



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**It Comes with Headlights!**

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Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today, after having my enthusiasm for golf rekindled by watching my nephew Ronnie Black play in a professional players tournament, I decided to buy a golf cart. Why do I want to buy a golf cart? Because our recently-purchased home has a golf cart door at the back of the garage. It matters little that I play little golf. I must use the golf cart door. Otherwise, it will suffer from lack of attention and be subjected to one of Dr. Phil's placebos.

I am not much of a golfer. I score triple figures on putt-putt courses. I cannot hit "greens in regulation" on putt-putt courses. I *lose balls* on putt-putt courses. Yet I own:

- golf tees
- golf bags
- golf balls
- golf clubs
- golf shoes
- golf gloves
- golf bandages
- golf ball markers
- golf divot repair tools
- golf sun block and lip balm
- golf caps, shorts, socks, and shirts
- golf pliers for replacing worn shoe cleats
- golf instructional and inspirational books and videos

And three sets of golf clubs. Each set is used once a year.

I also own a book titled, *A Two-Step Program to Eliminate Depression in Your Life*. Chapter One describes the first step. It is titled, "Stop Playing Golf." The second chapter is called, "Continue to Stop Playing Golf."

The cascading list above, growing longer across the page as it goes down the page, suggests a cost curve for playing golf. But we are dealing with golf here, not money.

Anyway, to round out my inventory of golf stuff, I needed a golf cart. Sure, I wouldn't mind having in my golf inventory a small item called *golfin' skills*. But that could come later, and after all, I just mentioned our newly-purchased home in Hayden Lake, Idaho has a separate garage door---just for golf carts!

Imagine this opportunity to complete an American male's quest for suburban fulfillment: We purchased a home, which has a garage with a golf cart door (See A in Figure 1). The house did not come with a golf cart, but it did come with a golf course (See C), with a handy path from the garage to a fairway (See B). I have friends and colleagues who would give-up their second

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<sup>1</sup> Image of golf cart on cover is courtesy of Google.

spouse and their third dog to live next to a golf fairway. They think about golf constantly. They talk about golf incessantly. They play the game at every opportunity.



**Figure 1. Suburban fulfillment.**

Why do I continue to think I will play the game of golf? We have a place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which is surrounded by a golf course. I rarely tee-off there. If I have some free time, I head for the tennis court or the gym. Yet I keep thinking I will become serious about this game. If I keep buying real estate next to golf courses, I hope I will learn the game through osmosis. After all, I am told the game is played on a field located between one's ears.

It stands to reason that people who live next to golf courses are expected to play golf. Otherwise, what's the point of ducking all those balls zooming at you when you're mowing your grass? You might as well put those errant balls to good use. In fact, as I write this report, the golf season has just begun, and I've already picked up four golf balls from our yard---in one week. (See "Lost Balls" in Figure 1).

At this rate, I can replace the golf balls I typically lose in one round. Thus, I can stay even with the Lost-and-Found Golf Ball Department by playing golf only once a week. This arrangement is attractive for three reasons: (a) I don't spend money on golf balls; (b) I restrict my state of depression to once a week; (c) I can mis-hit some of my balls into my own yard. Awesome. Now all I need is that golf cart. There are several golf cart stores (lots) in this part of Idaho. I paid a call on them today. Here's a recount of one visit:

- Golf Car Salesman, "Hey there. Anything I can do to help?"
- Reporter, "Thanks. Just looking around... . Eh. Say, what's the price of this golf cart?"
- "You've picked one of the top of our line. Eight thousand dollars."

As the salesman told me about this bargain, I thought, *What?! This is a four-wheeled motor-scooter; a plastic shell over a lawn-mower engine; stupid-looking buggy with an uncomfortable seat, some places to put clubs, tees, and golf balls. That's it.*

Trying to keep my shock subsumed to Clint Eastwood coolness, I responded,

- "Get atta here! That's outrageous! Highway robbery!"
- Okay, not so cool. And I did not utter those comments, but I wanted to. Instead I said, "Whew! When I was in high school, I remember my dad buying a new Oldsmobile. It cost less than half the price of this golf cart."
- I'm sure the salesman had heard similar protests from prospective customers before. Probably every time a person came onto the lot. He simply said, "Inflation."
- Reporter, "And my dad's Olds had doors. Got anything cheaper...eh...a bit less expensive?"

The next half hour was spent examining different models of golf carts. I test drove the models. I kicked the tires. I became golf cart literate. Before long, the salesman---realizing I was not going to pony-up eight grand for a mode of transportation across terrain I rarely traverse---nudged me across the lot to less expensive golf carts:

- Reporter, "So, the main difference between the expensive models and the less expensive models is the engine size? This model...it's \$5,000. Three thousand dollars for a slightly larger motor...only 1.5 more horsepower."
- Salesman, "Engine size *and* special features. The \$8k model has an ice chest built into the body."
- I responded, "Hmm. Let's say 1.5 more horsepower is about \$500. That's a \$3,000 difference. So, the ice chest sells for \$2,500?"
- "Ha! There's loads of extras. Here, look. This model has a front compartment (as he opened a small door, revealing an even smaller cavity covered with two-bit carpet). Never know when the missus will need extra storage space. There's more! The upholstery has been upgraded. Look at the wheels: Just like a fancy car. And the posts to the roof: Chromium!"

For the life of me, I could not get into the spirit of spending eight thousand, or even five thousand dollars on an oversized go-cart. I have many faults, but tight with money is not one of them. I spend the stuff like there's no tomorrow. ...Which is not a bad philosophy, as I have considerably more yesterdays in my inventory than I have tomorrows. Anyway, in my defense, it was not a matter of forking over the money for a cart. It was a matter of being forked.

I think the salesman began to realize I was not chomping at the bit to write him a check. Like any marketer worth his commission, he rallied:

- "This upgraded model is public road compliant! The state of Idaho will license you to run this baby over highways."
- I thought, *There's no way I'd take this thing out on a highway. No doors. No seat belts. No bumpers. A Tinker Toy plastic body. It's a portable death trap.*
- Salesman, "Also, we put in a windshield for free. And I'll take care of taxes...Even include a battery charger. Ah! Here's another feature. This model has a horn. See?" ...BEEP, BEEP.

- Reporter, "A horn! I thought golf courses were supposed to be quiet places. And I have no need to drive a golf cart on Interstate 90. As I mentioned we live on a golf course, so..."
- "Ah, yes, that's right. You'll find this feature quite useful. This model has headlights!"

This man was a fine salesman. He was pleasant, only moderately insistent. For every Ying I presented, he countered with a Yang. But headlights? I had him on this one:

- "Golf is played in the daylight hours. Putting headlights on a golf cart is like putting...." (I could not come up with anything Clint Eastwood-like.)
- "Like putting what sir?"
- "I dunno. It's like putting headlights on a golf cart." (Pathetic, but I did finish the sentence.)
- "Not at all! How about when you play a round of golf late in the day, and drive back from the 18th hole to your home. Might need a light to lead the way."
- "Maybe."
- "Or how about coming back from the club house later in the evening?"
- "Club house. You mean the 19th hole?"
- "Yes."
- "Yeah, I can see the purpose of those headlights."
- I thought, *Speaking of the 19th hole, I wonder if the cart comes with a designated driver.* But I decided not to bring up the subject, as he would probably try to sell me one.
- "Thanks for your time. I'll think it over. I need to decide if I will play golf enough to justify buying a cart."

I drove back to my home. As I pulled into the garage, I glanced at the golf cart door and to the space next to it. In spite of the golf cart adventure, it was vacant and vacuous, and likely to remain so...similar to my golf game.