Besides, when I finished college the money on the PGA Tour was far smaller than today's purses and endorsement contracts. I felt confident I could earn good money as a stockbroker by finding undervalued, quality stocks for investors.

A proud and healthy man, my father could still walk 36 holes a day with a caddie. He ran a marathon at 50 to win bets from friends, even though he never jogged regularly before or after that race.

Other than the marathon challenge, only golf, travel and a few close friends distracted my father from business. I remember one buddy sharing a great line at a retirement party. When my father asked what he had done with all the money he earned over the years, the celebrating golfer paused and meditated.

"Guess I spent most of it on booze, broads and golf ... and must have wasted the rest," he told the guests.

Moving away from the Lake Nona railing, my father walked to the bag-drop rack and reached for his golf clubs. The valet, who had just delivered his Cadillac, out-hustled me and insisted on loading the bag into the trunk. My father said he wanted to have lunch next week in St. Paul. Normally happy and gregarious, he occasionally seemed very sad, similar to someone carrying a painful memory. He and my mother quickly dismissed it whenever I inquired about it.

Standing next to the open car door, he whispered, "Marty, we need to have a long chat."

"Sounds good. What's up?"

"Several topics. Hope you don't mind if your mother joins us. There's something we need to share with you."

His comment surprised me.

"No problem," I answered.

My mind did mental gymnastics. My father and I had enjoyed plenty of business and golf lunches, but I couldn't remember the last time my mother had joined us. What was going on? A divorce? That wouldn't surprise me because my mom and dad weren't a good match.

My father exuded wealth and charm. People who didn't know him guessed him to be in his mid-fifties, rather than almost 70. His trim, six-foot-one frame and wavy brown hair flecked with some gray strands, caught the eyes of younger women. Before each meal, he thanked the Lord for his many blessings and asked for good health and the same for our family and his employees. He did so whether he dined at a Subway or five-star restaurant.

Tall, attractive, lean and with frosted hair, my mother Lorraine recently had lost her zest for life. The high-profile charitable activities that once fueled her had become chores. A marriage that seemed to disintegrate more each year and a mastectomy two years before had impaired her spirit. Mom became even more reclusive last year, when I got a divorce less than one year after a drunk driver crossed the median and killed my 16-year-old son, Jason. Many days, she never left her St. Paul home. And she never understood people's passion for golf or the chatter and drinks afterwards.

"Dad, you can't leave me like this," I said as my father opened the car door. "What's going on?"

"I've only got a minute, but let me ask you a question," he stated.

"Shoot."

"Are you tired of being a stockbroker, Martin?"

Unlike mother, my father seldom called me by my formal name.

"Trying to convince clients not to panic when their stocks fall or see them leave me to do online trading hasn't been fun."

He nodded. My father had tried several times to entice me with business opportunities. Tempting offers of a handsome salary, country club perks and all the time I wanted to play golf. He didn't accept that his only child insisted on making it on his own. And until recently,

the brokerage business had provided my family a good living. At least my ex-wife's divorce attorney thought so. Like many, I suffered from thinking about the paper profits that had disappeared. Losing clients to free Internet research, cheap Web trading and unexplainable market declines made each business day more difficult.

Once again, my father had offered to pay for me to rejoin North Oaks, the comfortable club where he and I had played for many years. A painful budget cut to drop out, I wasn't left with much discretionary income after the divorce. And I didn't want to be a member if I had to worry about the monthly bills or have my dad pay for them.

"We've got some plans for Hanzel Golf and Sports that I'd like to share with you after our next board meeting," he said.

I asked him to elaborate, but my father indicated he had to leave and said, "I'll tell you more about it when we get home. Don't sell any of your Hanzel stock. And remember where the U.S. Open is being played this year."

After getting into the car, he lowered the window and stared at me.

"Still worried that someone from the plant is after you?"

"Shouldn't I be?"

My father didn't respond.

"Why can't someone from Hanzel provide information about who attacked me?"

"If we could find our former warehouse manager, Reggie Silvera, we would know a lot more," he said.

Looking left as he drove off, my father smiled and waved. I followed him in my rental car. I had lost clients and significant money on a few companies he failed to rescue, but I loved and respected him more than anyone knew.

