

ROBERT TRENT JONES has built golf courses on every continent except Australia and Antarctica and likes to say that the sun never sets on Robert Trent Jones courses. ("Are you sure," he asks querulously, "that Antarctica is a continent?") But the important thing about Robert Trent Jones is that he is, at bottom, more golfer than golf architect, and if there is one place his enormous success is rooted it's right there.

You can tell Robert Trent Jones is a golfer because when an organization calling itself the United States Duffers Association proposed the legalization of certain popular forms of cheating—improving one's lie on the fairway, lifting balls without penalty out of divots or from footprints in sand traps—he bristled like a short, chubby porcupine and put down the proposal as being in keeping only with the license and immorality of our times. "It is also," he added stiffly, "bad for the game." As for the proposal of oldtimer Gene Sarazen that the cup be doubled in size to diminish the importance of putting, Jones sneers: "He's been saying that for 30 years. If it was a good idea it would have been adopted by now."

You can tell Robert Trent Jones is a golfer because he tells long golf jokes that are funny only to other golfers, an intense and swiftly multiplying breed that doesn't really think there is anything funny about the game. One of his stories goes like this:

A golfer died and applied for admission to heaven. The book was examined and St. Peter said that the poor fellow was indeed eligible for admission but that there was an asterisk next to his name indicating blasphemy and that this needed to be explained.

"Well, it happened this way," the suppliant said. "I was playing this tough par-four and got off the best drive of my life, 240 yards right down the middle. When I got to the ball, though, it was sitting in the deepest divot you ever saw."

"So that's when it happened," St. Peter said.

"No, that's not when it happened. I took out my three-wood and, despite the divot, swung perfectly and hit the greatest fairway shot you ever saw. Two hundred yards, straight as a string, headed precisely for the pin. Just as the ball was rolling up the apron of the green I could see it hit a pebble and kick off to the right,

smack into the deepest trap in America."

"That's when it happened," St. Peter said.

"No, that's not when it happened. I said to myself, 'Well, I'll never get it out of there.' But I gave it a try. I took my sand wedge and, aiming well behind the ball, swung as hard as I could. What a blast! The whole world was sand. And when I opened my eyes, I looked up and there was the ball, a foot and a half from the cup."

Said St. Peter: "I'll be goddamned. You missed the putt."

You can tell Robert Trent Jones

is a golfer because, while he holds professional golfers in awe and boundless admiration, he delights in constructing courses and holes that, they say, test their sanity as well as their golf. Sarazen, only half kidding, complains: "Jones must have a permanent crick in his neck. Every time he walks down a fairway he's looking behind him to see how he can make the hole longer."

Says Ken Harrelson of the Boston Red Sox, who regularly wins the baseball players' annual tournament and regularly plays against the pros —making friendly bets all the way: "I hate the S.O.B. There's a hole at

the Dorado in Puerto Rico where he put a trap in the middle of the damn fairway. They told me I couldn't reach it, but I hit the best drive of my life—280 yards—and wound up right in that #@%&+ trap. Cost me \$30."

As a group, professional golfers refused ever again to set foot on Jones's Spyglass Hill course in Pebble Beach, Calif.—the site of the annual Bing Crosby tournament — unless Jones modified the course and made it easier. He did, making the fifth green larger and softening some of the severe contours on the others. The pros complained that the con-

The Jones* Idea Of a Golf Course

*That's Robert Trent Jones. He's a golf architect. He likes nightmares

By LEONARD SHECTER



"While he holds professional golfers in awe and boundless admiration, Jones delights in constructing courses that, they say, test their sanity as well as their golf." Here, the world's foremost designer of golf courses—he has laid out over 360 — surveys construction of Panther Valley at Allamuchy, N. J.

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tours had made it possible to roll 30 feet past the cup on a 10-foot putt.

