

A Toast to the Gap on Her 50th Birthday

Hello again Gappers and Gap alumni. This is both a reunion and a birthday party. The reunion is our third since the great Exodus and Diaspora of 2007 and our first here on home sod—or “Ground Zero” as some detractors would say. The birthday party, slightly premature, celebrates the Gap’s Golden Anniversary—50 years young. According to public records, this William Bell Jr- designed course was opened to the public in September, 1960. Latipac-Perini, the developer primarily responsible for the early stages of the Peacock Gap residential community, also completed the course and the clubhouse--which opened the following year.

That was several owners ago: four owners and three bankruptcies, to be precise. It’s been a bumpy 50 years, but through it all, through this succession of owners and operators, good times and bad, the *essence* of a close-knit, community-oriented golf club has managed to survive--but barely. And, well, here we are. Welcome back, neighbors. Howdy, brothers and sisters.

Regardless of your present club affiliation, I hope you’ll join us in wishing the Old Bird a happy birthday, a safe recovery, and many, many happy returns of the day. Gentlemen and Ladies, a toast to The Gap!



While Captain Jerry Lindquist, Co-captain Steve Ferguson, and Tournament Director Adam Eisner are figuring out who won what, we’d like to award a few prizes of our own—Intangible prizes, unfortunately, but heartfelt.

First prize for longest distance traveled to be with us today goes to two of our new lifetime members, Don and Dorothy Chan. Dr. and Mrs. Chan live in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Don serves as Professor Emeritus of the University of Virginia School of Medicine and Dorothy teaches and exhibits Chinese brush painting. Anticipating retirement, they recently bought a membership in the Gap and are looking for a home in the area so they can be near their two daughters and their families. Great couple. Ardent golfers. We look forward to seeing a lot more of the Chans over the next several years.

And now for our “Most Experienced Player” award. Frank Manko was an old timer at the Gap when I joined the Club 34 years ago. He was our Men’s Section tournament director for, I think, 15 years—toughest job in the club that doesn’t pay a salary—and a lot harder than some that do. Frank may not have had the most gorgeous golf swing in the world, but I’ll bet there isn’t a Gapper, living or dead, who has had his name engraved *more* times on *more* golf trophies than Frank. He even carried a duffer named Braznell on his back through five victories in Peacock Gap’s annual two-man team match play tournament. Some guy! Some back! The only golfer I can think of who has taken his measure consistently over the years is his loving wife and companion for the past half century, Marge Manko. Here’s to our oldest and dearest active members, the Mankos.

We were to have two special guests today: Pamella Cavanna and her son Conroy. Pamella couldn’t make it, but we’re very pleased to have Conroy with us. This lad was practically raised on our golf course. Got his early training from one of the finest gentlemen and toughest competitors’ who ever played the game-- his dad, Roger Cavanna. Now Conroy has come home, a new or returning member of the Club, and he tells me his greatest pleasure these days is coaching and playing with his own two young sons, aged 6 and 4. Wonderful to see you, Conroy!

Peacock Gap regulars will especially remember his mother, Pamella, for the elegant dinner dances she and Roger used to put on for the membership. Everything deluxe, first cabin: elegant wine tastings, delicious hors d’oeuvres, five course gourmet dinners, live music by our dear, departed Omar Clay and his band, gorgeous table arrangements and decorations, fine Persian rugs. Eat your hearts out Gappers; those times may be gone forever.

But don’t be too sure of that. Though Roger’s gone, Pamella’s back, and she’s brought the old Cavanna magic with her. The Pearl Mesta of Peacock Gap has returned. Welcome home, Pamella.

Which brings us back to a question we’ve touched on at each of our previous reunions: *What exactly is the difference between a golf course and a golf club?* In short, what makes Peacock Gap special?

A golf club, I suggest, is much, much more than a well tended course and a fancy clubhouse with a spa and a swimming pool and a \$30,000 initiation fee. A golf club is, first and foremost, a social organism—a fellowship of good people who happen to love golf. For a while it looked like the owners of this club forgot that simple truth. But I think we’ve all seen the terrible error of our ways. And I think that bodes well for the future of this grand Old Bird.

Thank you so much for joining us.

Bill Braznell

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