

# Mink Meadows Golf Club



*75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

1936 – 2011

Front Cover:  
Photograph by James Weisman,  
*Mink Meadows Golf Club member.*

Back Cover:  
Watercolor from collection of Martha's Vineyard Museum,  
donated by Robert P. Bigelow.



Mink Meadows Golf Club  
320 Golf Club Road  
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

Dear Members,

It is with great enthusiasm that we celebrate our Club's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. From our humble beginnings, we've progressed nicely over the decades until today we enjoy a golf course, the quality and challenge of which is second to none on the Island. We have many people to thank for our evolution, from the original founders, the day-to-day operating guidance throughout the years of our professional staffs (Course Superintendents and PGA Pro's), the management provided by the volunteer Mink Meadows Golf Club Executive Committees, and the support of the Mink Meadows Association Boards of Directors.

One thing that hasn't changed over the years is the character of our membership. We have continued to be an inclusive group of golfers who enjoy the diversity in every dimension of our fellow members. The vignettes we've captured later in this booklet attest to the easy going, ego-free atmosphere that characterizes our Club.

It has been a real pleasure and honor to serve as President of the Club, especially in this year of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who organized our various anniversary events, especially our Editor of this anniversary booklet, Nancy Morris.

President, Mink Meadows Golf Club

## HISTORY OF THE CLUB

### A. The Early Years (before 1963)

The story of how we have come to celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary actually begins 100 years ago. LeRoy Goff writes in his memoir “Dee Dee Boy,” as a West Chop boy in 1911, he explored through the woods behind West Chop. One day he came across a footpath leading deep into the woods, and when the path stopped, there was a great open space covered with water. Suspecting it was a fresh water pond, he and his boyhood friends tasted it, and yes, it was fresh! Eventually they saw a man with a wagon full of small stones from the beach, and he told them the name for the pond was Mink Meadows. No one of any authority or with surety can say where the name emanated, but one story is that when the wind blew the grasses in the meadows in different directions, it reminded one of a mink’s fur.

#### **Demonstrates His Faith In Martha's Vineyard**

June 1 — 1928

The report that a golf course was being laid out on the West Chop property of Robert L. Bigelow has been confirmed by Mr. Bigelow, who spent a few days at his summer residence this week. Nine holes are to be laid out at first and if the project receives the necessary support, nine more will be laid out with a possibility of thirty-six holes sometime in the future.

The course will not be in shape for use this year, due to the lengthy process of properly preparing the ground. While the trees have been cut down and all stumps removed, the ground has been leveled and sowed to rye, this must be mowed and sowed and plowed once more this year before grass will thrive and thicken in the soil.

In speaking of this really formidable task which he has undertaken, Mr. Bigelow made it plain that he is planning for the future and the not-so-distant future either.

“Martha's Vineyard is destined to become the greatest summer resort on the New England coast,” he said. “The development of the airplane will make the island as near New York in the near future as the fifteen and twenty miles towns are now made by the auto.”

“But provision for playing golf is only one of the many things that could be done here,” he went on, “just a small part of the general idea of development. I feel that the game is an appeal to all classes of people who are fond of outdoor recreation, it care should be taken by all people who are interested in island development that it is done along lines that make for permanence.”

“The floating population, whatever they may be, can never be desirable visitors to the island and their coming should be discouraged. But we could all bend our efforts toward attracting people to the island who will establish permanent summer homes.”

Robert L. Bigelow, former president of the Eastern Exchange Bank in New York City, was a sportsman who loved hunting and fishing, and because of his love for the outdoors and for the Vineyard, had acquired Up-Island and Down-Island beach and pond property. Mr. Bigelow bought the property known as Mink Meadows before 1928, and commenced to cut down many trees to make fire lanes, which would impede the spread of a large conflagration. These fire lanes began to look like fairways to Mr. Bigelow.

Bigelow had been bitten by the “golf bug” and in a “fit of recklessness”, he hired golf architects, Wayne E. Stiles and John Van Kleeck, and they laid out 27 holes. Embryonic fairways spread far and wide, and a large part of the last 106 acres, which is now Tashmoo Woods, took the brunt of the attack. But economic conditions changed. The depression was extremely difficult, even for a man of means like Mr. Bigelow. The plans reverted to the original fire lanes, and even finishing those was a big job in itself, because getting grass to grow on sand takes knowledge, patience, money, and time.

“After several years and after grass grew, the curious and interested began to make trips to the site, and soon people started to hack or shoot a few shots on the sly. Mr. Bigelow fed the grass with water from his own well and irrigation system, and fertilized well until it was ready. There was one operation which caused a delay to the official opening; there were a goodly number of stones which had not

been removed. This was remedied by a depression ‘army’ who were willing to remove said stones for the large sum of a penny apiece” (Dee Dee Boy).

Because the trustees at West Chop did not want the public to start going through the built up part of West Chop, and Mr. Bigelow’s activities were attracting attention, they proposed he buy a one hundred foot right of way from the back wooded part of West Chop which is now Golf Club Road.

Robert P. Bigelow, the originator’s son, recalls that when his father acquired the land, he put it in his wife’s name for tax purposes. The general supervisor was Hollis Smith, who had worked with Mr. Bigelow for years, and accounting was handled by Frank Alter, his secretary, who also had been in his employ for decades.



Robert L. Bigelow

## ISLAND LINKS ARE THRIVING UNDER EXPERT

Turf Scientist Smith Is  
Tenderly Tending Grass  
At Mink Meadows

*Special to Standard-Times*

VINEYARD HAVEN, Aug. 13—

So you think you're having troubles, getting your little 2-by-6 front lawn to grow! So the Summer heat scorches your precious grasspatch to cinders!

Listen to the worries of Hollis A. Smith of this town.

Mr. Smith is a golf course turf expert—and if anybody knows about grass, it's he.

**What! No Signs!**

Mr. Smith, graduate of University of Maine and Harvard, where he acquired AB and Masters' degrees in Forestry, can look over greens and fairways he has created and see the fruition of three years of ~~scientific care and not a "keep off the grass" sign in sight!~~

Worst of the abuse a golf course takes is not constant passage of followers of the sport nor excavating onslaughts of their clubs, he will tell you. The grass on a course is abnormally short, less protected against the elements, requiring the most tender care if it is not to fade and die almost overnight.

Three years' efforts spells only the beginning of his troubles for a turf-care expert.

**Just a Swamp Then**

When Forester Smith took over Mink Meadows golf course at West Chop, it was still in its infancy, a broad swath just cleared through an oak forest.

To add to physical difficulties presented by grading, this particular area constituted a chemical problem—it was too much on the acid side.

"We found on sending soil samples to Massachusetts State College, that this stuff we were dealing with would not do for our purpose," he explained. "That meant using a heavy dose of dolomite mixture on our soil to bring it around toward the alkaline side."

**Ah—Planting**

Planting followed clearing. Successive sowing, growing, plowing under of seasonal rye, buckwheat, timothy and clover to alkalize the soil as a base for grass improved the seed bed.

Each multiple plowing and harrowing was accompanied by removal of stones and roots brought to the surface, until the area was well free of these materials. Into this soil went large quantities of the dolomite with its high magnesium content.

**Foreign Stock Imported**

Chosen for final surface grass were two varieties, neither native to the Vineyard, but the most suitable grasses were chosen by first planting sweepings from Vineyard barns, best of these being taken as index to what the soil would cherish most. The more aristocratic members of these families were then imported, one coming from seaside areas in Oregon where, in all the United States, it is known to flourish amid salt air.

To provide protection to the final sward in its infancy, red-top and a little English rye were planted, as "nurse crops," to shade the younger, slower-growing grasses.

**Grass, At Last**

Hardy adolescents at last, the two white hopes of the new fairway outgrew their nurses, crowded them out, and formed a tight-bound surface turf over which you can scuff without harming them.

Tees and greens, necessarily more carpet-like for those long putts, demand more specialized attention than fairways. When you reflect, Mr. Smith commented, that this grass is cut down to within three-eighths of an inch, it becomes apparent that more than ordinary care of its water supply is ahead for those who wish to keep it alive.

Rigorously reared, the green and tee grasses require a schedule of fertilizing and watering constantly adhered to, Mr. Smith went on, with a standard Weather Bureau rain gauge co-operating on the water end. If the gauge reveals a deficiency through lack of sufficient rainfall over a certain period, he explained, the water system of the course is used to make up the difference, a given amount of water having been determined as best for the greens.

"You see," Mr. Smith explained, "you are really hastening the growth of the grass, and then you cut it too short for a normal protection, thus requiring fertilizer and water schedules to approximate the normal, healthy condition."