Before the \$100,000 Greater New Orleans Open at the posh Lakewood Country Club recently, an easy 530-yard, par-five hole which had seen eight eagles (two under par) scored on it the previous year was changed into a difficult 470-yard par-four. Not only was the hole now a drive and a long iron, but the hitting area of the fairway was narrow and protected by a deep sand trap. The pros threatened revolt. Said Jack Nicklaus, crown prince if not king of the professional golfing world and himself

the designer of two or three courses each year: "A golf architect wouldn't have designed a hole that way." To which Robert Trent Jones, chuckling evilly, replied, "Oh, yes I would." Nicklaus insists that he would not. "Who do you build a golf course for?" he demands. "Club members," he answers, "people who shoot between 82 and 100."

JONES, of course, contends that he understands this as well as anybody, perhaps better than most. On a recent tour of two golf courses he is building and one he is remodeling in the New York area—Panther Valley

at Allamuchy, N. J.; the Fairview Country Club in Connecticut, and the Montauk Golf Club on Long Island—Jones, a small, bustling man with a comfortable paunch befitting his age (62) and wealth (uncounted), talked about his basic philosophy of building courses that will be used by both pros and weekend golfers. (Nicklaus would not discuss philosophy. He is under contract, he said, to do it elsewhere—for money.)

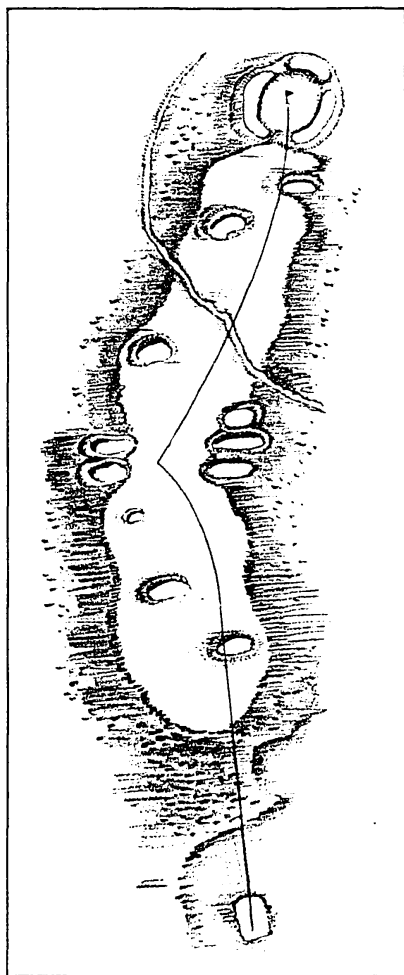
The Jones philosophy can be stated most succinctly this way: A hard par, an easy bogey (one stroke over par). The pros would prefer a hard birdie (one under par) and an easy

par. It's a most important distinction.

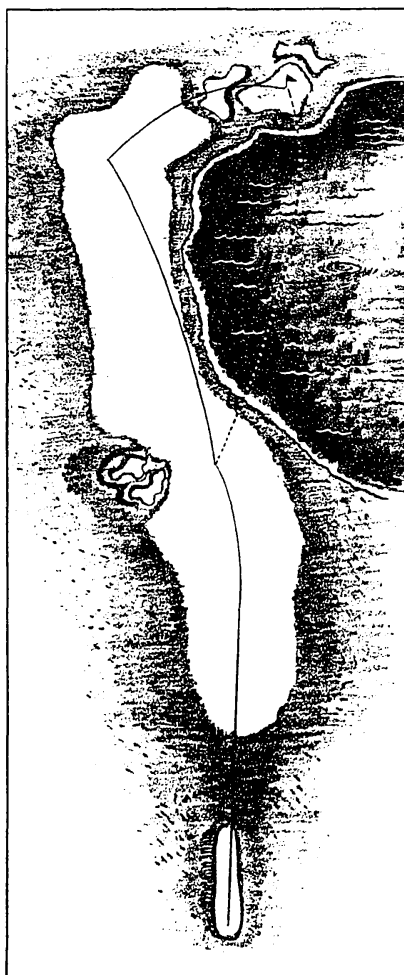
"Look at it this way," Jones said, sitting in the back of his Mercury while Roger Rulewich, a young engineer on his staff, drove. "What with livelier golf balls, better clubs and better athletes playing golf, the pros have increased their average drive in the last 20 years by 20 to 25 yards. Dead level, with no wind, Jack Nicklaus will average 270, 280 yards. He plays a 440-yard par-four with a drive and an eight-iron. In the mid-twenties it would have taken the great players two wood shots. Now they're talking about an aluminum

