

Peacock Gap Golf & Country Club: A Work in Progress

February 2011

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PEACOCK GAP GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB: 333 Biscayne Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901

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Site Description: Located just off Pt. San Pedro Road, about 5 1/2 miles east of downtown San Rafael, at Point San Pedro, Peacock Gap is a links-type course built on 136 acres of pasture and drained wetlands and rimmed by oak and laurel- studded hills. The fairways are bordered by residential properties, a neighborhood park, a salt-water lagoon, and numerous small creeks and drainage canals. Water hazards, replete with all manner of wading and paddling bird life, come into play on 15 of its 18 holes. The semi-private course is also remarkable for its wickedly undulating greens and challenging greenside bunkers.

Course data:		Men	Women
Championship tees	par 71, 6261 yards	Rating/Slope 70.6/127	
Competitive tees	par 71, 6101 yards	69.9/125	
Challenge tees	par 71, 5792 yards	68.3/123	73.4/130
Club tees	par 71, 5460 yards	66.8/119	71.6/125
Caddy tees	par 71, 4828 yards	68.0/115	

Course design and construction:

Original design, 1959, by William F. Bell, ASGCA

Terry Van Gorder, Superintendent

Restoration, 2007, by Forrest Richardson , ASGCA

John Rader, Course Superintendent

Course record: 63, set by former PGA tour pro Ray Floyd in 1965. At the time the course had only one set of men's tees. Although the posted length, 6100 yards, was virtually identical to Peacock Gap's current Competitive (three-stone) layout, the old course played considerably easier—or so say those of us who have (a) played both courses, and (b) short memories.

TIME LINE:

1869: New Englander John McNear and his brother George acquire original Spanish land grant and contiguous acreage covering approximately five linear miles of shoreline stretching from modern Glenwood development through what is now China Camp State Park—a 3000-acre tract that today includes China Camp, McNear's Beach, a brick yard and quarry, the Peacock Gap golf course, and the Peacock Gap residential community.

1955/1959: In 1955 the McNears sell all their Point San Pedro properties except for the quarry, brick yard, and beach. The new owner, John Stegge, carves out a 100-acre parcel for his proposed Glenwood subdivision and sells the remaining 2100 acres to Hawaiian real estate developer, Chinn Ho. Shortly thereafter, Chinn Ho's LATIPAC Corporation and Lou Perini's Perini Land and Investment Company form a partnership to develop a luxurious recreational/ residential/resort complex on the property, which they decide to call MARIN BAY. A master plan for the centerpiece of the project, a subdivision of several hundred homes and condo units clustered around a William Bell-designed golf course is approved by the San Rafael City Counsel in late 1959. Edwin C. Lee, the project's enterprising Resident Manager, names the subdivision "Peacock Gap" after former McNear Ranch dairyman-tenant, Tom Peacock.

1960/1961: Ground breaking for Peacock Gap Golf & Country Club begins in the spring of 1960. Course opens in September. In The Gap's first 12 months of operation Head Pro Harry Lawrence hosts tournaments sponsored by Standard Oil of California, IBM, Western Pacific, the San Francisco Athletic Association and several charitable and community organizations. Residential plots go on sale in mid-1961. Tract development, landscaping, and lot sales proceed apace, with seven completely furnished and decorated model homes open for public viewing October 15, 1961. Club's 26,000 square foot clubhouse, restaurant, and catering facility is completed in late 1961.

1963: LATIPAC/Perini drops its grandiose plan for Marin Bay. San Francisco developer Jerome Draper buys or acquires options on the 2100 acre property, including golf course, club house, and ready-to-build lots.

1965 : High water mark for Draper's Peacock Gap development—an area then comprising 290 homes , 50 condo units, and the golf club. In that year, City of San Rafael puts a moratorium on new housing permits pending financing and construction of sewage treatment and deepwater discharge system.

1966/1971: By 1971 Draper's organization has declared bankruptcy. Golf course and unsold homes are reacquired by Chinn Ho.

1973: Chinn Ho sells course and clubhouse to Nitto America Corporation, a Japanese-owned golf course development and management company headquartered in Los Angeles. Two jewels of original MARIN BAY, McNear Beach and China Camp, deeded to county and state, reportedly in remission of delinquent taxes.

