

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY

*The History of
an Orange County Treasure*

LARRY STRAWTHER



Front of Book stuff

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INTRODUCTION

This was a fun, but tough, book to write. The fun came from the many stories told (not to mention the drinks over which they were told) by so many nice people. What was tough is that I couldn't use many of those stories in mixed company (and thus this book). Plus, stories and memories told by one party who was there often conflicted with the stories and memories told by another party who was also there. But that's history for you. It's so often subjective.

I limited the “dirt and gossip”—using just enough to hopefully give a flavor of the colorful characters that have been a large part of Old Ranch. I also tried to tell enough to set the record straight on the club's beginnings and the Bixby sell-off/and attempted member buy-out. Some will no doubt take issue with my interpretation but I suppose this will just have to be one of those “first world problems.”

I tried to verify all my conclusions via multiple sources – members, newspapers, documents, and when I had them, photos. I spoke with over 100 members and former members, and dozens of former staff members, golf pros, tennis pros and general managers. Unfortunately, during the renovations, the changes in owners and the dissolution of the Bixby Ranch Company, many of the early documents and photos regarding Old Ranch were lost, misplaced or borrowed and forgotten. So there are some rare occasions when I used an unverified story -- usually if it was funny.

There are so many people to thank for helping me with this book. The Old Ranch staff—especially Frank Herrera and Renee Ord but also Felica Fragale and the legendary Shirley and Hank Barto, have been great. Thanks to Bob Silver and Helen Wilson for all the information and old newsletters they provided and to Dave Scott for the great information and all the photos of the Old Course. And of course thanks to my wife Nancy for once again doing the drudgework of proofreading, especially as my hunt and peck typing seems to get worse each year.

But most of all I want to thank Arnie Wilkins for bringing me into the project and greasing the wheels by introducing me to so many members. It was a lot more work than I think either of us envisioned, but I assure you, the pleasure was all mine.

A history is always a work in progress. If you have corrections, or information to add to the record, feel free to contact me at larrystrawther@gmail.com.

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Chapter One

THE BEGINNINGS

In 1965, the Seal Beach celebrated its 50th anniversary and history as an amusement resort, a small seaside haven for Prohibition-era rumrunners and gamblers, and more recently, as a middle-class home for suburbanites and world-class surfers.

But in the 1960s the big changes in town were happening to the north of town. Parts of the Hellman Ranch became Leisure World, the world's first "complete senior community," and across Seal Beach Boulevard, North American Aviation was assembling the second stage of the Saturn II rocket that would take America to the moon.

Annexations in 1964 and 1966 added some unincorporated lands of the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Company to the city's acreage: College Park West, College Park East, and in a controversial move, the Rossmoor Shopping Center.

The last celebration of the newly annexed property occurred on March 1, 1967, when 1,100 people attended the grand opening of the Bixby Ranch Company's latest venture, the Old Ranch Country Club.

An Open House began at 4pm. The club's first impressions were provided by the club's most recent hires. At the front Shirley Barto answered phones and greeted arrivals. Her husband Hank played the piano. Both would still be with the club fifty years later.

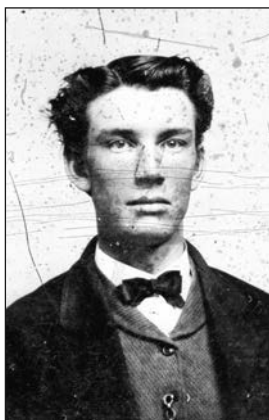
"For the first half hour or so it was fine," said Hank. "But then people kept arriving, the place filled up and you couldn't hear anything." Shirley described the opening as just one constant loud din. "Nobody could hear the music. The staff could barely hear each other."

Attendees enjoyed Chef Heinz Reuter's buffet of hors d'oeuvres, and tours of the new facilities. After being greeted at the front by Board members, guests then continued inside over the entryway's muted gold Spanish tile. All got to check out

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



The Bixby legacy in California begins with Lewellyn Bixby (top left). With cousins Benjamin and Thomas Flint, Lewellyn came to California in the Gold Rush and through mining, merchandising, sheep ranching and investments in stage coaches and sugar beet factories, established the Bixby fortune. Lewellyn got younger brother Jotham (top right) established at the Rancho Los Cerritos then in 1881 the pair helped cousin John W. Bixby (bottom right) buy the the 26,000 acre Rancho Los Alamitos. The area where Old Ranch is now located was passed down to John's son, Fred who formed the Bixby Ranch Company.



the facilities, including the pro shop. Women enjoyed the opportunity for what was described as their only chance to set foot in the Men's Card Room.