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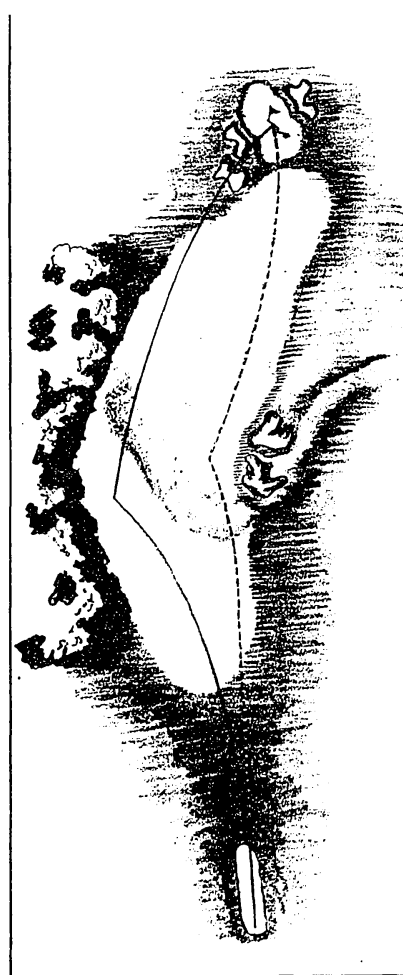
Three types of golf courses—Defined by an expert



THE PENAL—Marked by numerous traps, this course, says Jones, is easily driven by the better golfer but a serious hazard to the duffer; every bad shot is severely penalized. The only safe route is the "straight and narrow," and the green is often a small target nearly surrounded by deep traps, some of them hidden from view. The golfer must hit to an "island" between traps on the fairway, then to the "island" green.



THE HEROIC—A style still used in modified form on individual holes but once much more popular. It offers a big reward for the long shot (dotted line) but promises almost certain disaster if the shot is not perfectly executed. A safer alternative (solid line) is usually available, but often at the expense of an extra stroke. To get in position for a par, the player must take his chance on the long shot.



THE STRATEGIC—Traps near the fairway force the "safe" hitter to the left (solid line), but then he must face traps near the green. The more daring golfer keeps his drive (dotted line) to the right, where the fairway is elevated. He takes less chance of catching a trap near the green and he has a better target. Though bad shots are not severely punished, the golfer must play position to score well.

The Jones idea of a golf course

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shaft that will make it possible to drive a ball 10 per cent farther. Well, if Nicklaus drove 10 per cent farther he'd be driving over 300 yards. That would make a 350-yard hole a drive and a kick.

"Don't get me wrong. I understand how the pros feel. They're playing 50 tournaments a year, and every winning purse is worth \$20,000 to \$30,000, with other prizes grading down from there. So one missed putt or one bad hole might make a difference of \$5,000 to the player. As a result they don't like to play courses that are difficult. Out of the 50 tournaments, probably only about five—the Open, the P.G.A., the Masters, the Colonial and one or two others—are played on courses of championship caliber. Even if they have a 7,100-yard course they're unlikely to play it that long. They probably play it at 6,500 yards. And they're not inclined to put the pins in the most difficult positions. This is because of the complete psychological shock to the player when, all of a sudden, he misses a shot and he realizes those thousands of dollars are flying away from him and he feels as though he's been kicked in the stomach.

"As a result, tournament directors try to alleviate these

unfortunate calamities and the pro has come to accept that. So, for the most part, these tournaments are putting contests. I don't approve, but I understand."

WHAT Jones sets out to do, especially when he's called in to toughen up a course for the Open or the P.G.A., which he often is, is extract from the professional his best game. He puts it this way: "I think the best golfer should win. Any week there are probably 30 golfers who are capable of winning it. They just have to put all their shots together just right. Our feeling is that if the player who has put together the most shots is the best for those four rounds, the golf course should be sufficiently strong, the shot values sufficiently high, so that that player will win the tournament. We don't want somebody to win who's spraying his shots over in the next fairway, then knocking a wedge over a tree or two to the green and ramming in a putt for a birdie, scoring a 65 when he would have scored a 75 if the proper penalties had been exacted."

