

Country Club Celebrates 100 Years in Tualatin

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In 1912 a group of gentlemen from the Portland Concordia Club first leased and then purchased around 100 acres of beautiful rolling countryside along the banks of the Tualatin River from the Sweek family. They established the Tualatin Country Club for the exclusive use of Portland's Jewish community, whose members were not allowed to play golf on other links.

The first nine holes were laid out by Chandler Egan, U.S. Amateur Champion. George Junor, of the famous Junor golfing family, supervised the first construction and the groundskeeping. It was not long before Tualatin was famous for its beautiful and challenging course, which had been planted with Oregon Bent seed.

Golfers came to "the city of two railroads," as Tualatin was known, on the Oregon Electric Green train and got off at Golf Station. Others rode the Southern Pacific line. And of course, many folks drove their cars out to play golf. On Sundays my classmate Carl Harr would wait for Nicholas Ungar to pull into his driveway in his Lincoln town car. He wanted Carl to caddy for him.

Much more could be written about the history of the Tualatin County club, but as history is best told through the lives of the people, I want to share the stories of some of the local folks whose lives were affected by the golf club. Local farmers mowed the fairway grass, hauling the loose hay home to be stored in barns for livestock. And in early times the greens were hand mowed with push mowers. During the great depression, many men, including my dad, got jobs caring for the course.

During the first world war, according to my dad, who often passed the golf course on his way to visit his Jurgens relatives, the government ordered that the greens be plowed up so beans could be grown, as there was a food shortage. He also said that before the golf course, the Sweek

family had a peach orchard on the land.

Henrietta "Rita" Barngrover Conover grew up in a house just next to the east end of the golf links, and as a child saw many people playing golf. Her brother Bill McLaughlin caddied, and also played golf. The kids that caddied got to play golf at the club, which otherwise was for the exclusive use of members.

Bill brought home some discarded golf clubs and gave them to Rita. As a child of six, Rita would go out to the greens and play with her used clubs. She had a driver, a 9 iron and a putter. Bill also picked up lost balls which he brought home for his little sister. Rita would follow groups of players, and through the years became quite a proficient golfer.

Cecil Ladd, who lived nearby and was the pro, and his wife Helen would give Rita tips on how to play. Cecil said that if she had kept at it she could

have been a pro also. The only time she got in trouble was when she played on Thursdays. Thursdays were men's day. A highlight of Rita's life was when she heard the boxer Joe Louis was going to be golfing at the course. She waited till she saw him, then told him, "Oh, I've been waiting all day to see you. I just love you." "Well, I love you too," said Joe, who gave her a little hug.

Many local kids, mostly boys, got jobs as caddies, and were paid 25 cents a bag. But some girls got to caddy also, according to Nora Pickens, who was so small it took her and another girl to carry one bag together.

One of the most famous caddies was Nellie Wesch, who grew up close to the golf course. Nellie worked at the Southern Pacific depot and would also carry bags to earn extra money. Julius Meier passed around the hat when he heard that Nellie's family could not afford to send her to college. He collected

\$500 from members which saw Nellie through Oregon Agriculture College where she graduated with a degree in business. She went on to be a famous typing, shorthand and bookkeeping teacher at Tigard High School, using her married name, Elwert.

Walter John Eames, whose father Walt was greenskeeper, and who lived with his family in the old Southern Pacific Railway depot that was moved close to the greens, said he used to go out and pick the tiny white daisies that popped up through the grass, because the golfers might mistake them for golf balls.

In the clubhouse, local women got jobs cooking and serving food. Three generations of Barngrover women worked in the clubhouse, cooking and serving. Her mother, Teresa, Rita and her sister Dolores, and Dolores' daughter Lorie.

Then there was Emma Ladd, my great aunt, and her deaf sister in law Myrtle, who were often seen with their sticks poking around along the railroad tracks looking for golf balls, which they sold back to the players.

During the winter of 1948, there was a heavy snowfall, and all the neighborhood kids got together and went sledding on any hills they could find. We had great fun sliding down the hill behind the clubhouse. Walt Eames had a bonfire burning in an old metal barrel, and someone from the clubhouse brought us out colored marshmallows, which we roasted on little branches and devoured, blackened edges and all.

And now, with a new modern clubhouse, the site is open to all who want to play golf, enjoy meals or celebrate grand



Fore! Young Nellie Wesch practices her swing in front of her house. Train depot in the background.



Henrietta "Rita" Barngrover

occasions. It has been a good one hundred years for the community.

**TUALATIN
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Tualatin Life Publisher Receives Award

At its annual meeting in November, The Tualatin Historical Society 2013 presented the 2012 Lafky-Martinazzi award to Jonathan Crane, for his outstanding newspaper, Tualatin Life, which celebrates all the good things in Tualatin.



Tualatin Country Club, ca 1914, was built in the style of a hunting lodge.



Walter John Eames with his father Walt Eames. Walt was head groundskeeper at the golf course, and Walter John picked the daisies off the greens so golfers would not think they were golf balls.