1973/1987: Peacock Gap evolves from semi-private country club and neighborhood watering hole into a professionally managed golf and catering operation with one of the largest banquet facilities in Marin County.

1987: Clubhouse renovated. Entire upper floor, including ballroom and former members' grill, transformed into dedicated catering center. Downstairs remodeled, with refurbished locker rooms and an expanded bar and grill for members and public.

1988/1997: Steady decline in club membership; steady increase in deferred clubhouse and course maintenance. Number and quality of rounds played annually restricted by deteriorating irrigation system and meager water allotments during dry summer months, poor drainage during rainy season.

1997/2004: Nitto America hires West Coast course design firm Robert Muir Graves to turn Peacock Gap into a more challenging year-around golf course. In July 1997 master plan calling for extensive earth moving, dredging of water ways, and fairway and green re-contouring sails through city and community review process, only to be put on hold by cash-strapped Nitto parent organization. "Indefinite delay" stretches into months, then years. Membership continues to languish amid rumors of Club's impending sale or bankruptcy.

2005/2007: Club is acquired in late 2005 by Arizona resort owner Kabuto Arizona Properties for \$10 million, mostly borrowed. Kabuto operating subsidiary, Golf Solutions of California, assumes management of property. In early 2006 Kabuto/Golf Solutions president George Lee announces plans for three-phase redevelopment program covering: (I) construction of new practice range and "learning center;" (II) extensive course restoration and redesign, and (III) construction of driving range annex, clubhouse renovation, and construction of an adjoining resort-style spa, health club, and swimming pool. Phase I practice range completed in late 2006, necessitating rerouting of holes No. 2 and 9. To expedite Phase II development (all new irrigation and drainage system, new concrete cart paths, new tees, rerouting of holes 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and extensive modifications to all 18 greenside complexes) management elects to shut down course until work is completed and all 18 holes are playable. Membership privileges are temporarily transferred to Kabuto-owned Adobe Creek Golf Course in Petaluma.

2007: Entire course, with exception of new practice and instruction area, closes in April, reopens in late October, as promised. Plans and permits for the Phase III clubhouse renovation and construction of the proposed spa/health club/swimming pool are "proceeding", "pending" — "moving right along."

On November 10, a Saturday evening about a month after the renovated Peacock Gap course reopened for play, management meets with club members to reveal its proposed membership package for 2008: An up-front \$20,000 "initiation" fee, payable immediately, plus monthly dues ranging from \$250 to \$550. A stunned audience votes with its feet. Ultimately, only two of the Club's 200-odd members elect to rejoin Peacock Gap in 2008. The rest, representing thousands of years of patronage and hundreds of thousands of rounds played, decamp to San Geronimo, Indian Valley, Oakmont, Stone Tree, Richmond and other Bay Area golf clubs.

2009: In January, faced with continually declining revenue and dried up financing for the proposed multi-million dollar clubhouse additions and renovations, Peacock Gap files for protection under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy laws. Shortly thereafter a court-appointed group of "debtors in possession" (DIP) announces plans to restructure the Club's debts, recapture lost members, increase public play, and restore profitability. Replacement of the disastrous initiation fee with relatively modest annual membership dues attracts 50 to 60 new and returning members. Otherwise, the DIP team falls far short of its announced objectives.

2010: In November 2010, San Rafael-based Syufy Enterprises (formerly Century Theatres, Inc.) pays off the Club's outstanding debt to its largest secured lender, Nara Bank, Los Angeles, and submits a plan of

reorganization to the Federal Bankruptcy Court in San Francisco under which a Syufy operating subsidiary will assume full control of and financial responsibility for PGG&CC. Urgent priorities, according to Syufy's president, Raymond Syufy, include completing construction of the new range pro shop and interim clubhouse and rebuilding several greens. Pending the bankruptcy court's approval of the reorganization plan, Syufy advances Peacock Gap a \$150,000 bridge loan and court appoints Syufy nominee interim club manager. It appears that 50-year-old Peacock Gap is soon to have a new owner.

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Clearly our timeline is a work in progress. The legend of Marin Bay continues. Stay tuned.

Timeline and fact sheet researched and edited by longtime Peacock Gap member, historian, and newsletter writer, William Braznell, w.braznell@yahoo.com (415) 924-2115. Opinions expressed are the writer's and not necessarily those of Syufy Enterprises or Peacock Gap Golf & Country Club.

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