**Diseases, Too**

But the turf expert doesn't find himself a shady spot in which to rest and watch his grass grow at this point. His job as nursemaid has just begun, for a never-ceasing battle begins with grass diseases too numerous to mention.

Most common is "brown patch," at mention of which the average lawn grower will gnash his teeth and spout vitriolic comment indicative of sad experience.

This villain in the bed of clover comes at night when sudden temperature changes have promoted its peculiar cobweb fungus, bringing about by morning innumerable spots of dead brown. Sprays or powders with mercury base are used to combat it, while long bamboo poles passed over greens surfaces at early dawn like a magician's wand may break the fungus webs and prevent spreading.

The next time you stand on a velvety green arranging your stance, reflect on the care and science behind that turf beneath your feet—but don't reflect too long; that testy foursome behind is yelling about going through again!

The flavor of the early years is nicely captured in the below commentary by George Santos, Sr. As he notes, George started as a caddy at Mink Meadows, later to become a longstanding member of the Club:

"It had to be about 1938. Someone had to carry those golf bags. There were six of us, standby caddies. We were there each day and were paid fifty cents each day whether we caddied or not. The players at that time were mostly the West Chop colony, the Greenoughs, the Gibsons, and others there for the summer season. My home was on Pine Street, directly behind the new Catholic Church. Early mornings, I would walk along Pine up toward Tony Silvia's house and cut through the woods to the Herring Creek Road which passed just south of the 4<sup>th</sup> tee of Mink Meadows. (You can see it from the 4<sup>th</sup> tee). Cutting into the course, I would stop along the 1<sup>st</sup> hole at the pump house for the course and hang my homemade root beer bottle into the cold water to have it at lunch time. We would hang out behind the clubhouse and wait for players to arrive. (There weren't many when the course first opened.) It was boring at times, but we played games to keep busy. We would build tree houses near a little creek that fed off a small pond nearby. I remember one day standing on a large rock at the edge of the water. Suddenly, the rock moved. I'd been standing on the back of a loggerhead turtle. You never knew what was around at the Mink.

Another time (years later while playing golf), I was about to hit my drive on the 3<sup>rd</sup> tee. "You'd better wait a minute," someone said. I looked out and standing about 200 yards ahead, a beautiful doe was looking at me. (I believe she was waiting to compliment me on my 375 yard drive.) It was not unusual to see deer around the course.

On rainy days we used to stay in the shed along the 1<sup>st</sup> hole where they stored the loam for the greens along with other greens keeping equipment. One day, Herbie Isaacs brought a snare drum. We started the Mink Meadows jazz band. One caddy rolled up a magazine and beat out a tune on the louver slats on the window. My "instrument" was a batch of galvanized water pipes which I banged on. (We never made the big time.) Along with Herbie Issacs, were Howard Andrews ("Bay Rum"...his father Billy Andrews was a barber across from the Capawock Theater), Tom Brennan, Milton Nichols, Tony Lima, and myself; we were the six standbys. As the course grew, there were numerous other caddies. Some were locals and some were seasonal.

It was a pleasure to grow up in this area. I was fortunate to end up with a piece of property at Lake Tashmoo. I spent a lot of my childhood at the Lake. It was fresh water 'til the 44 hurricane, when they decided to open the narrow creek to the Vineyard Sound. Our Pine Street gang swam, fished, and ice skated at the Lake. To continue with the Mink, it would have been nice to see the back nine come into the picture. They did start to cut and trim for the additional holes, but along came World War II that fouled up a lot of people's plans.

Mr. Bigelow, the owner of the club, was pretty regular with the caddies. After one good summer season, he invited the caddies (maybe a dozen then) to his West Chop home and gave us a turkey dinner and then monetary gifts. It was a nice event. He always picked me as his caddy. At one point, I thought he might fire me though. After a round, we were at the 9<sup>th</sup> in front of the clubhouse, and as I was about to put his putter into the bag, it hit him in his glass eye. Thank God, no damage. It was quite an experience at the Mink, good friends and fun times. Another experience I didn't mention was going swimming in the Vineyard Sound at our lunch break. Yes, I will always remember the Mink."

Mr. Bigelow's son also remembers that the course was closed from 1942 to 1944 or '45, and during those summers, young Mr. Bigelow served as an assistant air raid warden. A Vineyard Gazette article from May of 1942, states: "The privileges of the Mink Meadows Golf Club course have been made available to the Twelfth Company State Guards of Vineyard Haven, who essayed field tactics for the first time on Sunday. Hitherto, the company has confined its activities to movements performed in the restricted areas of the school gym or grounds outside. At Mink Meadows, however, battle formations are possible, and these were attempted with proper reference to the placement of the various units"

Also, since the course was not in use, young Mr. Bigelow learned to drive a car on the fairway without endangering anyone or anything. Another memory of his: "My family also owned a camp on the west shore of Tisbury Great Pond.

My father asked the man who had rented it to come to lunch at our house in West Chop, and bring a friend who was visiting him. They came to our house in the summer of 1944, and after lunch the four of us walked around the course. My father and his tenant were slower than the guest and I, so we walked ahead of them. The guest told me about making one of the best movies of that time, and how he enjoyed being the star. His name was Jimmy Cagney.”

In December, 1945, the Gazette reported that “West Chop interests” are about to lease the Mink Meadows golf club and start immediately to put the course in shape for use. The terms of the lease place the operation and maintenance of the club in the hands of the lessees at the price of one dollar a year, and Richard D. Mansfield, has been engaged to put the course in order and to act as groundskeeper for the lessees.

When Mr. Bigelow died in 1952, his widow, Doris, and his son Robert, hired Mr. Mansfield, who was managing the Oak Bluffs Golf Club (name later changed to Island Country Club) to also manage Mink Meadows Golf Club, which he did through 1962.

## MINK MEADOWS GOLF CLUB

Opening May 15, 1939

### GREENS FEES

Daily Greens Fees.....	\$ 2.00
One Week Privilege.....	10.00
One Month Privilege.....	25.00
Summer Privilege.....	38.50

JUNIORS UNDER 18 NOT PERMITTED TO PLAY UNTIL AFTER 4:30 P.M.

### RATES FOR JUNIORS ONLY

Daily Greens Fees.....	\$ 1.00
One Week Privilege.....	5.00
One Month Privilege.....	15.00
Summer Privilege.....	25.00

### PROFESSIONAL

David Davidson of St. Andrews, Scotland

Lessons by Appointment.

## B. The Middle Years (1963-1987)

In 1963, John Rowe, a newly hired P.G.A. pro from Pennsylvania, had just begun to manage the Oak Bluffs Club, and was a “fly on the wall” who heard about a big developer plotting to buy Mink Meadows and to build in the woods, and also on the fairways, a whole village of little vacation shacks. John passed this information on to his friend, LeRoy Goff, a summer resident in the area, and someone concerned about what might happen if efforts were not taken to preserve the Mink Meadows area. “Fortunately the developer did not know who or where the owner was, and the search was slowed as it was only listed by one broker, who was also unlisted and worked out of her home. The golf course was threatened, and it couldn’t be legally stopped because at the time there was no zoning.” (P. 412 Dee Dee Boy)

Mr. Goff met with Robert P. Bigelow, the son, at his office in Boston, wherein Bigelow gave him the option to buy the golf course and all the woods and beach, and a different option on the land on the east side of the 8<sup>th</sup> fairway and the lot between the 7<sup>th</sup> green and Franklin Street. The first option was for three years, and the second could be satisfied after the first.

Mr. Goff got Samuel L. Fuller, newly retired from Merrill Lynch, to come to the Island, where he showed him the view from what is now Hilltop Road, and then took him to the Mink Meadows ponds. Not surprisingly, Mr. Fuller was sold on the opportunity to join forces with Mr. Goff in completing the purchase from Mrs. Bigelow and developing the area. The land was surveyed and approximately 60 home sites (minimum 2 acres) with interconnecting roads were laid out. Offering letters were sent out to potential stockholders, primarily friends and acquaintances of Messrs. Goff and Fuller, resulting in these same home sites, golf course, and common areas being sold as Mink Meadows Association, Inc. (The 106 acres, now Tashmoo Woods, was obtained separately by a Mr. Chira, thus marking the end of the envisioned 27 or even 18 hole golf course.)