That's why Jones often lays banks of traps to the left of his fairways 230 to 270 yards out—the hitting area of most professionals. Pros have a tendency to hook, to the left.

Duffers and club players have a tendency to slice, to the right.

With his penalty theory in mind, Jones developed the extra-long tee, which is now his trademark and in use by every other golf architect. (Jones first used the long tees right after the war in building Peachtree in Atlanta with golfing great Robert Tyre (Bobby) Jones, who is no relation but sufficiently famous for Robert Trent Jones to tell people to call him Trent.) The tees, often 100 yards in length, can be played from in front, which turns the course into a pussycat friendly to both women and elderly club members who have lost some pazz. Played halfway back on the tees, the course becomes a decent test for the member with a handicap of 10 or so. When the very back tees are used and the pins are placed diabolically enough on the green, the course can be turned into a nightmare, even for a pro. Jones rather likes nightmares.

Said Ben Hogan to Jones's wife after winning the Open at Oakland Hills, near Detroit, in 1951: "If your husband had to play this course for a living he'd be in the poorhouse." Yet four years later, Jones points out with chest-puffing pride, at a luncheon in Dallas, Hogan said to Jones: "You

know, if I played more of your courses, I'd probably be the only man in history to win five Open championships."

The point Hogan, the winner of four Opens, was making was that he realized his kind of controlled swing could deliver the shot values Robert Trent Jones courses demand.

While Jones is most widely known for his tough courses, he is not incapable of designing easy ones. "We just built a course in California called Birnam Wood," he says. "It was meant for use by 50-year-old or 55-year-old men. It's 6,200 yards from the back tees, probably 5,200 from the front. And people say it's a fun course to play.

"I've also been experimenting with a new theory. Five par-threes [as opposed to the usual four], five par-fives [again as opposed to the usual four] and the rest par-fours. Keep them all easy. The par may be 72, but people who score 100 on other courses will score 85 to 90 on this one. It will make everybody a pro for the day."

NO matter what the pros say, everybody else seems to love Robert Trent Jones courses. Robert Trent Jones, Inc. — offices in Montclair, N. J.; Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Palo Alto, Calif., and Leeds, England — builds 12 to 15 courses a year throughout the world. From Mauna Kea in Hawaii, where Jones had to grind up lava to act as a base for his fairways, to Sardinia, where he is building a course for the Aga Khan, to Rabat, where the King of Morocco wants to build a course to attract tourists, 360 R. T. J. golf courses stand as monuments to wealthy leisure. A golf course costs \$350,000 to \$650,000 to build, depending on the difficulty of the terrain (Jones is building one now in Beverly Hills which will run to a million dollars because he had to move a couple of mountains), and Jones's fee is 10 per cent of the cost plus \$3,000 to \$5,000 to cover a design fee and expenses.

The fact that this is a lucrative profession has attracted a lot of people to it, many of them, unfortunately, as qualified as the old-school golf architect of Scotland, who was anybody with 18 pegs and a free Sunday afternoon. ("Well, this would be a good place for the first green, MacPherson, wouldn't it?" Peg. "And we'll put the second green here." Peg.)

"Anybody with \$27 can put an ad in Golf magazine and call himself a golf architect," Jones complains. "There are no

standards or licenses required."

In an effort to set some standards and give themselves some standing, Jones and 34 other top golf architects have banded together to form the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Jones will heartily recommend any of them as qualified. None of them, however, attempt to operate on Jones's scale.

To conduct his widespread business, Jones has built a staff of 35 people, including civil engineers, construction engineers, landscape architects, agronomists, draftsmen and a lawyer and an accountant. He pays them well, and through the years a fierce loyalty has been built up. Only one of his employees, a landscape architect named Frank Duane, ever moved down the street to set up his own shop.

