

## 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.)