As a postscript to the Bigelow era, LeRoy Goff noted, “Mr. Bigelow had been ahead of his time in the thirties, because golf was not that popular until the sixties. West Chop was so tennis oriented that we thought anyone playing golf was odd or antisocial.” (P. 414 Dee Dee Boy Memoir)



LeRoy Goff

Mink Meadows Association, Inc. consisted of Dudley Brown, Edward M. Douglas, Robert S. Douglas, Gardner Drew, Samuel L. Fuller, LeRoy Goff, John L. Grandin, Jr., Amor Hollingsworth, Robert M. Love, Charles Mason, Jr., Ralph J. Mitchell, Frederick Moore, William C. Reed, Frederick Singer, and Irving Warner, Jr. It is probably a certain bet that most, if not all, of these gentlemen were golfers, and many of them, also, West Choppers.

The Club tied into town water, but the strain on the Tashmoo water system forced them to limit this supply to the greens and the tees, and the fairways got the “short end of the dog’s tail.” Grass was now in short supply, and golfers found it harder to find grass than to find the ball itself.

The Mink Meadows Golf Club was operated as a private club, with membership open and available in accordance with regulations compiled by the Golf Committee of the Association, consisting of Talbot C. Chase, President, Ralph J. Mitchell, Executive Director, Paul Cruikshank, Gardner M. Drew, John L. Grandin, Jr, and LeRoy Goff.

One of the first acts of the Association was to bring on the club’s first golf professional, Tom Rowe, PGA, son of Johnny Rowe. Tom was hired for the summer months to run the clubhouse, sell equipment, and give golf lessons. His assistant was Kenneth Duarte, a young man from Vineyard Haven, who was an excellent golfer, and later went on

to play golf for the United States armed forces. At that time, the clubhouse underwent alterations and an apartment was built for the occupancy of Tom, his wife, and their young son. Tony Lima, who had started as a caddy at Mink Meadows, familiar to and well liked by many who played at Mink Meadows, was employed as a groundskeeper on a full-time, year round basis. He had gone to school to learn the greens-keeping profession, with Mr. Bigelow's assistance. He also doubled as a mechanic, keeping the sometimes decrepit equipment running, literally with bailing wire and spare parts reclaimed from the town dump, because of a very limited operating budget.

In 1963, Dr. Ralph J. Mitchell, chairman of the Club's Golf Committee, in trying to dispel the idea that MMGC was a rich man's club, stressed that the club wanted play from local people, and especially Island boys and girls. Ten free scholarships would be given, which included free golf instruction by the club pro, and the supply of equipment.

Sometime during the 70's, Dave Ritter ran the pro shop, and in 1977, Gardner Drew took over the shop, after his retirement from the Martha's Vineyard National Bank. He ran it for 10 years. Gardner was always the "go to" person for any questions and helpful problem solving. (He remained as such until his death in 1999.)

### **C. Recent Years (1987–present)**

In 1987, Carl Barrie as president of the Mink Meadows Association (MMA) reported at the July MMA shareholders meeting that the golf course had made its first profit since 1963. "The objective of the Association is not to make money, but improvements". Some of the reasons for the increase in income were due to efforts of Stuart Eyman, the groundskeeper, in finding more economic ways to maintain the course, increased memberships, and more public interest in golf. This same meeting noted "Financial planning to date includes \$10,000 for equipment, \$10,000 for golf carts, and \$10,000 to reduce debt, any surplus to go to a capital fund."

In September of that year, a major project was undertaken to make enhancements to the irrigation system, for which Mr. Eyman hired a consultant. Leaks in the galvanized water line were repaired, and the manual sprinkler heads (which had to be rotated through the night by a separately hired watering person) were put on a wired system. (The result of this undertaking was a considerable cost savings in that the annual cost for labor to manually water the course heretofore was approximately \$19,000!)

In May, 1988, John Green reporting at a Golf Club meeting on memberships announced there would be no big campaign push for memberships, as the course was saturated. The possibility of limiting memberships in the future was discussed. There were 160 memberships in 1988, which counted husband and wife as one.

In July of that year, at the MMA annual meeting, it was noted that the association had purchased its own grading machine and budgeted \$2,000 for road work. Clubhouse hours had been increased, and a new financial control system had been developed. Thank-yous were extended to Gardner Drew, Stewart Eyman, and Frank Carter for their hard work over the past year, and to Austin Smith for his promotional work, and to Nancy Smith for all of her work on beautification of the grounds. (Nan Carter recalled that her husband, at one point, used a metal detector in the parking lot to discover, not only where the septic system was, but that there were three of them!)

In the late 80's and early 90's, Carl Barrie, as president of MMA, and Frank Carter, Chair of Golf Course Operations and Property and Greens, were responsible for initiating major enhancements to the course, with particular emphasis on improving the fairways through an expanded irrigation system. In June, 1990, Tom Wessner became the new Superintendent. In 1992, work continued on the irrigation system, including installation of a double row system. Mr. Wessner negotiated a very favorable price (\$60,000) for the planned major improvements by purchasing the materials himself, and getting another 2% discount for C.O.D. Also in 1992, Tim Spring was the returning Pro, the new practice tee was completed and new trees were planted on the 1st and 6th fairways.

At the October, 1994 MMA Board of Directors meeting, Carl Barrie reviewed the continued highly successful Golf Club operations, projecting a net positive cash flow of \$39,000 for the year. The course continued to be at full use during summer months, with the highlight being four visits by President Clinton. There were approximately 200 members and a waiting list of 32 with preference given to landowners and West Chop residents. It was also noted that the Club would make the course available for three charity tournaments open to the public, among them the Holy Ghost Society and the Vineyard Nursing Association.



The President and First Lady's Visit

In 1995, a search committee consisting of Carl Barrie, Chris Righter, and Fred Kingsley was formed to hire both a new golf pro and superintendent. Matt Crowther was selected as the new Superintendent, having previously held an assistant superintendent position in Weston, MA, following his graduation from the University of Rhode Island, College of the Environment and Life Sciences. Allen Menne was hired as the new golf pro, having previously served as a pro in the Hartford, Connecticut area. Linden Drew, who had been on the Golf and Junior Golf committees, eventually took the job of winter manager, holding that position until his death in March, 2002. There is a Linden tree planted near the first green in his memory, and in July, 2003, after completion of the club championships tournament, a memorial service was held on the first tee box with over 150 people in attendance. Here, too, sits the Gardner Drew memorial bench, with the apt quotation, "Hit 'em straight". We also fondly remember Ed Carey, who worked in the pro shop, and helped to plan Lindy's memorial, but could not be there because of his own failing health.

In 1996, Carl Barrie, following his long tenure including many accomplishments benefiting the club, first, as President of MMA, and then as the first "official" President of MMGC, turned over the reigns as MMGC President to Chris Righter.

Under Chris's direction in the mid to late 90's, many further improvements were made to the course and facilities. To bring the irrigation system up to state of the art, it was necessary to put in a new well and pumping system which was housed beyond the practice range area. With this, the system could then be fully automated.

A golf course architect, Ron Pritchard, was hired to complete a master plan of renovations for the course. With the plan in hand, entire green complexes on holes three and four were re-done, additional tees were added to every hole with some entire complexes being re-built. The work on the fourth tee was one of the first major additions to the course in decades by adding length and also a second par 5. Also completed under the master plan was a change

of the sixth green to a double green meant to hearken back to the game's infancy where double greens were common. Other additions were the practice putting green, bunker and chipping green. Furthermore, during the late nineties, all bunkers were rebuilt, and many newly added.

Major facility improvements were also completed. Renovations to the turf management facility were made, including moving the Superintendent's office to its present location above the garage, a chemical storage building was added, bag storage space was added to the golf cart barn, and on course bathrooms were placed between holes four and five.

One of the largest projects ever undertaken by the Club was the re-building of the clubhouse. The original clubhouse was constructed in 1937, and while it stood up well over the years, including weathering a number of hurricanes, it was definitely showing its age. Chris Righter, as President, asked Joe Fitzgerald, Long Range Planning Committee Chairman, to head the effort to look at alternatives, and come up with a financing and building plan. Three alternatives were considered: re-habilitate the current building, tear down the current building and "stick" build a new one, or build a new one using a modular building approach. The modular approach was chosen because it was the least expensive and could be finished in a minimum amount of time. The \$765,000 project was approved by the MMA Board of Directors; the project was financed by a combination of funds reserved in earlier years by the club, an increase in future initiation fees, and a loan from MMA to the Club to be paid off in 5 years.

The old clubhouse was torn down in December, 2004; the new clubhouse basement level was poured in early January, 2005 during a warm spell. The new clubhouse modules arrived in January, 2005 (four 13ft x 56ft units comprising the first and second floors), with the remaining decks and ramps plus interior fit-out of the bathrooms in the basement level completed by early July.