There are, Jones says, three basic types of golf course. He calls them the penal, the strategic and the heroic. "In the penal school of architecture," he says, "like Pine Valley, which was built on a sandy wasteland, you hit from the tee to an island fairway surrounded by sand. Then you hit from the island fairway to an island green. It's a penal course because you are severely penalized for any shot you miss. This is hell on high-handicap golfers.

"On the other extreme there's the strategic course, like Augusta National. This is a sort of park-like school of architecture. There is a lot of rough, the fairways are wide and you're not punished for a bad shot. On the other hand, you've got to play position to get the most out of the course.

"In the heroic school of architecture, like Merion, there are alternate routes. There is an easy shot for the weekend player. But in order to get into position for a par or birdie, you have to carry the hazard off the tee.

"We use all three philosophies and we mix them up. We're constantly striving not to get into a rut."

ROBERT TRENT JONES was born in 1906 in Ince, England, the only child of Welsh parents. His father, an engineer, came to this country when Jones was 4 and worked for the New York Central in Rochester.

At 16 and 120 pounds, Jones was a scratch, or par-shooting, golfer (he can still go around one of his own difficult courses in 80). But at a remarkably early age he developed what some people insist is golfers' disease—ulcers—and realized that, as much



HOME COURSE—Jones going over plans with an aide in his Montclair, N. J., office—a rare sight since his work keeps him on the move around the globe 250 days a year.

as he loved the game, he could never make a living playing it.

Not far from where he lived, however, Donald Ross, a well-known golf architect of the time (he built the famous course at Pinehurst, N. C.), was constructing a golf course. Jones watched the process and decided that this was what he wanted to do for a living. He set about learning his profession methodically, attacking the problem the way a golfer corrects a flaw in his swing.

He went to Cornell and proposed that he be allowed to take a conglomerate of courses that crossed the usual university boundaries. With the permission of an astonished dean of admissions, Jones attended the College of Agriculture to study agronomy, horticulture and land drainage; the College of Engineering to study surveying and engineering; the College of Architecture to study landscape architecture, and the College of Arts to study public speaking, journalism and chemistry. There is no record of his having studied salesmanship, but Jack Nicklaus says he is tops. ("He can jet into an airport," Nicklaus says, "and sell a golf course to a country-club committee by scribbling on the back of an old napkin in the cocktail lounge.") After his tour of Cornell, Jones dashed off to an art school in Rochester and studied sketching. To this day he makes lovely sketches of his greens and the traps around them. Obviously, golf-dom's only Renaissance man.

Jones designed his first course in 1929 with Stanley Thompson, a Canadian architect. "It was just after the stock-market crash," he recalls, "but the Depression hadn't set in yet. Thompson and I did about three courses together, but they all went broke and we received practically no fee."

AFTER that, things got better. And pretty soon Jones was spending a good part of his life on airplanes. A large calendar on the wall of his Montclair office showed recently that he was scheduled to visit South Africa, Sardinia, Morocco and Japan in quick order. An accident in Hawaii, where he stepped out of a Jeep that was still rolling and cracked a bone in his ankle, has slowed him down temporarily, but he estimates that he flies 300,000 miles a year and spends 250 days away from Montclair. "I try to come home weekends," he says.

Home for Jones is a pleasant, rambling Tudor house in

Montclair, his wife's hometown. The garage has been turned into a cluttered office and agronomist Robert Trent Jones has bare spots on his lawn. The only conspicuous luxury in the house is a basement gymnasium containing an Exercycle, a complicated machine that is capable of giving its owner a sexy back rub, and what Jones calls "my Japanese bath," a walk-down-into tub four and a half feet deep with a device that shoots a soothing stream of hot water. "It's amazing how it relaxes you before you go to sleep," Jones says.