As a well-traveled amateur, I had competed in two U.S. Opens and several other PGA Tour events. I'd played with some of the greatest names in golf and had held my own against Minnesota players who

became rich on the PGA Tour. Watching my father shoot his age on that sunny spring afternoon at Lake Nona, though, ranked among my favorite rounds. It also was the first 18 holes I had putted cross-handed, and it made me feel differently about this crazy game.

I remember my father's car meandering past the British and Lake Nona banners flying below the American flag. He cruised past the lush landscaping that framed the long, winding Lake Nona entrance. More beautiful than Augusta National's short Magnolia Lane, the drive often compelled my father to lower his driver's side window and smell the plants, flowers and freshly cut grass.

For 40 years, I never felt good when my father left me. I cried as a child when he departed for business trips and couldn't wait until I would see him again. In typical style, my father's parting words had captured my imagination and left me dangling. With Hanzel Golf and Sports stock having climbed to \$20 a share, I thought about unloading it.

Lake Nona's heavy, dark green gates opened as my father reached the guard house, surrounded by beautiful plants and shrubs. Admiring the dancing waters of the fountain to his right, he stopped to greet the guard. My father had a way of making waitresses, doormen and mail carriers feel special, often greeting them by name. I hated to see our golf trip end. His parting words commanded my thoughts as I drove to my dinner meeting with a major client attending an Orlando convention. We each had a morning flight home.

Almost two blocks now separated us. When my father passed a convenience store near the Bee Line Expressway, a Ford Taurus pulled between us. We turned left, driving west toward the Orlando International Airport. The vehicle following my father put on his breaks for the first toll booth and the driver gave money to the female attendant. He looked straight ahead at my father's Cadillac and fumbled the change. At the second toll booth, the man pulled into another lane than my father. He waited before throwing coins into the

bin. Wearing sunglasses and a baseball cap pulled down over his brow, his long black hair reminded me of a former Cuban friend.

Several miles later, we turned right off the expressway onto International Drive. My father pulled into the luxurious Peabody Hotel across from the massive Orange County Convention Center. I honked, waved and drove to my dinner meeting several blocks away. The Taurus behind my father turned off one block past the Peabody.

The following morning, a hotel housekeeper found my father's body in the suite's hot tub. A gold money clip with nearly \$1,000 remained on the sink, along with his memorable Lake Nona scorecard from the day before. Nearby rested his Rolex watch, a bottle of quick-acting insulin for his diabetes and documents for an upcoming 3M board meeting. Three golf balls were on the carpet next to his Odyssey putter. A syringe was in a wastebasket with an alcohol swab. The clothes my father wore the prior day were on top of dirty laundry in the closet.

A framed picture of a beautiful woman with short black hair and hazel eyes adorned the hotel night stand. She had an exquisite silver brooch pinned to her somewhat revealing dress and appeared to be in her twenties. The photo looked similar to those in which people dressed up in old costumes. The glucose machine my father had used several times each day to test his blood sugar rested on the credenza, next to the television with its sound turned up.

Police investigators found a wrong-size battery beside the non-functioning blood-sugar monitor. There were no bruises or other signs of a struggle. The back of my father's skull had been crushed against the brick tile edge of the hot tub. Detectives disagreed whether he had slipped or had been killed. Fingerprints and the unknown woman's picture baffled everyone, as did a number — \$24 — scrawled on the front page of a yellow legal ledger. A Hanzel Golf and Sports acquisition offer perhaps?

Four days later, Twin Cities business leaders, government officials,

friends and golfing associates mourned his death at a large St. Paul funeral. I had difficulty thinking how I could live without my son Jason and my father. I wouldn't rest until I discovered how he died.

## 2

**T**wo months later, I banged my fist on the personal computer monitor in my downtown St. Paul brokerage office. I didn't want to believe the stock prices that came up. Especially Hanzel Golf and Sports. The NASDAQ stock with less than 10 million shares outstanding had fallen more than 30 percent in three days without any news released. The Dow and S&P 500 had gained, but Hanzel Golf fell to \$14 per share.

Piles of research reports downloaded from the Internet cluttered my desk — evening and weekend reading to divert me from Orlando police reports. Despite my many phone calls, a reward offer and having hired a private investigator in Orlando, we couldn't find Reggie Silvera. I studied the private eye's video of the shack Silvera called home when he worked for my father's company.