Many thanks go to the countless hours of planning and implementing those plans spent by the building committee consisting of Joe Fitzgerald, Chris Righter, Rollie Savage, George Balco, and Bob Huss. Again, we think back with gratitude for all involved and inconvenienced, for their time and patience, especially the Crowther family who resided in Sally and Joe Fitzgerald's guest house, until their upstairs apartment was completed.



# OPEN HOUSE



8/6/05

## Grand Opening

### of the New Clubhouse at Mink Meadows Golf Club

Ribbon Cutting at  
1 PM on Saturday  
August 6



Hole-In-One  
Competition  
(Donation to benefit  
the MYRed Cross  
Chapter)

Enter Free Raffle  
for golf rounds  
and merchandise

Saturday, August 6 from 11 AM to 4 PM  
and  
Sunday, August 7 from 11 AM to 3 PM

Mink Meadows is located off Franklin Street in Vineyard Haven  
Call 508/693-0600 for details

When Allen Menne left the Club to take a position on the Cape in 2005, we were very fortunate to have his replacement right before our eyes in the person of our seasonal teaching pro, Chet Nowak. Chet brought an extensive PGA Pro background, having served as a club pro both in Florida and the Dominican Republic, and was currently spending the winter months on the teaching staff of the Golf Digest Magazine's Florida teaching facility.

In 2005, Chris Righter retired as President, to be succeeded by Joe Fitzgerald. Joe's job was made easy not only by the firm foundation for the Club laid by Carl Barrie and Chris Righter before him, but also by the continuing service of the long serving Executive Committee consisting of George Balco (Vice President, Finance), Ken Ward (Membership Chairman), Rollie Savage (Pro and House Chairman), Gerard Peterson (Greens Chairman), and Jim Weisman (Legal Counsel).

In 2007, the first New Member reception was held at the Clubhouse to introduce new members to the Executive Committee and the Professional staff, and to acquaint them with Club facilities and services. Also in 2007, membership was increased from 235 to 250, to make better utilization of the course given the downturn in public play. Further increases were made in the membership level in 2008-2010 to its current level of 280 members (regular individual, couple, and family) with approximately an additional 20 senior individual and couple memberships.

One very notable aspect of Mink Meadows is our "Green" approach to course maintenance, even before being "green" was politically correct. This approach was best described by Matt Crowther in a 2007 Newsletter as follows: "We here at Mink Meadows Golf Club have a very strong commitment to the environment and use plant protectants (insecticides and fungicides) as sparingly as possible. We treat the greens as most courses in New England would, using these on a preventative basis. This program gets tweaked as we adjust to weather conditions and visual inspections where we scout for active fungal growth and active insects. We review and adjust the program annually based on results. The tees are also treated preventatively, but on a much smaller scale. The rest of the course, fairways and rough, get very little in the way of plant protectants."

"We try to keep the weeds to a minimum, and this requires occasional spraying. We could apply a preventative herbicide over the entire place for the crabgrass as most homeowners do mixed with their spring fertilizer, but choose not to. Based on experience, I know where we will get the most crabgrass and spray only these areas with the preventative herbicide or treat the areas with a post-emergence herbicide. This may seem like a "no brainer", but this approach adds time and effort. I choose to add the extra work believing it is better to do this or have a few weeds than to blanket the entire property with chemicals."

Matt's faithful crew has served the course, and, in turn, the players, well for many years including Assistant Superintendent, Will Warner, Kevin Cleary, Otis Tholander, and Fred Pekari, who formerly assisted Allen Menne in the pro shop and at ladies' lessons.

Mink Meadows Golf Course is a club where members and public players feel comfortable and welcomed. The club represents the camaraderie of seasonal residents, titans of industry, education, and politics; year round residents ("townies"); and the one-time guest we will never see again.



President Obama's Visit 2009

## **GOLF PLAY THROUGH THE YEARS**

The first recorded account of golf play at Mink Meadows was about the Club's founder. LeRoy Goff remembered vividly Mr. Bigelow's original swing. "He would start with an orthodox back swing, but when he reached the ball, he put in an extra flourish, similar to a drum major twirling his baton when he would come down on the poor intimidated ball" (p.410 Dee Dee Boy Memoirs).

No further references were found until the 1950's when several excerpts were found in the Vineyard Gazette noting Mink Meadows members and events played at the Club. For example, May, 1957: "A Tri-town golf team captain, Bob Chapman, walked off with a great victory in the 4<sup>th</sup> match in a series of six for the Cornelius S. Lee trophy. Bill Swartz and Gardner Drew took advantage of their handicaps to rack up 12 important points. Vineyard Haven team: H. Metell, J. Boyle, B. Swartz, and Silva; Oak Bluffs team: Barmakian, Arruda, Church, Garland, Noyes, and Louis; Edgartown team: Nunes, West, A. Metell, McBride, Gross, and Guilford."

July, 1958: "Second golf tournament will be played on July 26<sup>th</sup>, for the Chase Trophy, newly instituted this year in honor of Talbot Chase of West Chop, who is characterized as "one of the younger golfers of the older group".

April, 1961: "The Wright-Wortman second annual Junior group coached by Bob Bailey. Winner: Bill Swartz, Howard Leonard, Bobbie Chapman, and Carl Alwardt. Junior Division; David Gordon and David Drew. Tournament chair, Gardner Drew."

November, 1961: "Martha's Vineyard Golf Association will hold annual Goulding Wright-Denys Wortman tournament at Mink Meadows. This tournament is held annually in memory of two members of the club. Last year's winner, Bill Swartz, will be defending his title."

November, 1962: "Wright-Wortman golf tournament; low gross, Manuel Francis, low net, Fred Metell, second low net, Ted Frank, and third low net, Howard Leonard."

In 1962, "Doll Howland Memorial golf Tournament. Unique in tournament play were the winners, Mrs. Samuel Fuller, who is 86 years of age, playing with Silas Howland as partners, box score, 31. Two sets of partners tied for second place with scores of 33, Ducky Righter, playing with Don Brown, and Hamilton Benz playing with Goodie Benz."

1963 Vineyard Gazette: "MMGC team captained by Talbot Chase defeated the Edgartown golf team, led by Murray Wilshire. MM women's team headed by Sue Flake, swamped Agnes Osborne's (Edgartown) players. A Revere bowl which will be suitably engraved with the winning team's names for the last three years and bearing the inscription 'Cornelius S. Lee Golf Trophy' was jointly purchased by the two clubs in honor of Mr. Lee, who has done so much to promote golf on the Island over many, many years."

July 1963: "The money raised from the mixed foursome nine holes golf tournament in memory of Mrs. Silas Howland (Doll) is given to the Cerebral Palsy Camp. The tournament lasted all day and was won by Celeste C. Van Riper and Gardner Drew."

Gazette news from 1973 noted that in an early year tournament, Mrs. Silas Howland and Frank Madeiros won first place in the couples event, and finishing second in the ladies division was Mrs. Edward Pulling and third, Mrs. John Grandin. Prizes for nearest to the pin on the seventh went to Mrs. Amor Hollingsworth and Steele Winterer. Mention is also made of the annual Doll Howland Memorial Tournament which took place in August of that year.

It was not until 1977, that Mink Meadows joined the Massachusetts Golf Association which then allowed Mink

Meadows golfers to have accredited handicaps. This is the year that Manny Jardin became Mink Meadows' first champion. Close contenders were Ed Barmakian and Mike Zoll (presently the head pro at Farm Neck).

Recollections from the 60's and 70's are many: Frank Cecilio remembers as a young teenager riding his bike through the woods to join other caddies among them: Doug Fortes, George Rogers, and Terry Canha, to sit on the stone wall behind the clubhouse to await the golfers (the caddies were not allowed in the clubhouse) to carry two bags each for nine holes for the grand sum of \$1.75 a bag, which with a tip of 25 cents, gave him a total of \$4.00. The caddies then went upstairs to the pro's apartment, where Mrs. Rowe sold them a sandwich for lunch, for which they paid \$4.50! There were few carts, and they were stored under the clubhouse building, which had no real basement. Among the young caddies' "clients" were Joe Reisman, Samuel Johnson, Ken Stoddard, and E.Y. (Yip) Harburg, well known lyricist of Broadway and Hollywood ("Over The Rainbow", being only one of his many hits).

One of the interesting traditions of the caddies at Mink Meadows was to carve their initials in the cedar shingles in the back corner of the clubhouse. To honor this tradition, when the old clubhouse was demolished and the new one built in 2005, the original shingles with initials were saved for posterity and are now on display in the new clubhouse.



Another interesting story from this era was the selective use of motorized golf carts. At this stage, the club did not own any carts for rent prior to the building of the cart barn. However, one enterprising member would trailer his own cart up each day he played (which was often), unload it, play his round of golf, then re-load it, and drive home. Records aren't available as to how much the club charged for this privilege, but knowing the ever fiscally-minded managers of the Club, we're sure it was an appropriate sum.