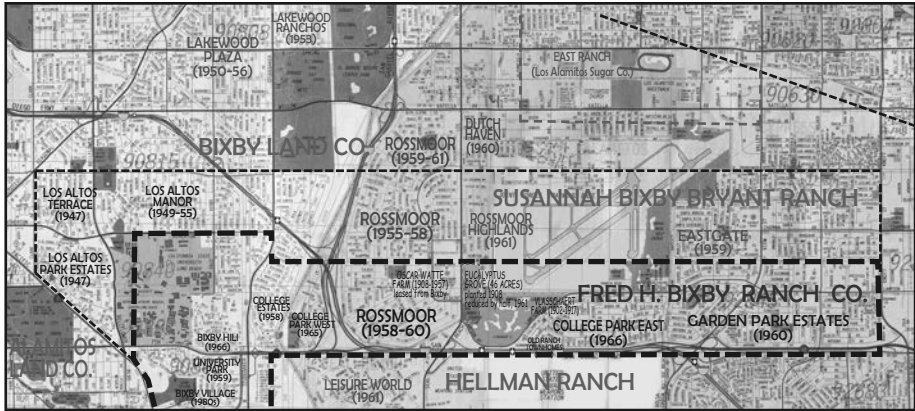
Judge Norm Gordon, Old Ranch's only full-time golfing member throughout its first fifty years, says he thinks the night was a lot of fun. "I drank too much to remember specifically."

Not to worry. Newspaper articles confirmed Gordon's assessment. Also in agreement was 37-year old Preston Bixby Hotchkis, the club's guiding force and leader of one of California's most influential families, the Bixbys.

The Bixby legacy traces back to Maine. Amasa Bixby had over 100 grandchildren and great grandchildren through his Bixby, Weston and Flint lines. The 1849 California Gold Rush prompted many of those grandchildren to seek their fortune out west.

Three of those grandchildren soon discovered the real money was in feeding and supplying the miners. In 1852, Lewellyn Bixby and cousins Benjamin and Thomas

THE BEGINNINGS



This overlay of a modern map shows the subdivision of the Rancho Los Alamitos and the subsequent sub-division of the Bixby Ranch Property. After John W. Bixby's death the Rancho was subdivided, leaving the middle section, a strip seven miles wide and a mile and half wide, with the J.W. Bixby heirs, Fred H. and his younger sister Susannah. In the early 1900s Fred and Susannah divided their property in half with the dividing line roughly following Main Way/Rossmoor Center Drive and continuing East on what was then known as Bixby Road. This left the part with Old Ranch with Fred and his new company, the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Company.

Flint united to purchase and bring to California sheep and cattle. They returned east and after forming Flint, Bixby & Co., they purchased 2,400 sheep in Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. After the winter snow melted, they set out for California. Lewellyn noted the slow pace of the sheep made it more comfortable to walk than ride their horses. They paralleled the Oregon and Mormon Trails (sometimes carrying sheep on their backs to cross rivers). In Utah, to avoid the heavy winter snows of the Sierras, they veered south and roughly followed today's Interstate 15 into California. They wintered near Pasadena then ambled north to establish a ranch near present-day Hollister. All told it was a 2,000 mile trek.

Flint, Bixby & Co. thrived — in mutton and wool. The Civil War embargo on Southern cotton made Bixby wool very profitable. The company used its profits to purchase more land around San Luis Obispo and then in Southern California, where a terrible drought from 1862 to 1864 had broken many previous landowners.

By the mid 1870s Flint Bixby & Co. was the largest non-railroad landowner in California. Their Southern California acreage soon included Rancho Los Cerritos, most of Rancho Palos Verdes, land around La Habra and Orange, and three ranches that combined now make up the Irvine Ranch holdings.

A cousin, John W. Bixby, came west in 1870 to work the Cerritos, now part-owned by Lewellyn's younger brother, Jotham. John W. soon married another Maine emigr , Susan Hathaway, whose older sisters were married to Lewellyn and Jotham.

