

# Peacock Gap Management Update: July 2011

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So much water has flowed under the proverbial bridge since the Syufys acquired dear old, stone-broke Peacock Gap Golf & Country Club, it seems incredible—miraculous—that only eight months have elapsed since the meeting at which Ray Syufy and Andrew McCullough told us their company’s plan to revive the Club—and just six months since the Syufy organization formally gained control through bankruptcy court-supervised settlements with the former owners’ creditors.

So far this year our new owners have *merely* (?) refinished the Maintenance Department’s equipment shed, (2) laid utility pipes and completed the interior and exterior design for the new Range Building pro shop and café, (3 ) reviewed and updated previously approved plans for the renovation of the main clubhouse, (4) rebuilt “Five of Forrest’s Finest” (weird greens, that is), (5) eliminated or reconfigured a few nasty fairway and greenside bunkers, and (6) mowed down several acres of chest high “native grass” (discovering, in the process, 12,050 golf balls, three abandoned golf carts, two complete sets of golf clubs—some with bent shafts or missing heads, and a platoon of cub scouts that had gotten lost in the tall stuff while hunting for arrowheads in the old Indian burial mound).

But, as they say on those endless daytime TV commercials, “That’s not all!”: Within the past couple of months the Club has (7) reinstated breakfast and lunch service in the downstairs grill--this under the expert direction of Chef Mario Gonzales (try the French Onion Soup Gratinee—merveilleux!), (8) restructured weekday green fees, knocking as much as 30 percent off prime time rates--and instituting a virtual stampede among unattached weekday players, (9) hired our new General Manager, Kelly Joyce-Percich, and, as we go to press, (10) welcomed our new head pro, Matt Dito (pronounced “Deeto”).

To listen to Andrew McCullough, which I did for about an hour and a half recently, the Syufys are just getting warmed up. Four pending projects, each of which could and probably will affect all of us Gappers for years to come are, or soon will be, on the fire:

**Complete the new range pro shop and café:** With all but one minor permit problem with the City of San Rafael resolved, management expects to begin construction on our new multipurpose range building any day now and hopes to have it completed by late fall. Aside from serving as the Club’s permanent pro shop, it will feature a café and bar providing indoor and patio seating for over 100 guests. We’re betting that the good food, attractive décor, light and airy ambiance, and wide selection of driving range golf swings to critique while sipping one’s favorite après golf refreshment will make this a regular stop for players, range addicts, and general public. Salud—and fore!

**Renovate the main club house:** Peacock Gap’s historically lucrative catering business, and to a lesser extent, its ability to attract and retain club members, will require a hefty investment in restoring its long neglected ‘upstairs’ kitchens, banquet halls, public dining facilities, lounges, locker rooms, and meeting places. Management expects to complete plans, secure bids, and begin construction some time before the end of 2011. Since the contractor will be working

from plans submitted by the Club's former owner and long since approved by the San Rafael Planning Commission, management anticipates there will be few if any permitting delays.

Mr. McCullough estimates the renovations it will take about 18 months from start to finish. Please mark your calendars and make your wedding and bar mitzvah arrangements accordingly.

In a follow-up letter I asked about the Club's **marketing plans and membership programs for 2012 and beyond**. Mr. McCullough responded: "By October we'll be in a better position to lay out the details of our 2012 membership program. In the meantime, we're open to thoughts and suggestions from everyone, with the understanding that the new program will likely be different from the program of the past. Remember that the existing program was designed by the prior owners after their private membership strategy failed. (We have honored those memberships even though we have received none of the monies that were paid for them!) We intend to devise a program that will better match everyone's expectations in light of the significant investment we are making in the facilities."

Mr. McCullough concluded, "Our broader objective is to **restore the strong sense of community that epitomized Peacock Gap in earlier times**, when most of the Club's members were also Peacock Gap residents. Of course, there are plenty of ways to foster a sense of community besides living in the same neighborhood. We can build affinity through membership activities, public gatherings, neighborhood Friday night specials at the Café, and the like."

At which point I interjected, "Obviously, you'll need a lot of help achieving that objective—the enthusiastic support of members, homeowners, employees and public. I think you could stand to improve your communications with all these constituents. Standard PR practices aren't enough. Keeping people informed isn't enough. You have to be active, interested listeners as well."

McCullough nodded. "I agree; in fact, that's what we were talking about. We especially want to hear from our members. Tell us how you feel about the Club's services, fees, facilities. Help us learn what it takes to build, not just "steady business", but lifelong relationships with you and your friends and neighbors."

Post Script: You've probably noticed that the goose population around the sixth and seventeenth water holes has been unusually dense this spring and summer. That's partly explained by the absence of Hannah, our Goose Dog, who passed on a few weeks back. Worn out, half blind, and infirm of hip and limb, the old girl hung in there till the end, but was no longer a match for the big birds. Now she's chasing angels, and no doubt having the time of her life. John Rader asked me to thank the many members and friends who have been asking after her.

*Longtime Gapper Bill Braznell wrote this report, based on interviews and correspondence with Andrew McCullough, EVP of Syufy Enterprises. Quotations are "approximate." Comments not enclosed in quotation marks are the writer's, for which he is solely responsible.*