Orlando police tired of my calls. Except for helpful detective Quincy Underhill, they provided little information. Underhill had worked as a bell hop at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Orlando while attending junior college. I learned from a Bay Hill assistant pro that Underhill's dad had been murdered on his 11th birthday. About six-foot-three but weighing probably no more than 175 pounds, Underhill wasn't as gruff as most detectives I had met. He had short,

curly blonde hair, freckles and a warm smile. I enjoyed his great laugh and sense of humor.

Turning away from my desk, I gazed outside. I missed my father and son so much. I often thought about the many opportunities I could have spent with them but didn't. Those days when I got talked into an extra nine holes. Or playing the back nine in the rain when I wanted to quit at the turn. Rolling dice for one more round of drinks. I had spent many afternoons and evenings like that, golfing, drinking and rolling dice. I sometimes didn't get home until the kids were in bed.

I picked up a picture of Jason and held it in my hands. His handsome face faded into the accident scene. When I saw my son's body covered up next to his mangled car, it took three policemen to prevent me from battering the drunken driver who smashed into him.

My mother envisioned Jason becoming very successful, with his quick wit, sharp mind and warm personality. He hated science but loved growing things, often talking about becoming a golf course superintendent. Unlike other kids who hung around the tennis courts, practice range, putting green or grill, Jason often went to the maintenance shed and spent time with the North Oaks grounds crew staff.

Jason built his first bird feeder at age six. He learned to navigate the Internet before some of my friends did. Opened an online brokerage account before he could drive and tripled a \$1,000 gift from his grandfather in six months. We talked about different stocks, and he often found solid companies with low price-earnings ratios and little debt. He was cautious and never bought a company that wasn't profitable or didn't have good trading volume. He sold when his stocks appreciated more than 40 percent or fell more than 25 percent. When I discovered him drinking with friends at only 15, I sunk so low I had trouble working. My ex-wife, Jamie, blamed me and said I had put competitive golf ahead of my children.

After Jason's death, golf no longer seemed important. And not

belonging to a country club for the first time in my life, it wasn't as if I had somewhere to play most days. Or threesomes waiting for me to fill out their group. Nothing other than my two remaining children seemed significant, but I didn't see them as much as I would have liked because of schedule conflicts. Jamie kept the kids busier each month. I worked longer days and often hit golf balls in the evening at Keller Golf Course's public range, hiking to a remote elevated hill and being alone or with one of two other members of the popular men's club.

Decades earlier, Keller had hosted annual PGA Tour and LPGA stops as well as two major PGA Championships. With inexpensive green fees and such tradition, Keller tee times were scarce when Ramsey County got the course in good shape. The active men's and women's clubs had long waiting lists.

I had become a Keller member when in college through my father, who once belonged to the men's club there. He wanted me to help Keller compete against other public courses in the competitive 24-man team events. When I left North Oaks, a long-time Keller member who also belonged to North Oaks told me I could rejoin as a former member without going on the long waiting list. I did so. After practicing or playing a few holes at Keller, I spent most evenings with books, magazines, newspapers and the Internet. Occasionally, I turned to The Golf Channel for company.

The mystery of my father's death, almost getting killed at the Florida golf warehouse and plunging Hanzel stock prices consumed my thoughts. I wouldn't rest until I solved the puzzle. Had my father been murdered or did he slip in the hot tub, perhaps from an insulin reaction? Could an angry investor who lost money in one of his companies have killed him? A thief would have taken his money and watch.

Now almost 4 p.m., many golf-starved Minnesotans would have kicked themselves for not being on the course this splendid May after-

noon. I tried to muster the enthusiasm to play a few holes with another broker after work. Not a cloud in the sky, 73 degrees and barely enough wind to move the bursting new leaves.

Sun streamed through my corner office in downtown St. Paul near the Mississippi River. More than 400 square feet and furnished elegantly, it reflected the corporate decor seen more in movies than today's cubicle world. Two outside glass walls provided panoramic views of the meandering Mississippi River and St. Paul skyline, sights that often took me away from the phone and computer. Looking the other direction, I could see Minneapolis up the river.

The stock market had risen throughout the day, and people were upbeat. Karen Ames, my sales assistant, came into my office and dropped off a magazine.

"You're famous," she said with a sinister laugh.