The "noonies" began play in the mid to late 70's. (As a member, one could call in the morning of play to get a place in the 2 or 3 tee times reserved for the group around the noon hour.) Some of the regulars, many of whom played almost every day, were Frank Medeiros, Manny Jardin, Walter Dumas, Ernie Garvin, Herbie Metell, George Anthony, Brad Church, "Lanky" Pachico, George Rice, Ed Barmakian, Jerry Shea, and Ziggy Paiva. Players tell of a few more "colorful" players among them. One of them, "Pinky" Silvia, played very well (three times a week) on his one and only leg, by leaning against the back of his three wheeled cart, hitting the ball straight down the middle, and falling over to the ground. He got himself up, got into the cart, and proceeded in this manner to the green, where he would lean on his crutches while he putted the ball into the hole. Another unforgettable player was nicknamed "six pack George"

as he always consumed six beers on the front nine. His disclaimer: “I don’t know why they call me ‘six pack,’ I got six more in my cart for the back nine”, which he did, and which he always finished alone. Interestingly, he started play at nine in the morning!

During the late 70’s, Nan and Frank Carter stayed with her mother, Rachel Luke, (hence, Rachel’s Way road in Mink Meadows), as did her sister and husband, Joy and John Luke, and for years they played the “Friendly Cup”, which was passed back and forth in the family.

Nan says it was Gardner Drew who initiated Ladies Day. The only decision to be made was who should bring the iced tea that week, as there were no planned contests or games. Nan Carter recollects Ladies Day was only nine holes, and was on Thursdays, as it is still. Nan remembers playing with Rose Anthony, Marcia Knowles, Jan Lehmborg, Susan Goodrich, Patty Vanderwarker, Leigh Smith, Hazel Nelson, Joan Shepard, and Andrea DeChiarra.

Leigh Smith recalls: “When my husband was playing (1970’s), we would sometimes go out very early, and have to dash around the sprinklers...at other times we might wind up with (the late) Sally and Joe Kraetzer, who played well. Joe compared the rhythm of a proper swing to humming the ‘Blue Danube Waltz’ – very helpful! For many years my friend Hazel Nelson and I had a regular foursome with Nan Rheault and Norma Van Buskirk. Norma could share the latest news while hitting; Nan politely requested some quiet when hitting, saying she didn’t want to miss any news items.”

“For a while the Ladies Day games were mainly 9 holes (80’s and 90’s), sometimes followed by lunch. Women I miss playing with now, who took part then, included Anne Fulton, Claire Claiborne, and Ann Funn, Edith Wells, Doris Wheaton and Doris Williams. Also, Joy Silverstein, who I recall was playing just ahead of President Bill Clinton, the first time he tried Mink Meadows, when she exclaimed, ‘I’m so nervous!’. Bebe Howland kept up her 9 hole Ladies Day participation, along with Rose Anthony and Marcia Knowles (Ladies champion, a number of times). Nan Carter, Nancy Smith, Joy Luke, and Ellie Balco are among many other longtime MM players I’ve enjoyed playing with. Now Hazel and I will often have games with any of the younger and newer members willing to join us, including Mary Sue Arnold, Elizabeth Reim, Atheline Nixon, Genevieve Jeffreys, Bonnie Conway, Joan Shepard, and Christine Leahy. ”

Ladies Day has steadily grown over the decades, with women taking pleasure in both 9 hole and 18 hole competitions. We remember fondly so many ladies who are no longer with us. Rose Anthony and Lois DeBettencourt even wrote and published a small pamphlet listing rules and etiquette for beginners, which could, at one time, be found in the pro shop.

Fran Gentle recalls in her early years of play, enjoying the expertise of “Bobbie” (Mrs. Ernie) Pachico, Shirley (Mrs. Arthur “Lanky”) Pachico, Anna Jean (Brownie) Brown (former opera star), and occasionally with Ann Jordan (Mrs. Vernon). Everyone recollects the years (80’s and 90’s) when the pro shop was manned by Louis ‘Ziggy’ Paiva, Jerry Shea, George Rice, and starters and rangers: Dick Andrade, Frank Jardin, and Chet Cummins.

No history of golf play at Mink Meadows would be complete without mentioning Albertha and Andrew Steele, a Chilmark couple who, in their 90’s, walked the nine hole course at least a few times a week and never held anyone up or slowed them down!

Over the years, Mink Meadows has provided access to the course for many Island charity-sponsored golf tournaments including Big Brothers/Sisters, Visiting Nurse Association, Holy Ghost Benefit, Tisbury Fire Department, Martha’s Vineyard Prevention, and the Williams Memorial Scholarship. The Club has done this without any compensation, allowing the sponsoring charity to receive full benefit of the entry fees.

There have also been some lesser known tournaments held at the club over the years. The Wacky Packy tournament is one that as the Gazette articles below note, provided enjoyment for all.

## Gazette Article 8/9/83

### *Peter Bowker Is Winner Of the Wacky Packy Open*

Jim's Second Annual Wacky Packy Open was held on Sunday, July 24, at Mink Meadows Golf Course. The expected field of 48 was cut to 32 die-hard participants due to the inclemency of the weather. It was voted that play take place provided no thunderstorms occurred.

Tournament director George Santos instructed that if there should be lightning while on the course, "Hold up a one iron — even God can't hit a one iron!" The first foursome lead by defending champ, Pete DeBettencourt, teed off an hour behind schedule in heavy rains.

Of the eight foursomes that participated, seven completed the regulation 18 holes and the weather was fairly lenient for most of the tournament.

This year's winner was Peter Bowker with a respectable 79. Peter was presented the trophy, a marble base with Heineken bottle and gashed golf ball atop, by Peter DeBettencourt. The two players are coworkers with George Wey, Engineer Consultants and teammates on the Bandits softball team. Peter also received the staggering \$35 cash prize for first place.

Elmer Silva Jr. won second place and \$25 in cash with a score of 85. Elmer was followed by Tim Norton who took 88 strokes to capture third place. Nick Kofos, one of eight participants who came from off-Island especially for the tournament, shot a 90 for fourth place. Don Gosselin and Jay DeBettencourt tied for fifth with scores of 91.

Closest to the pin on the 16th hole went to Bill Andersen with a distance of 9 feet 11 inches. Rick Kane of Jim's Package Store, and the Chicago Whales softball team, hit the longest drive, known only to be "real far" in distance measure.

Michael "Ollie" Oliveria beat his last year's gross score of 133 with a 154 but was still surpassed for the Grossest Gross award this year by Alan Fortes with an approximated 172.

Following the tournament a barbecue was held at the clubhouse, along with the necessary refreshment donated by Ed Ben David of Jim's Package Store. Prizes were then awarded and pictures taken. A good time was had by all, as they say in these parts.

George Santos Jr.

## Gazette Article 8/9/85

### *Wacky Packy Is Apt Moniker for This Golf Tourney*

By GEORGE SANTOS JR.

To the disdain of real golfers the world over, Jim's annual Wacky Packy Open took place on Sunday, July 28, for the fourth consecutive year at Mink Meadows golf course at West Chop. A number of newcomers to this prestigious event swelled the ranks to an even 59. Despite rigorous attempts by the tournament committee of George Santos Jr., Ollie Oliveira and Cliff Robinson to structure tee times, the event began in accustomed fashion, one hour late.

To open the event, George "Blackie the Bottlemann" Pachico topped a worm-burner 43 yards down the fairway and Robert Carter snap-hooked a drive deep into the woods. It was nice to see that some things never change.

First place this year went to Tim "The Ringer" Anthony, who spends his spare time working at Island Electronics. He accomplished the feat with an impressive 81. He was presented the staggering \$30 cash prize. His name will be engraved on the Arthur Ben David Sr. Memorial Trophy to be kept at Jim's Package Store. In addition he will receive a trophy similar to past open trophies — a Budweiser bottle with a gashed golf ball atop — as soon as a suitable base can be found at a yard sale.

Second place required a playoff between reigning champ Ron Leonard and Jay DeBettencourt, who both shot 83s. They were required to putt 40-foot putts on the 18th hole (actually the ninth) as the rest of the field looked on. Jay's putt ran out of shoes after 15 feet, leaving Ron a real test, which he passed. Ron collected \$15 in cash. Jay won a new, and obviously needed, putter.

Fourth place was a four-way tie between Tim Norton, a native Islander turned mainlander; Ken "I'd rather be running" Rusczyk; "James" Paul, the Island-renowned chef; and "What's his first name and where's he from" Campagnoni. They all received absolutely nothing but the admiration of the rest of the field for shooting 88.

