

# SETTINDOWN OPENING DAY

*By Courtney Young*

From under the arching branches of the oak behind number 14 tee a round figure stepped through the gathered crowd. He came to hit the biggest drive of his life. Years of dreaming ushered in the events of this drizzly September morning thirty years ago. John Hall teed a ball in an attempt to inaugurate his captaincy in the ancient way – by driving into office.

Although John stood on the tee alone, he was never alone in his dream of creating a great golf course in Atlanta. Dick Perry and Bobby Gaston joined John Hall on many pilgrimages to the British Isles and Pine Valley. They wanted to recreate, as much as possible, those experiences in a place they could play every day. It wasn't a hard dream to sell to the other future founders.

While working for Jack Nicklaus on the back nine renovation of Atlanta Country Club, Bob Cupp developed a great relationship with Bobby Gaston. Cupp hosted a group of about 40 to play Port Armour, and talk about his vision for a great course. They had no property yet, so Bob's talk was about a philosophy of design. The group wanted a golf course that could challenge the best national-level players, and were adamant about it not being a "country club course". They wanted it to be full of Scottish design features and unique among other courses in the region.

Over the next few years the Settindown membership grew big enough to start shaping earth. Many of these charter members invested, sight unseen, in the dream of what Settindown would become. Before we planted the first sprigs of grass, Settindown had over half of its 300 charter members. Many more joined during the summer of 1988 as they could better see what Settindown would become. There was no access to the current clubhouse site, so a temporary clubhouse was set up behind #14 tee. The club would go on to operate in the black over the next four years on \$135 dues and 75 cent beer out of that double-wide trailer clubhouse. On #14, Settindown owned the most onerous starting hole in golf. This site at #14 hosted the opening ceremonies.

In a throwback to old traditions, Settindown would have a "Captain" rather than a president. To commence the inauguration ritual, the new captain had to strike a ball into play to "drive into office". John Hall, amid all the excitement of opening day and after years of planning, stepped on to the tee to do the honor. Fore caddies waited in the landing area to retrieve the ball, and all the charter members massed around the tee. While all had hope, no one had confidence that Hall would succeed in his attempt. To thunderous applause however, John piped a straight (but short) drive to the fairway.