"Among the most eligible Twin Cities bachelors is Marty Alexander," she read from the local magazine that she picked up. "Forty years old, six-foot-two and possessing a rugged athletic body that can drive golf balls prodigious distances."

I rose from my chair.

"I don't know where the warm Robert Redford smile went," Karen added, "but I can vouch for the wavy, sandy hair and broad shoulders."

"I hope you don't believe everything you read."

"I don't ... and even less that I hear."

Other than occasional gatherings with friends, I had become a loner. Singles bars turned me off. I realized most people who frequented them seldom shared that they might be unemployed, sexually involved or almost maxed out on credit cards.

I played far less golf since the deaths of my son and father. I had a good amateur record but felt my better days were behind me. Seemed like ancient history since I had played in two U.S. Opens as an amateur, won major Minnesota tournaments and captured the NCAA and USGA Junior Championship against current PGA Tour stars. Same

for the two Walker Cup teams I played on against Europe's best amateurs. I doubted that I could break 75 today, but I had entered the upcoming Minnesota Open and local qualifying for the U.S. Open.

Competitive golf could be one possible way to conquer my depression, my therapist believed. But then what did she know? She played tennis. Couldn't expect her to understand what it was like playing on public and daily-fee courses when I had always belonged to a country club. However, police believed if I played in tournaments, it might help me learn more about Hanzel Golf and Sports and perhaps find the missing warehouse manager.

On some days, the only people who kept me functioning were my two children. Shelly had turned 16, Russell 11. Not many of the country club friends I had golfed, partied and traveled with called. I sensed women did a better job than men of staying in contact with troubled colleagues. The party invitations ended long before the divorce's legal work had been completed. I realized even the most popular country club members seldom got invited back to their former clubs when divorce, work or financial setbacks took them away. Not getting invited to graduation open houses and weddings of friends' children I had played golf with or helped on the practice range hurt the most. My father was right when he had told me that most country club friendships were a mile wide and an inch deep.

Jamie didn't work outside the home, giving her time to keep up with many country club wives. A few also snubbed her, however, because they thought she attracted too much interest from their husbands. Five-foot-three and less than 125 well-packaged pounds, Jamie looked younger than her 39 years. A slight frosting gave her short, light brown hair an alluring sparkle. Tennis and regular aerobic workouts enabled her to eat, munch on snacks and sip white wine without gaining weight.

Although some believed me wealthy, others knew better. The divorce, stock market losses and declining brokerage commissions

stretched my paychecks. The \$20,000 reward a friend of my father had offered for information that would help locate the missing Hanzel manger and find the man who had raped the girl at the warehouse could come in handy. Friendly bankers who had pursued me for years when I was earning more commissions now sometimes didn't return my calls.

Karen interrupted again, informing me that my best friend, Tommy Mathias, was on the phone. A *St. Paul Pioneer Press* investigative reporter from Great Britain, he came to the United States when only 11 years old. An uncle convinced his dad to move the family from outside of London to the Twin Cities. Mathias became consumed with my father's death and Hanzel Golf and Sports. He could have made a fortune in sales or at one of the nation's largest papers. The power of the media and gratification of seeing his words in print shackled him. And he loved that the *Pioneer Press* gave him a chance and the freedom to investigate whatever intrigued him.

Unlike those who had grown up as a country club member, Mathias discovered golf as a caddie. He lugged clubs at North Oaks Golf Club for my father and other members for spending money, after losing both parents. Late one Saturday evening after Minnesota's annual May fishing opener, 13-year-old Mathias and his father returned to find fire trucks and police at their suburban St. Paul home. His 16-year-old brother had fallen asleep with a marijuana joint in his hand. Members of suburban Little Canada's volunteer fire department worked desperately but couldn't save his mother, brother and younger sister. One fireman died challenging the intense flames to save the sleeping British family.

Less than six months later, Mathias moved into a church member's foster home when his dad, a carpenter, died in a reported hunting accident. Determined to find the man who shot his father, he learned that his dad had killed himself on a deer stand. Having taken many fishing and hunting trips, Mathias' father blamed himself for his wife

and children's deaths.