Nick Fullin of Cronig's State Road Market fame was the only other player to break 90. For this he received a little less

than absolutely nothing.

Closest to the pin on the 16th hole went to Dr. Brian Braveman, one of six recently graduated optometrists here especially for the open. He nearly holed the putt for a birdie but he choked and took a par, still a rare bird amongst this crowd.

Doug Hoehn, a four-year veteran of the open and year-round Island guy, hit a massive drive on the long drive 10th hole. For this he selected a hat to cover a quietly withdrawing crowning glory.

Neophyte golfers Kevin Thomas and Mike Goveno battled for Grossest Gross, using approximately 160 slashes. Their efforts went unrewarded due to the prizes being gone by the time their scorecards were finally totaled early Monday morning, using some trigonometry and pre-calculus formulas.

As the 15 foursomes finished, a barbecue along with liquid refreshments donated by Anheuser-Busch eased the trading of truths and fabrications of the day's ordeal. Lastly, the names of all the hackers who had not already received prizes were put in a spent corn chips bag and prizes ranging from spirits donated by Ed Ben David of Jim's Package Store to head covers and those elusive little dimpled spheres were raffled off to the anticipation of all.

Special thanks to Mr. Drew, Mr. Shea, and Mr. Piava at Mink Meadows.

A good time was had by all.

No records of Club Champions have been found, but many of the 'noonie' regulars and other long time players are recollected as champs; Rusty Hitchings, Lenny Vanderhoop, Tim Fullin, Manny Jardin, Doug Dowling, and Stevie Garvin. Other 'noonies' remembered; Frank Gonsalves, Dick Andrade, George Santos, Sr., Ralph Gordon, Duncan McBride, Lester Baptiste, Frank Jardin, George Rice, Gardner Drew, and Linden Drew. Today, many stalwarts play year round, among them Ron Schultz, Frank Gonsalves, Lenny Vanderhoop, J.C Murphy, Jay Foley, Dan McCarthy, and Bobby Rose.

## What Makes Mink Meadows Unique

by Matt Crowther

There are several features that make a place stand out; could be the location, think Pebble Beach or Sankaty Head on Nantucket; could be a feature on the course like an Island green, think Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho or TPC Sawgrass; could be a famed tournament like The Masters and Augusta National. For us, we have many such features. We have hosted a couple of Presidents, but so have other courses. We are in a nice location that has a certain mystique of its own. We do not have any water hazards on the course, maybe not unique but un-common for sure.

One of the most unique features is our orientation where we go around in a rectangle. The original 18 hole design used this feature but it would not have been as distinct. The architecture is of a classical nature. There are no forced carries; you are not expected to hit a certain target while advancing the ball. There are blind shots: third green, sixth green and a par three where you cannot see the green surface in number five, but it is all right in front of you, and a risk/reward style. Classical architecture is challenging yet rewarding. You never feel tortured or bored, and you always seem to think I'll do better next time. We have struggled to bring back what must have been a spectacular feature in the course's infancy, the view of Vineyard Sound and the Elizabethan islands. I often wonder why the architect did not have any holes closer to the water. My guess is they would have been difficult to build and maintain, and when the course was built, it probably seemed like you were on the water with un-obstructed views from most holes.

Another of the key features that separates us from other places is our attitude. To say we are laid back does not do it justice. It is hard to pin-point what drives the atmosphere since the Executive Committee personnel change, members change and even the staffs come and go. The staff does have a major role in setting the tone, and we have a long history of members joining the employee ranks. We planted a tree near the second tee not only in memory but picked the species he was named after for a special member turned staffer. Linden "Lindy" Drew was an interesting character who changed the way our course ran for over a decade. After his passing the off-season was never the same. I even buried my first course dog, Thumper, at the linden tree. He and Lindy were pals and loved to chase the geese off the course together.

Thumper was best known to the golfers for his trick of circling a tree off the first tee when asked "where's the squirrel?" The dirt ring he wore around that tree lasted for years after his passing. Thumper was also well known to the landowners and frankly anyone who went to the beach from West Chop to Lake Tashmoo.

One of my favorite stories about the impact Thumper had came from Steve Knipmeyer, the grandson of the Mink Meadows Association founder Roy Goff. Steve would come up to visit in the summers, and I am sure re-live all the summers of his youth, and hang out with Thumps on the beach. He was so inspired to return to the Vineyard, he had a t-shirt made with Thumper's picture on it at the beach in which he inscribed: "Thumper's Office". He told me he would tell himself while wearing the shirt "if I could ever get my office close to his I would have the perfect life."

Our current longest tenured employee (close to 20 years) also started as a member. Fred Pekari began in the pro shop working the counter, giving lessons and also mowing rough one day a week on the Turf Maintenance staff. He eventually moved into maintenance and added mowing fairways and one day asked who was going to be mowing with him. After hearing the name, possibly mine, he responded "if you are going to let him mow, I would rather cut them all myself". From that day on he has mowed all the fairways almost exclusively all season long. It has to be over a decade now. His signature cigar is gone, but he still is the first to be called back and the last to call it a season. One of his many stories about working the shop is when people would refer to him as that grumpy guy, and he would jokingly say "no you are thinking of George".

George Rice was another member-staffer and the father-in-law of yet another member-staffer, Dan McCarthy. One of our newest member-staffers is Frank Gonsalves. Frank used to do some odd jobs for us occasionally as a carpenter by trade. The current bag stands were built by Frank. He joined the staff a few years ago and can be seen mostly seeding divots on the tees and fairways. We should all be as healthy and active as Frank is at his age!

Another feature of Mink Meadows is our environmental approach. Long before it became popular to have large lots to preserve the character of an area, Mink Meadows was setting a trend. When the original owner Robert Bigelow owned all of what encompasses Mink Meadows and Tashmoo Woods, there was no zoning and developers were interested in plowing up the course and putting up hundreds of houses. Instead the course was saved and roughly 60 two acre lots were created around the course. This preservation of the course continues with a strong environmental approach to everything we do. Examples of our approach are the limited pesticide use on the course. We have not applied a fungicide or insecticide to fairways or roughs in over a decade. We may get some disease or insect damage, but it is a credit to our players that ultimate perfection is not placed ahead of environmental stewardship. We try to conduct all our practices with the environment in mind; whether it is the use of biological products as fungicides or the use of vegetable based hydraulic oil in our mowers.

The types of fertilizers and methods in how we apply them have changed over the years as we learn better ways to protect the environment. The landowners also work hard to protect and enhance the ecosystem in their care. There was a big project to save the pond just off the parking lot a few years back as well as an on-going process to keep the other water bodies as healthy as possible.

It is an impossible task to put a finger or label on what exactly makes Mink Meadows so special. I think it is a combination of many factors. One of the largest factors is our membership and players. Whatever draws people to Mink Meadows must be what separates them from other people because we have always had a great group that enjoys the course for what it is and rarely complains. As we have made improvements to the course, I expected the demands to rise as well. I am astounded at how people always compliment the course and will often invoke a memory of the past and say how happy they are just to be out playing. I hope whatever makes Mink Meadows unique continues to grow for another seventy five years and the magic that is as elusive as the mink that once roamed the property keeps bringing a smile and warm feeling to everyone who enjoys the property.

Matthew Crowther, CGCS  
Superintendent

## PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES

### Mink Meadows - My Kind of Place

by Chet Nowak

My first experience at Mink Meadows was during the summer of 2002. My wife Heidi and I had been to the Vineyard only once on our Honeymoon in 1979. I had no idea about Vineyard golf never mind a course built in 1936. Once at Mink Meadows I knew it was a special place just by the atmosphere and the people. Allan Menne was the pro who hired me to do the bulk of the teaching. Linden Drew was the winter manager and Matt Crowther the superintendent.

I grew up playing at a 9 hole course in Western Massachusetts with a similar atmosphere. What I mean is a casual, low key relaxed feeling that seemed to start with the members. Every time I went to "The Club" I had fun, was welcomed by staff and enjoyed the golf. This similar atmosphere exists at Mink Meadows. Guys like Rusty Hitchings, Lenny Vanderhoop, JC Murphy and many others were the first members that I met. They introduced themselves, gave me that "you are part of us" feeling and ever since, I knew this was my kind of place.

My definition of the atmosphere also is one of being welcoming and a feeling that golf is what it's all about. My other golf experiences as a Pro have been diverse. I have been at resorts, private clubs and now a semi-private facility open to the public. Those facilities were not only about the golf, not always fun and usually very complicated. Food and socializing were the focus for most other clubs. Not a bad focus, just not about the golf like at Mink Meadows.