Jones takes quiet but obvious pride in his comfortable, unpretentious home, just as he takes pride in his golf courses, which are anything but comforting or unpretentious. He will not pick the courses he's built that please him most ("Golf courses are like children. I have no favorites"), but it is clear that he has a special feeling for Spyglass Hill, where each hole is named after a character in "Treasure Island." He admits to counting it one of his most photogenic courses, but then immediately lists Mauna Kea; Broadmoor, in Colorado Springs; Incline Village, at Lake Tahoe, and Dorado Beach as being equally attractive. He modestly refuses to take credit for their beauty, although he talks constantly about the artistic value of holes, the balance of masses, how making a golf course is like painting a picture and how he sometimes puts a trap in because it looks as though it belongs there. "These courses are beautiful," he says, "because nature was very generous."

Where nature has not been generous, Robert Trent Jones uses his sketchbook. He likes to think, he says, that his business is making silk purses out of sows' ears. This is a proposition that can be challenged on several grounds. What does it profit mankind for Robert Trent Jones to take a bulldozer into 170 acres of beautiful woods and hack down enough trees to make 18 fairways and a practice tee? And what does it profit mankind to take 170 acres of land that could be made into a park to be used by thousands daily and turn them into a golf course that can be used by only 250 people a day?

To this argument Jones bobs his head, smiles his friendly smile and shrugs his tweedy shoulders. "It's true," he says. "A couple of holes on one of the courses we built were used as a ski slope in the winter. Five or six thousand a day

skied there. The course will accommodate only 250 a day for golf."

"However, you can get 350 on some of the public courses we've built. No rough, wide-open greens and duplicate par-three holes to speed play. I have another idea, to light the last four or five holes of a course so that golfers can go out at five or six in the evening and still play 18 holes. That would increase play considerably, too."

"As for the value of making a golf course out of woodland—well, a lot of it is woodland that isn't any good. I think my golf courses *improve* on nature. In Rochester we took an area which was mostly wet and quicksand and made it into a beautiful golf course. Two papers in Rochester wrote laudatory articles about it." He nodded with satisfaction. "Anyway," he added, "I never knock down a tree unless I absolutely have to."

NOT long after saying this, Jones was inspecting one of his new fairways at Panther Valley. He pointed out a bog area that was being turned into a pretty pond and commented: "We'll have beautiful features instead of skunk cabbage." This is the kind of project with which Jones has become increasingly involved in recent years. Basically, it is a housing development designed around a golf course. Without the course, all you have is housing too far from civilization to be worth inhabiting. Panther Valley is a \$60-million joint venture of Frank H. Taylor and Sons of East Orange, N. J., and the Travelers Insurance Company of Hartford. It's the sort of thing that Jones is doing more and more, to his own considerable profit.

When he was called upon to redesign the course at Montauk he recommended that 30 acres in the center be turned into golf villas that would not only pay for remodeling the course but turn a profit as well. He is now involved in several such golf course-real estate ventures in Europe. The spread of American culture goes on apace.

Construction costs at Panther Valley skyrocketed because of the rocky terrain. (Allamuchy, the name of the nearest town, is an Indian word for land of rock.) Much blasting had to be done at a cost of some \$100,000, then heavy spring rains washed away \$75,000 worth of contouring. The course will cost more than \$650,000, but the developers are certain it will be worth it. (Of course they have a lot of money. They even

have a set of expensive Maas Rowe electric chimes in the clubhouse which bounce "Getting to Know You" off nearby mountains. The first time a member is startled by them into missing a putt they will no doubt be retired to the ladies' locker room.)

JONES recalls with fondness an incident while he was building a course for I.B.M. near Poughkeepsie. Thomas J. Watson, the president of the company, and his entourage accompanied Jones on a walk-

The Ego Trap

Robert Trent Jones golf courses are designed for a specifically American clientele. British "links" are much more difficult; the rough is left alone to become a tangled jungle and bad shots are penalized ferociously. In addition, British courses follow natural land contours, which means that on one shot the ball will be well above the golfer's feet, on another well below. This does not make par-breaking easy.

"If we were to build a course like that," Jones says, "the next day the greens committee would decide to level the fairways. The American wants to excel. He is more apt to adapt his playing field to where his ego can be satisfied by excelling than to accept a challenge. The British golfer does not consider a bogey a failure. The American golfer does."

—L. S.

ing tour of the proposed course. Watson suggested, at one point, that a steep hill could be made into a beautiful uphill hole. "Let's walk up," Jones suggested. By the time they got to the top Watson had changed his mind.