Bright and ambitious, Mathias earned an Evans Scholarship at the University of Minnesota. He joined the ranks of several thousand former caddies from lower-income families who received four-year, full rides at major Midwest universities in fraternity settings. Mathias qualified by caddying several years at North Oaks, ranking in the top 25 percent of his graduating class and getting first-rate character references from club members and the head golf professional. My father wrote one of the most convincing letters. Annual contributions from more than 150,000 golfers made the Western Golf Association's caddie scholarship program among the nation's largest.

Possessing an unusual golf swing and charming British personality and tongue, Mathias' tenacity helped him earn second-team All-America honors at the University of Minnesota one year after I had won my second Big Ten championship. In match play, Mathias beat me many times during the hundreds of rounds we played together. A grinder, he almost won the U.S. Publinks, which would have earned him an invitation to the Masters at Augusta National. In the wind and rain, he often soared to the top of the leader board.

I'll never forget the time Mathias and I played with a cunning veteran and his younger partner at Duluth's Northland Country Club, a fabulous Donald Ross classic that overlooks Lake Superior. It had several annual invitational tournaments and some of golf's best views and toughest greens to read. Putts that looked downhill sometimes were uphill. Our older opponent in a post Labor Day best-ball tournament named for Leo "the legend" Spooner carried a full glass of water. He pretended to sip it on the cool day and sat the large cup near his ball on the greens. The well-traveled vet looked into the plastic glass to see which way the water leaned, discovering if his putts were uphill, downhill or sidehill. Twice, Mathias and I kicked over the container. When the crafty golfer attempted the trick on a crucial 12th-hole putt, Mathias smashed the glass with his foot. Gave him a

look that didn't need words. I fought so hard to keep from laughing, my stomach hurt. Minus the water, our opponent hardly made another par and we buried him and his partner down the stretch in the medal-play event.

Short, good-looking and rambunctious, Mathias seldom entered a room without changing the conversation. Especially after people heard his English brogue. The determination that had made him a good student and dogged match-play competitor helped him become one of the nation's best reporters. He could have worked for the *Wall Street Journal* or other major papers, but he wouldn't leave St. Paul and the newspaper that gave him a chance when others wouldn't. As a caring and dedicated friend, Mathias had few equals.

"We make any money today? I haven't had time to punch up any stocks online, but it sounds like you had pretty decent action."

"A few of my stocks were up, but it wasn't that good of a day," I told him.

"Don't be daft now. The Dow climbed more than 100 points. The news reports made it sound like you investor gents made money on every bloody stock."

"Some of the Blue Chips soared, but Hanzel had a horrible day. Many out-of-favor companies that my clients and I are holding still didn't rally."

"Your dad's company take another tumble?"

"About five bucks a share," I replied. "Fell to nine and an eighth."

"Ouch. Did Hanzel Golf and Sports make any announcements?"

"Yes. They reported that a new golf club innovation they were developing would be significantly delayed."

"They provide many details in the press release?" Mathias asked.

"Not really."

"So, you think Hanzel's stock went over \$20 a share in anticipation of your father bringing out a new golf club?"

"Yes," I responded. "My father had something important to tell me

before he died, but I don't know what it was. He didn't want me to sell the stock."

"An acquisition, or perhaps something about the company's technology?"

I didn't answer him. Mathias and I then shared stories of what we had learned from the private investigator as well as from St. Paul and Orlando police. Detective Underhill in Orlando shared some things, but we still didn't have much.

"Have you been playing much the past week?"

"Nine holes a couple times," I responded. "But I've been practicing a lot and playing a few holes most nights at Keller when I'm not with the kids."

"Still putting cross-handed?"

"Yes, sir. And I'm going to stick with it. I putted better than you did the last few times we played, and that hasn't happened very often."

"You're becoming a blade. In fact, the way you putted last week reminded me of a delightful chap who gave me a free chipping and putting lesson after I caddied for him at St. Andrew's when a neighbor took me there."

Changing the subject, Mathias wanted to know if I had plans for tomorrow evening. I told him I should hit practice balls and get ready for the Minnesota Open and U.S. Open qualifying coming up.

"Why didn't you enter the U.S. Open qualifying this year?" I asked.

"I've contributed enough cash to the USGA over the years. I'd have better luck pissing it away on lottery tickets. I don't do that because I did take a few math classes."

"Are you going to play any tournament golf this year?"

"Probably not," Mathias said. "I realize how much time I've wasted preparing for and playing in tournaments. When I tee it up now, I do so on my terms. And I golf with people I want to be with and on days suitable to me."

