Charlie and His Boys

The trim lawn of 1704 Coventry Lane, Nichols Hills, is hardly similar to the rolling fairways of St. Andrew's Scotland; but they do have this in common—an awful lot of golf is being played on both by people named Coe.

Charles R. (Robert) Coe, a former O.U. business student, is, of course, the St. Andrew's Coe. The Coventry Lane Coes are three less-well-known figures of the sports world: Chuck, Rick and Ward Coe, who are presently attending Casady and West Nichols Hills schools.

The three youngsters (Chuck is 8, Rick and Ward are 7 and 5 respectively) have nowhere near the international reputation which Charlie Coe, their 34-year-old father, has earned by winning two U.S. National Amateur Championships and by being a player on seven U.S. international teams. But their exuberant application of club to turf on the Coventry Lane "fairways" would make the elder Mr. Coe quake for his title (and his lawn) if he were a jealous man.

Happily, Charlie Coe is a normal-enough father who takes a deep interest and pride in his sons' athletic ambitions.

"The boys actually are seasonal athletes," the lean, six-foot champ said of his sons. "They are interested in golf, but not to the exclusion of other sports. And frankly, I'm quite glad. In the spring and summer it's basketball and baseball. In the fall and winter it's football."

"And throughout the year it's wrestling—for the chair in front of the TV," added Coe's attractive, red-headed wife, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Coe is the very pleasant, feminine complement to Charlie and his boys. An O.U. letters graduate, Elizabeth claims to have more of a spectator's talent for golf; but as might be imagined, rearing three boys and a golf champion doesn't leave much time for spectator activities. Nevertheless, Elizabeth is active in civic work and

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Charlie and his boys (with Queenie and her pups): Left to right, Chuck, 8, Ward, 5, and Rick, 7. Ward has just been nipped by Pup No. Two.

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or otherwise, presents a 1937 movie, shop-worn though it may be, at least the picture probably has a story. Which is more than most modern movies boast. Even a comforting proportion of its live presentations has been chipped from books and magazines of yesteryear, from a vanished America where such words as subjective value, morals, religion, ethics were not—as now—mere empty cartons, discarded soap boxes for street corner neo-existentialists to kick around. Still more, when TV takes advantage of its unique ability to transmit non-verbal communication right into every living room, to use, that is, gestures, actions and sounds in lieu of words, why it widens there a tremendous weapon.

But unfortunately, when a culture begins to revert from the printed word to manual gesture, from language to sign language, it is taking a great step backward. Monkeys gesticulate. It is the sign of civilization that it communicates with the written word.

Alarming and unmistakable signs of degeneration in our basic communication system have been evident for more than a generation now, beginning, I think, about 1925, when, under the curse of so-called “progressive” education many of our elementary schools switched from the old, proven A, B, ab phonetic method of teaching reading, to the new and completely idiotic “word-recognition” system.

Now nothing could be better calculated to make a nation of illiterates than this read-by-rote system which, fortunately for me, I am old enough to have escaped; but which you probably had to endure. As Dr. Rudolf Flesch says in his angry little book, Why Johnny Can’t Read, it’s a sentiment they younger Coes agree with completely. Asked if he wanted to other boys get any lessons from the

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recently spearheaded the successful Speech and Hearing Clinic development fund drive.

The Coe boys show every sign of growing up to be as active as their parents. Chuck, the eight-year-old, might succeed his dad in the golf department. He recently came in second in the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club’s junior tournament.

Do the boys get any lessons from the National Champion along with their lawn chopping?

“Very little,” said Coe. “I enjoy golf, but I wouldn’t want to force that enjoyment on them. They all take lessons at the club and they have some special children’s clubs. If they like the game, fine; if they don’t—that’s fine also.”

Coe, who won his first National Amateur Championship in 1949 at the age of 25, thinks golf is becoming a young man’s game—particularly after having to wrest his second Amateur’s from Tommy Aaron, a Georgia college senior.

It’s a sentiment the younger Coes agree with completely. Asked if he wanted to grow up to be a champion like his father, Ward’s face lighted up in startling contrast to the traditionally solemn expression which his father sports on the fairways:

“Sure,” he laughed, “I’ll be a champ’n, too. It’s easy!”