

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 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.

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, 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 added as new additions.

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 13ftx56ft 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.

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 season 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 month 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 it 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 2011, the Club celebrated its 75th anniversary at an August cocktail party and dinner under a large tent erected off the 9th green. It represented a significant milestone for a club that evolved from modest beginnings in 1936. In recent years, the Club has also increased its social events for members, including Opening and Closing catered cocktail parties, Nine and Dine early evening golf events, and enhanced Men's and Women's Member Guest golf tournaments.

The Club also increased its web-based capabilities, including an enhanced web site which includes a live virtual tour of the course to inform prospective members. In addition, members and the public can make tee times through an automated web-based system.

The Club also continued to host the President of the United States, with President Obama playing the course in 7 of the summers of his presidency.

Changes in our staff has included welcoming back Allan Menne as our PGA Pro when our previous Pro Chet Nowak left the Club for other opportunities. We also had Will Warner, a long-term Turf Staff member, move into the Superintendent position when Matt Crowder moved to a course on the Cape. We also continue to enjoy the benefit having our staff positions held by long-term employees in our Pro Shop and Turf organizations.

A major improvement we've just made was to re-do our irrigation system, parts of the old system dating back to 1938. The Club engaged the Golf Irrigation Systems company to complete the work. Phase 1 was completed in the fall of 2020, and Phase 2 was completed by June of 2021. The system is state-of-the-art, including the ability to communicate through computer systems to individually irrigate down to a specified sprinkler head through remote control. In addition, in 2020 we replaced our older well with two more shallow wells to mitigate the impact of salt intrusion which forced us to use town water in extended dry conditions. Finally, we installed a new control system linking the new wells to the new irrigation system. The new irrigation system, wells, and control system represented a capital improvement in the Club facilities of over \$1.1 million.

With the improvements in our course and the added social events, interest in the Club has increased to the level we now have over 300 regular members. Because of this increase, the Club has just instated a Waiting List to manage the membership level to ensure our members can have easy access to tee times, especially in the busy summer season.

Mink Meadows 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.