Obviously Jones has had to learn to be a diplomat as well as a golf architect. "If you have 600 members you have 600 architects," he says. "Each one wants to adapt the course to his own personal problems. Say I'm a hooker and there's a pond to the left. I say take

it out. If I'm a slicer I want to leave the pond alone but take out the trap to the right. Other golfers have favorite holes. When I'm remodeling a course certain of them will say, 'Don't you dare change that hole. I always score well on it.' It isn't until you come up with the final thing and they see what kind of golf course they have that they stop griping."

To reach the Montauk course Jones hires a pilot and a single-engine airplane at the Westchester Airport. As the plane came in for a landing over menacing telephone wires at the tiny Montauk airport recently, Jones gleefully pointed out the dune formations along the ocean beach. "You can learn a lot about building traps looking at dunes like that," he said. There was a gleam of jealousy in his eye as he examined nature's rugged handiwork.

The Montauk course could have been constructed as a natural seaside links in the British mode, but Jones did not want it that wild. "We're taking out the heather and the gorse," he said with a laugh. He is particularly proud of the par-three 12th hole there, which, he says, will be "one of the great par-threes in the world."

It has a high tee from which the golfer can see the Atlantic Ocean, Block Island Sound and Carl Fisher's boarded-up white elephant, Montauk Manor. In front of the tee the ground breaks sharply down and then the well-trapped green rises abruptly to a level as high as the tee. It's like aiming from one frying pan to another over the fire. One could use anything from a nine-iron to a two-iron on this hole, depending on the placement of the tee markers and the direction and velocity of the wind. Each position on the long tee, however, presents a different problem of getting over the traps. "I don't care what club you use," Jones said, "it's an interesting shot. It just shows you can make beautiful golf holes even if nature hasn't been good to you." As he limped around the tee, the wind tousling his sparse hair, Jones muttered, "Beautiful, just beautiful." No artist could have been more proud of his work.

While a young designer like Nicklaus insists upon having his course look as "natural" as possible, Jones doesn't mind bulldozing where he thinks nature needs some help. "A good hole has got to have trapping or something else to make it interesting," Jones says. "If you don't trap a green well you have to elevate

it or plateau it or you have a listless golf hole. That's the pattern at Augusta—not many traps, but well-elevated greens. If you miss the shot to an elevated green the ball will run away from the pin; to get down in one becomes more difficult. Or on the green itself, the farther you are away from the pin, the more difficult it becomes to get down in two."

THE first step in building a golf course is to make topographic maps from terrain profiles plotted in a helicopter. Next, Jones or one of his staff walks over the ground, making preliminary sketches of the holes. ("Some builders make their mistakes with bulldozers," Jones says. "We make ours with a pencil. They can be erased.") The course is then laid out carefully on contour maps, and contractors are asked to follow the maps.

The hiring of contractors is also Jones's job. "Earth moving, drainage and watering systems are mechanical phases," he says. "Any contractor can do it. We just ask for bids. But the art work needs training and experience. Sometimes we have to change operators several times because they are not esthetically adaptable."

One of the problems that Jones runs into with his 10 per cent fee is that it does not appear to be to his advantage to keep costs down. "That's foolish," Jones says. "If you are not ethical you won't be in business very long. But if somebody insists on a flat fee, we give them our estimate of the cost and charge a fee based on that."

IN the end, Jones has few unsatisfied customers. When he returns to a course he has built he is seldom called anything but "Mr. Jones." The look people wear when they talk to him is one of respect, if not awe.

And the Jones name is secure in golf for years to come. It is estimated that there are 10,000 golf courses and 10 million golfers in the U.S. today and that these numbers will double in the next 10 years. In other countries golf is growing even more rapidly. The world is going to need a lot of golf courses, and if Jones ever retires—a prospect he is not even considering at this point—his sons will carry on. Robert Trent Jr. is running the Palo Alto office, and Rees Lee is working in the Montclair office. At that rate, the Jones empire will last longer than Britain's. The sun may never set on Jones family golf courses. ■