Like all clubs, we have groups that play together at Mink Meadows: for example; the Noonies, the West Choppers, the East Choppers, locals, seasonal residents, summer residents and of course, tourists. These groups still exist and have been around a long time. Within the groups we have Corporate Executives, University Presidents, Billionaires, Millionaires, NFL Owners, School Teachers, Business Owners, and countless other occupations. Lots of dynamics coexist at Mink Meadows and have to be combined for smooth play. Each group has its own subgroup of people that play together. Ronnie Schultz back then seemed to be the leader of the Noonies. Marsha Knowles led the West Choppers, Bob and Liz Huss took care of the East Choppers. The locals had Rusty Hitchings, the summer residents were people such as Carl Barrie, Club President Chris Righter, Sheldon Hackney and many others. The tourists of course are the tourists. They come in droves and ready to play golf. All of these groups have changed over the years but still have certain times of the day and week to play.

The Executive Committee of the club was as mentioned Chris Righter, President; George Balco, Vice President; Carl Barrie, Past President; Ken Ward, Membership; Rollie Savage, Clubhouse; Gerard Petersen, Greens; and Jim Weisman, Attorney. They seemed to have things under control from the top with clear ideas about how the club should run.

When Allan Menne moved off Island, and I became the Club Professional, Chris Righter was moving out of the Presidential seat and Joe Fitzgerald was ready to take over those reins. Joe matched the club atmosphere, bringing a casual but strong leadership to all of us on the staff. One of the great things about working at "The Mink" as many members refer to it is that we have goals and plans for the season, and we are left to accomplish those plans without interference from the Executive Committee. All of the other clubs I have been affiliated with had meetings to decide if we needed to have meetings. Every step of the way was always micro-managed. The Mink is a breath of fresh air.

The simple tee time set up provides the members with a first come tee time schedule. Tourists can get a time, but only after the members have had their chance. Savvy members can work the system to their advantage by following the simple rules and times to call for the preferred time. Some are amazed that certain groups have the same times every week. Quite simply they just know when to call. With the various groups booking tee times, we have mixing and matching among the groups. At Mink Meadows this is just fine. Life goes on, the group has fun and usually these pairings will be repeated. Only one time in 9 years have I seen an individual choose not to play with a group other than his own.

Stuck in and around all these tee times is the Mink Meadows Tournament schedule. The first being The Holy Ghost Tournament or the PA Tournament. This event is a huge fundraiser for the PA Club toward college scholarships for the local High School students. Mink Meadows also hosts several other fund- raisers throughout the summer, all very well attended and done in the same casual way of Mink Meadows. The member part of the tournament schedule is the best I have ever been around. The holiday events, Memorial Day, Labor Day, July 4<sup>th</sup> are simple scramble events with either a home style cookout or a home style prepared lunch. Other events offer more difficult formats but do so in a friendly fun manner. Our food and beverage is simple and complimentary to the rest of the club. Sandwiches and soft drinks are the necessary food items with sweets available. For the first time, a simple beverage cart was added in 2009 offering similar items.

As casual as Mink Meadows is, we have hosted golf for The President of the United States and all the formalities that go with those visits. President Clinton and President Obama have been welcomed for golf in recent years.

Each summer, we are complimented by new golfers to Mink Meadows who say “how much fun they had on the course”, “how nicely they were treated” and simply that “they would be back”. As difficult as the game of golf is, Mink Meadows has positioned itself as a place for everyone to simply enjoy golf. All will be welcomed to enjoy their day of golf at The Mink.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is a milestone for Mink Meadows. From the club’s inception, it has been all about the golf. To date it is still about the golf. Going forward, I am confident that the staff and members will continue this trend well into the future.

Chet Nowak  
PGA Professional

## Up-Island Member Perspective

by Rollie Savage, House and Pro Chairman

If you consult a world almanac, you will find that here are thirteen sea islands whose land is divided by international borders. Among the better known islands shared by two nations are Hispaniola, which is home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and St. Maartin, with its French and Dutch sides.

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time on the Vineyard knows that it is divided into two nations: Up-Island and Down-Island. Although there is no formal boundary separating the two sides, Up-Island generally is considered to be comprised of Aquinnah, Chilmark, and those portions of West Tisbury whose residents grocery shop at Up-Island Cronig's rather than Down-Island Cronig's. (Up-Islanders refer to the Cronig's in Vineyard Haven as "Down-Island Cronig's"; Down-Islanders simply refer to it as "Cronig's.")

The two sides of the Vineyard have distinct topographies, dress codes, and social mores. They even have different times zones! (Chilmark midnight is 9 p.m. Edgartown Standard Time). Social intercourse between Up and Down-Islanders is minimal. Art Buchwald famously said that he never socialized Up-Island because he had a hard and fast rule against accepting invitations from hosts who had to draw a map with directions to their home. Up-Islanders have to travel Down-Island periodically to the Steamship Authority or to purchase necessities not available at the few Up-Island stores. (Trips Down-Island became even less frequent when Our Market began making liquor deliveries Up-Island.) Conversely, Down-Islanders only travel up-Island every decade or so, usually to show houseguests the cliffs at Aquinnah or a sunset from Menemsha.

Of the 311 members of Mink Meadows Golf Club, only twenty one are from Chilmark or Aquinnah. Up-Island members must make the half-hour to forty-five minute drive to the Club over the winding Vineyard roads, all the while avoiding deer, wild turkeys, and police speed traps. But while we like to think that Down-Islanders at least respect our level of commitment to the game of golf, we suspect that some Down-Islanders unfairly perceive us to be brie eating, Chardonnay sipping elitists, and we do our best to dispel that perception when paired for the first time with Down-Islanders at the Club. We try to blend, but once on the course, we are immediately exposed as foreigners.

Things generally go awry on the first fairway. The simple question "Where do you live?" leads to some surprisingly long conversations, as Up-Islanders demonstrate their complete unfamiliarity with Down-Island landmarks. Down-Islanders seem surprised when an Up-Islander doesn't know where the Vineyard Haven Yacht Club is. In fact, they would be more surprised to learn that many of us didn't even know that Vineyard Haven *had* a yacht club.

As the round progresses, myths about Up-Islanders are largely dispelled. The focus is on golf and finding other common interests. In fact, many friendships between Up-Island and Down-Island members have developed over the years. Some Up-Islanders have even persuaded Down-Island members to travel to their homes to sample a fine Chardonnay and a wheel of brie.

And now that we have GPS, no map drawing is required.

## PERSONAL REMEMBERENCES

### **Mink Meadows – An Inclusive Community**

by Gerard Peterson, Greens Chairman

Thanks to Mandred Henry's suggestion, I joined the membership of Mink Meadows. Mandred was a friend from Hartford, CT who retired to the Vineyard about the same time I did. In addition to the great golf course in excellent playing condition, I was introduced to members from far and near.

My first few months, I played with serious golfers called the "noonies". every week day we gathered (about noon) to select teams and compete for modest prizes that included "bragging rights".

In addition, Ken Walker introduced me to a cadre of friends who play on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. the diversity of this group is quite unique for most golf clubs. African American families have found the Vineyard to be a welcome vacation home for many years. Our membership is an example of the Vineyard community.

I am reminded of a quote from a famous golf pro who said "golf is a game where you will meet people from all walks of life".

How true!!!

If you visit Mink Meadows, the proof is evident.

# Winter Rules

BY WARD JUST

The day after the wretched swallows returned to Capistrano, a nor'easter tore into Martha's Vineyard with raw fifty-five-mile-an-hour winds and three inches of rain, the definitive punctuation to our three-month winter sentence of bitter cold and arctic breezes-no parole. no time off for good behavior, no golf at all. It was the worst winter anyone could recall, nuthatches belly-up in the iced-over birdbath, deer the size of racehorses foraging in the rose garden, and, cruelly enough, very little snow, so that the golf course looked playable, in the way that an inside straight looks fillable to a man ignorant of the odds. Every now and again I'd wander over to Mink Meadows Golf Club looking for a little companionship or perhaps hoping that a miraculous down-island microclimate had brought the temperature up to thirty degrees or so, only to find Lindy and the boys sitting listlessly in the clubhouse watching a French soccer match, with occasional detours to CNBC to discover just how bad the market was that day. All the gents had a golf stick in their hands. That sound in the corner was Ed bouncing a two-iron off the toe of his loafer.

