

Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association

When Men Were Men and Sport Was Sport *The Story of Robert Garrett, Olympic Hero*

by **Barbara Guarnieri**

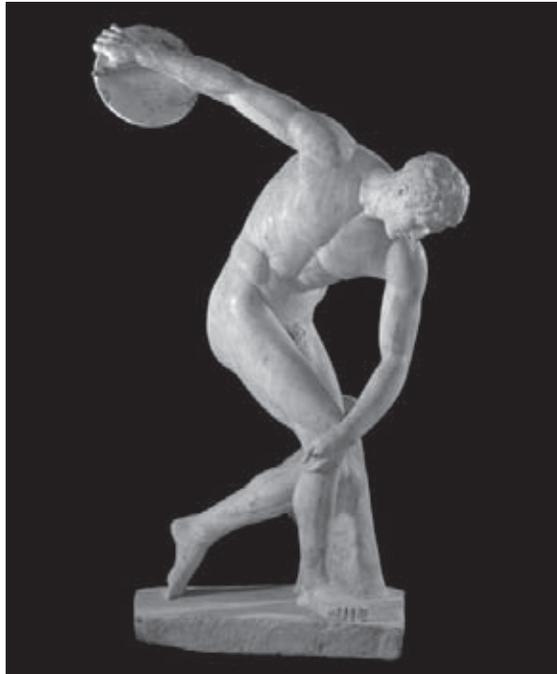
The crowd was still tittering with laughter as the athlete made his third and final attempt. Twice he had frenetically twirled himself and flung the discus hard – only to watch it spiral end over end and land perilously close to the audience. When the crowd roared with laughter at these ridiculous miscues, the handsome athlete simply acknowledged the guffaws by joining in the fun and vamping like a clown.

This one last time he scowled intently, raised the ancient saucer, spun with grace and released it with a loud grunt. The audience fell silent as heads traced the perfect arc of the disc, watching it coast cleanly to well beyond the other competing marks. The silence grew deafening; the crowd was stunned. No one could believe the young foreign athlete had defeated the Greeks at their own time-honored exercise. The young American had just won a gold medal in the discus!

Legends were born that day in April of 1896. Robert Garrett (1875-1961), then in his third year at Princeton, became something of a supernatural hero to the Greeks. He had arrived in Athens only days prior with several American collegiate athletes to join in the first modern Olympics since ancient times. Mostly, he'd made the week-long trans-Atlantic crossing with three friends to savor a good, old-fashioned adventure.

Garrett, a strong athlete and the captain of the Princeton track team, was noted for shot put and

jumping events. It was not until he heard that the Greek nation had decided to host the first international games since 385 A.D. that he began his odyssey with the discus. Professor William Sloane, his history professor and then a member of the organizing committee for the first Olympics, suggested that Robert enter the games and include the discus among his game entries.



This Roman copy of Myron's famous Discobolus served as a pre-Olympic model for Garrett Photo courtesy The British Museum

The pair consulted with classical scholars for information about the discus and the ancient exercise of making it fly. They also closely examined art from that period such as the famed Discobolus, sculpted and cast in bronze by Myron in 450 B.C. This particular

statue had long been admired for its portrayal of a beautifully proportioned athlete crouched and poised at the very moment when his arm would spring forward to release the discus. Surely, thought Garrett, I can stand like this too and get the job done.

Neither Professor Sloan nor Robert had any idea what the discus should look like except from art prints. No one manufactured them in the United States so they developed a scale drawing, took it

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The Foundation at Mid-Year 2012

by Joseph M. Coale

The Greater Ruxton Area Foundation was started a decade ago to help in the preservation and beautification of our unique and historic community. Those of us who formed the Foundation felt the need to support a campaign to restore some of what has been lost during years of neglect.

Everyone looks at his or her home as a sanctuary, but it's also true that the neighborhood in which the home resides is a sanctuary. The community frames and sets the tone for the residences that it contains. This is why the Foundation's work is important to *all* our residents. The Foundation puts our collective resources to work here where we live.

While we have been pleased to see many new participants this year, our landscaping improvements have been made possible mostly by a core of consistent and generous contributors.



Every year is different in the fundraising arena. So far this year, 115 residents have responded to our May mailing. The donations have ranged from \$10 to \$1,000 with the average being about \$200. We will issue a 2012 year-end letter that will report on our finances, contributors, accomplishments and plans for the coming year.

I am often amused by being referred to as a 'community activist' but, frankly, that's what it takes to get things done. Due to active lifestyles and professional commitments, not everyone can play an active role in the community, but most can afford to at least nominally support the effort. County government cannot carry the responsibility for beautification and preservation of our community. We must be our own keepers and continue to accept the challenge. I believe our best days are ahead and we each must participate.

Tax deductible donations payable to GRAF can be sent to P.O. Box 204, Riderwood, MD 21139.

Fall Fun in Robert E. Lee Park

by Nancy Worden Horst

Have you been to Robert E. Lee Park recently? If not, you're missing a chance to explore this 450-acre park where nature abounds. Lake Roland sparkles and entices boaters to bring their canoes and kayaks. Paths leading through the woods beckon runners, bikers, walkers and bird watchers. And, of course, there's Paw Point, the dog park for off-leash romps on land and in the water.

Baltimore County rangers and volunteers provide a variety of activities for children and adults, from learning how to make mud pies and fish with cane poles to family campouts. Guided walks showcase the Park's rich history, its abundant bird population and its unusual flora. A calendar of activities can be found at www.relpnc.org/events.

Renovation of the old trestle bridge over Jones Falls on the trail from Falls Road has recently been completed by Baltimore County. The new bridge is safer, wider and provides a nice vantage point for viewing the stream. Other new amenities include a second pavilion with a spectacular view of Lake Roland and a newly renovated ranger station and storage area. Each pavilion accommodates 60 people and is available to rent for \$75 (call Donna at 410-887-4156).

A bond bill to fund construction of Acorn Hill is expected to provide \$215,000 for Baltimore County Recreation and Parks and landscape architects to begin work on the natural play area,

which is geared to children, their families and friends. The Robert E Lee Park Nature Council (RELPC) is grateful to Senator Bobby Zirkin and Delegates Steve Lafferty, Jon Cardin, Dan Morhaim and Dana Stein for sponsoring the bond bill.

Volunteers working in the Park are making a real difference. RELPC board member Howdy Knipp and his trails committee work in conjunction with the County to keep the trails open. A group from Baltimore ServeFest worked on the Acorn Hill site this spring. Sixth-graders from Friends School took charge of spreading mulch and picking up trash in another area of the Park. And Baltimore City high school students from the Baltimore Conservation Leadership Corps continue to work on trails and erosion control.

The Nature Council is seeking new board members and volunteers for its committees, such as membership, environment and history, recreation and Acorn Hill. There is also a need for volunteers to help with programs. If you have the time

and interest, or want to learn more about the Park and Nature Council, please visit the website www.relpnc.org.

Robert E Lee Park Nature Council partners with Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks to provide high quality nature and recreational opportunities for the public at Robert E. Lee Park.



A new pavilion at Robert E. Lee Park

Photo courtesy Nettie Washburn