

Published Sept. 2, 2010 • The Chronicle, Glens Falls, NY

A rare 'albatross' by Mike Shea in Airway Meadows benefit tourney

By Gordon Woodworth
Chronicle News Editor

Queensbury's Mike Shea knew he had hit a good shot, his team's second on the sloping par-5, 530-yard 10th hole at Airway Meadows in Gansevoort.

"I striped it," Mr. Shea said of his 3-wood struck during the Aug. 21 benefit golf tournament for Matt Carruthers, who is fighting cancer. The shot, in a four-man scramble, followed up Mr. Shea's 300-yard drive.

"It was on a low trajectory and perfectly straight," he said. "It must have rolled 40 yards."

It's a blind second shot, so none of Mike's playing partners — **Pat Collier, Tom Culligan and Sean Nolan** — saw it once it disappeared beyond the hill.

"As we drove up over the hill, we saw the foursome in front of us just coming off the green," Mike said. "So we asked them, 'Did you see the ball?'"

"And one of them said, 'Yes, it's in the hole' and drove away. We

thought they were busting on us, but we looked around and couldn't find it, so we looked in the hole, and there it was."

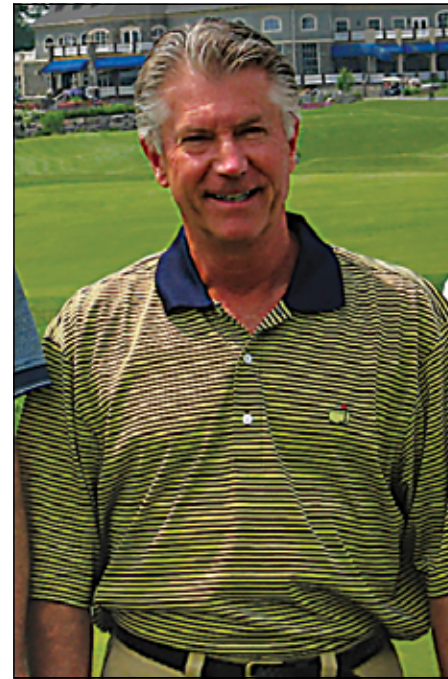
It was a double eagle, an albatross, the rarest of rare birds in golf. The only thing rarer is a hole-in-one on a par 4. The odds of hitting a hole-in-one on a par 3 are thought to be roughly 13,000-to-1. The odds of hitting a double eagle are at least 1-million-to-1, according to a 2004 story in *Golf World* magazine.

In fact, between 1983 and 2003, there were 631 holes-in-one on the PGA tour, and only 56 double eagles, never more than six in one year.

Mike is an 8 handicap who plays mostly at Saratoga National. He's never had a hole-in-one or a double eagle.

"The celebration was a delayed reaction," he said. "We didn't know what had happened until we got to the green. The group in front of us certainly didn't make much of it."

Mike said he couldn't help but think of his brother-in-law, **Mike Nolan** of South Glens Falls, after recording the rare double eagle. After all, the tournament was being played in honor of Nolan and **Danny**



Mike Shea of Queensbury recorded a rare double eagle during a benefit tournament at Airway Meadows held in honor of his late brother-in-law, Mike Nolan. "It was divine providence," Mr. Shea said.

Chronicle photo/Gordon Woodworth

Killian, two of Matt Carruthers's uncles who both passed away in the last year from lung cancer.

And, Mike Shea was playing with Sean Nolan, Mike and Kris Nolan's son.

"It was divine providence," he said. "There is no question Mike was looking down on us."

The tournament raised \$12,000 for Matt's medical bills, and had 36 four-person teams.

"It was a beautiful day," Mike Shea said. "We won a skin on the 10th hole, and maybe another one. After I turned in our scorecard, I went to go change, and apparently they made an announcement, wondering if our 2 on the 10th hole was a clerical error."

The team finished at 6-under, out of the money, but was left with a lifetime memory.

"I guess the club is going to put up a plaque in the clubhouse," Mike said. "They said there have been at least a couple of other double eagles on the course."

"Now it's Gene Sarazen and me," Mike said, remembering Sarazen's "Shot Heard Round the World" double eagle on the 15th hole of the 1935 Masters.

"Mine was the shot heard round Gansevoort, I guess," he said, chuckling.

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