"Won't you miss the competition?"

"When my handicap went up three shots last year, I realized this chap's in the twilight of a mediocre career."

"You could beat half the field if you hadn't played for several months."

"Marty, you seem to forget that I didn't grow up with swing doctors videotaping my action. Not many British kids my age did. I've got to work at it. You're going to find out how difficult this game is now that you don't play regularly."

I asked if he were going to play in the TapeMark Charity Pro-Am that has raised millions of dollars for handicapped children.

"As much as I would like to help those great people out, I won't be able to make it this year."

"Guess you're letting work and women interfere with your golf game."

"That's true. And I'm enjoying both more than double bogeys."

Mathias then asked about this weekend's state open.

"I'm playing, but tell your sports department *not* to list me among the favorites. Lucky if I break 80. But I'll get the opportunity to pump some golf buddies about their thoughts on Hanzel Golf and Sports."

"If you plan to tee off with that attitude, stay in hibernation," Mathias said. "With your swing, you should shoot in the 60s every time you play."

"Don't I wish. Let me call you back. I've got a call from a fellow I suspect wants me to eat his stocks."

Mathias wanted me to join him at a local bistro when I called him back. He and some colleagues planned to celebrate their golf editor's retirement and visit with Shannon Fitzgerald.

"I thought your golf editor had a serious heart attack last week?"

"What country club bloke told you that bloody trash?" Mathias asked.

"Some friends from Dellwood told me. We were talking about how rotten it would be to have something like that happen just before

you retire. "

"Greg's more fit than ever. Plays golf and tennis several times a week. Where do your country club friends get some of that crap?"

"I've met some of the best people in the world at North Oaks and other country clubs," I said.

"And some of the biggest gossips who ever walked the face of the earth," Mathias countered. "They share bullshit and rumors over drinks when they're done playing golf or tennis."

"And you don't have anybody like that in your news room?"

"Not nearly as many as at country clubs. And except for sports and politics, our people are pretty objective."

Tired of his sparring, I tried to change the subject and asked about Shannon. Mathias said she had inquired about me yesterday and appeared fine.

"If I were you, I'd camp out on her doorstep," he said.

I tried to change the subject, but it didn't work.

"Marty, you know how gossip gets exaggerated when people take sides in a divorce. Doesn't take much to create these malicious country club secrets that aren't anywhere close to the truth."

I scoffed at his comment and sighed. Then I recalled some of the ugly lies spread about a friend who had divorced his caring wife and had a business go sour. I wondered what gossip the North Oaks members were spreading about my father, ex-wife or me.

"Almost forgot," Mathias mentioned. "The guys in our sports department have figured out who the mystery woman is."

I wanted to hear more, realizing that several *Pioneer Press* sports writers and columnists belonged to area country clubs.

"The gossip at one guy's club is that the great-looking chick pictured in your dad's hotel room was a mistress. We heard she killed your dad because he wouldn't divorce your mother."

I moaned and wanted to hang up.

"But members at another club are convinced your mom hired

someone to kill him, and the girl in the picture is an illegitimate daughter your father had before marrying your mother. She does look like you."

"I've got to go."

Before hanging up, I asked Mathias to check with detective Underhill about the mystery woman.

"Do you have his new cell phone number?"

"Here's the latest one I have."

"I'm relaxing in the bath tub, Marty."

"Alone?"

"Damn right!"

"Use your finger to write this number in the scum on the side of the tub," I told him, sharing the digits.

Mathias laughed and got out to fetch pen and paper. After agreeing to meet him at the St. Paul Grill, I checked the Internet for security analyst comments about Hanzel Golf and Sports. Nothing new. The few analysts who covered the company were befuddled, too. Even though the Dow Jones, S&P 500 and NASDAQ indexes rose, Hanzel continued its decline. Trying to recover from some other depressed stock issues, I borrowed money to buy Hanzel stock on its way up after my father took over the company.

Now, with the stock below ten, my shares were worth less than half what they were when my father died. I had purchased much of the stock on margin, borrowing about half the money from our brokerage firm. I felt relieved not to have big country club bills. Signing and writing an account number created four-digit, monthly summer bills when eating, drinking and playing in events at a private club.

Thinking about Shannon again at the St. Paul Grill fascinated me.