This was the year 2001, a winter for television generally, especially on weekend afternoons for the Pro-Am at Pebble and the other PGA Tour events in California and Florida-the Buick, the Bob Hope, the Genuity, the Nissan, and the Honda-watching winless journeyman Joe Durant enjoy a dreamy second childhood, the one in which all putts dropped and you never met a sand trap, you didn't like, and such was the sheer pleasure of it that you could honestly reply when the reporter asked the obvious question: I'm damned if I know. With his open, honest face and cheerful manner, this Durant could be you long about June or July, when you'd busted 85 for the first time in your sorry life, par birdie par birdie par and so forth and if you hadn't taken a nine on the short par three you could have had a pretty good shot at 80 plain.

Lindy, this is just one of those days when everything clicked, you know?

Television winter meant also that instead of talking about your own duck hook you could talk about Tiger Woods's, along with some serious reflection about whether or not he'd lost it at age twenty-five. That young man's got to get used to the hard knocks in life, same as the rest of us. Television winter was one endless grievance. Drinking started earlier, too.

When my wife refuses to play with me, I like to play alone. I have a passion for winter golf, and not only because winter golf means winter rules. No such thing as a bad lie in January.

In winter, the Vineyard is a private almost reclusive place, not at all summer's merry island-surrounded-entirely-by-white-wine, when you have to call a week in advance for a tee time and the parking lot is crowded with BMWs instead of pickup trucks, and there's a lot of cashmere on the golf course. After Thanksgiving, the crowds clear out, the summer houses close up, and you can show up at the clubhouse any time you want. There's a false spring in January and another in February, winter suddenly in remission, but the distant tom-toms let you know that it's only a remission, nothing to count on. Still, we've played on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve day, the sun so bright and soft you could believe it was the middle of April.

The game, too, has a different feel I've learned some dubious tricks over the years, such as placing a half-dozen golf balls over the defroster on the car's dashboard, and then turning up the heat as far as it will go for the five-mile drive to Mink Meadows. The idea is

to keep the balls in your pocket and rotate them throughout the match, because a warm ball flies farther in cold air, honest injun. Always take an extra club length on the fairway, and someone told me always to select a ball of seventy or eighty compression, though have no idea what that means. I like the sound my metal driver makes when it strikes the ball a sort of dumb clunk as opposed to the smart click of summer. Everything about the winter game is clunkier, the ice in the sand traps, the frozen goose turds in the fairway, the carpet of oak leaves as brittle as potato chips, the pine needles on the green. When it rains, the cups fill with water and then the temperature falls, and the flagsticks are stuck fast, often for weeks. You drive off One, a thirty-mile-an-hour wind in your face, and hope to God you can make it to the dogleg at Two and the shelter of the tall pines. At Four, the wind is at your back, and a well-struck ball will fly nearly as far as it does in August-and sometimes farther because the fairway is as hard and slippery as marble.

Hardships abound. In a heavy sweater and insulated vest, you can't swing properly. Your golf shoes slip on the clotted earth. Your nose is running and your hands are numb, so numb you can't light a cigarette. But all the same, there's a fine triumph-over-adversity spirit to the winter game. What it lacks in elegance and finesse it gains in earthiness and clumsiness, an uneven but headlong narrative. Winter golf is Dreiser to summer's Fitzgerald.

For years I have clung to the convenient theory that writers generally do not make good golfers. Writing depends on rewriting, and there's no such opportunity in golf. Play it as it lays and no mulligans, not even stately, plump ones. Agassi can easily recover from a love-game, but even Woods would be hard-pressed to come back from a nine on the short par three. When you write yourself into a hole you take the passage out of the hole and begin again. Fly the ball into the water, you drop another ball, but you take a penalty stroke. At one time I believed that golf, specifically winter golf, was good for a writer's work. This thought was inspired by the late John Hersey, a Vineyard resident for many years and a disciplined craftsman.

John hated golf- I think for mainly political reasons. I had the feeling he believed the PGA Tour was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Republican National Committee. Nixon was a golfer. The author of Hiroshima was a fisherman, but not what you would call a sport fisherman. John fished for dinner. He drove his boat to that part of Vineyard Sound called Middle Ground and trolled until he had a bluefish. Then he went home and cooked it. He said that trolling on Middle Ground was useful for "back-of-the-head" work, which I took to mean thinking about writing instead of writing. Thinking about the off-key chapter eight or the always vexing page fifty-four. Thinking about the misconceived character or incoherent description. Trolling for bluefish, alone in his boat, John could ponder his work uninterrupted. The tug on the end of the line signaled dinner. A fugue state, in other words, which I thought would have application to golf, but not golf in a foursome or golf with your wife on a lovely summer's day, temperature seventy-five, no wind. In a foursome, you have to pay attention to the lie and the score, and the lovely summer's day simply offers more temptation than you could bear: front-of-the-head trumps back-of-the-head. Hersey's work was best done golfing alone in January, no one in front and no one behind, and while you're improving your lie in the fairway on Three you could be worrying also about how to improve pesky page fifty-four. Lining up (the long putt on Eighteen, you could be thinking about how you're going to bring your nuvvel home-and what a surprise when the putt slides fifteen feet beyond the cup, ruining an otherwise award-winning round. And suddenly the book is forgotten in the anguish of a criminally stupid putt. I am prepared to accept F. Scott Fitzgerald's notion that a first-rate intelligence can hold two ideas in the mind at the same time. But I am equally certain that golf is not one of them.

pp 48-49 THE ULTIMATE GOLF BOOK

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## Caddying at Mink Meadows

by Howard Andrews

We just had to do something when we weren't caddying. We were just raising hell. That was exciting. I went from there [Editor's Note: there being the former Vineyard Haven Golf Course located at the Tashmoo Overlook] to Bob Bigelow's when they started Mink Meadows. That first year we used to get a quarter an hour for pulling weeds out of the greens. And that was a hell of a long walk from up where we lived on the corner of Skiff Avenue, all the way to Mink Meadows.

I was Katharine Cornell's caddy. So she always let me know what day she was going to be there. She and Gert Macy, they'd come and I was always there when she told me she'd be there. She always had little dachshunds. She let them run all around the green. So one day she was putting, and when she putted, the dog walked right in front of her ball. Of course, a dachshund covers a lot of ground. So I'm holding the pin, where the hole is, I'm holding the pin in one hand, and I reached out with my left foot, lifted the dog up, and the ball went right in the hole. She thought that was one of the most wonderful things that ever happened to her. I got the dog out of the way.

When I was in the service – I've still got the ticket stubs right in my desk - the Erlanger Theater in Chicago, I'd heard she had a play going there, so I called her and got a hold of her and she got two tickets for me for this one particular performance. She said, "After it's all over, I want you to come up to my dressing room." So after the play was over - I took a woman Marine with me. She thought she'd died and gone to heaven, you know. "We're going to meet Miss Cornell!" "Yeah, we're going to meet her." So we went out back and we exchanged pleasantries and she was a good friend of mine. I got a picture in here, "To my buddy, Billy." She always called me Billy, which is actually my right name. I was always very friendly with her.

Interviewed 1999

(Excerpt from Howard Andrews as quoted in More Vineyard Voices Words, Faces and Voices of Island People, Interviews and Portraits by Linsey Lee – Martha's Vineyard Museum, page 98)

## **APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF MINK MEADOWS GOLF CLUB**

### **1936**

- Course constructed

### **1937**

- Clubhouse constructed

### **1940's**

- Course closed in 1942 because of WWII, reopened in 1946

### **1950's**

- Upon Robert L. Bigelow's death, Richard Mansfield hired as club manager

### **1960's**

- Mink Meadows Association formed
- 7th hole changed from par four dog leg left to a par three for creation of Bigelow Road
- Grounds maintenance operations moved to current location

### **1970's**

- Cart barn constructed

### **1980's**

- Greens irrigation modernized

### **1990's**

- Major irrigation system upgrade – fully automated system as well as entirely new pumping system and well
- Bunkers re-done on all holes
- Full master plan of renovations under architect Ron Prichard begun. Entire green complexes redone, tees added, current practice green added, etc.
- Major renovations to Turf Maintenance Facility undertaken; Chemical storage building added, office moved upstairs
- Bag storage added to cart barn

### **2000's**

- Master Plan of renovations continued, new lesson tee and bunker constructed
- Irrigation system upgraded: computerized central and wireless system, Town Water booster pump installed, added rough irrigation to holes 5, 6 and 7
- New Clubhouse constructed

Thank you to the many, many contributors who were very willing to reminisce, to Cynthia Meisner of the Vineyard Gazette (who took the time to collate clippings way back to the beginning), and for the support, especially, of Carl Barrie, Joe and Sally Fitzgerald, Midge Knipmeyer and Don Groover at the Tisbury Printer.

– Nancy Morris, *Editor*.