In 1878, John W. and Susan Bixby, began leasing part of Rancho Los Alamitos. When the 26,000 acre property came up for sale in 1881, John enlisted his Cerritos cousins (Lewellyn and Jotham) and banker I.W. Hellman (of Wells Fargo Bank fame), to purchase the site. John would manage it and each party held a one-third interest.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Oscar Watte first leased the Bixby land that is now Southern Rossmoor around 1905. His ranch house (above) was located by the current Sprouts in the Shops at Rossmoor. He also farmed what is now the Old Ranch Country Club from the 1930s to the 1960s. Watte was a Belgian who emigrated here to grow sugar beets. In 1908 Fred H. Bixby hired Watte to plant 46 acres of Australian eucalyptus trees for local tenants to use as firewood. "The old Bixby Gum Grove" became a local landmark. Fred Bixby used to have the grove maintained, but after his death in 1952 it grew wild. In 1961 the Navy condemned the land under the take off path, leaving only a 100-foot row of trees to insulate Rossmoor, now fully developed, from the dust and noise. In the present clubhouse area, the trees remained thick. Current member Leroy Williams remembers hunting for pheasant in the marshy area -- when the Bixbys weren't grazing sheep in there,

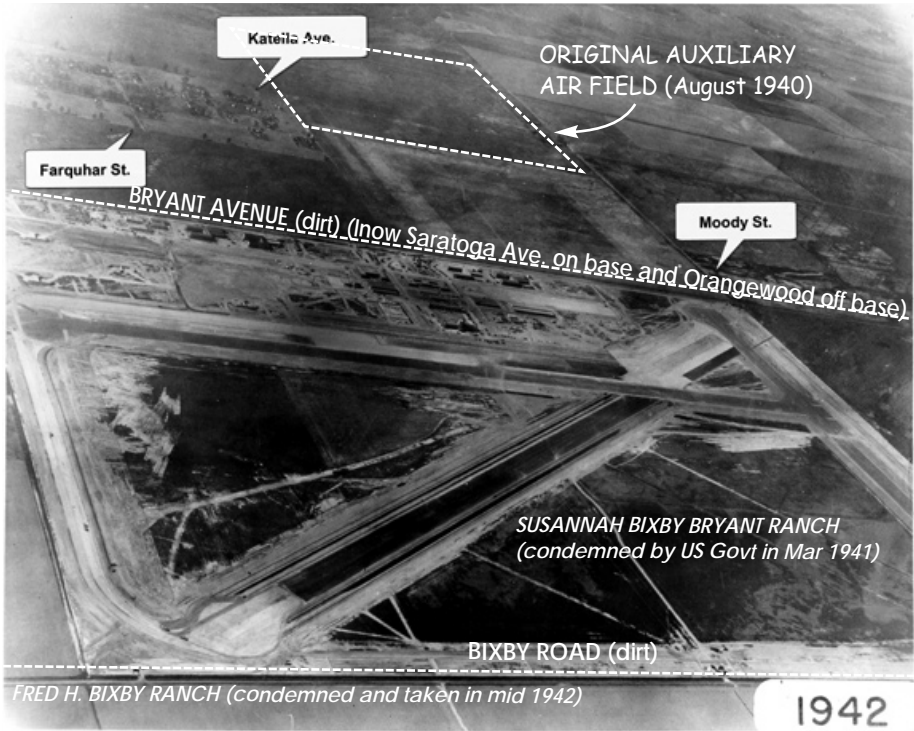
At the time both Alamitos and Anaheim Bays were much larger than now. High tide reached up Coyote Creek into southern Rossmoor, and the Alamitos Bay wetlands extended to the western side of the present Old Ranch club, especially around the present driving range and Holes 2 and 3. The area was home to all kinds of wildlife -- even deer and grizzly bears. The marshes were also a haven for migrating birds. In the early 1900s the area was home for over 25 nearby gun clubs.

John W. Bixby built a thriving ranch and laid out the "city" of Alamitos Beach (Alamitos Avenue to Termino in Long Beach). After his death in 1887 the ranch was divided into four parts. Alamitos Beach and East Long Beach south of present Pacific Coast Highway continued as the Alamitos Land Company. The rest was divided into three parcels, each about 7,000 acres. Lewellyn and Jotham kept the Northern third adjacent to Rancho Los Cerritos. Hellman got the Orange County part south of the present Garden Grove Freeway, and John W.'s heirs (wife Susan and children Fred and Susannah) kept the middle third -- a strip seven miles west to east from current Park Estates in Long Beach to Knott Avenue in Garden Grove. In Orange County it was a mile and a half wide, between the present freeway to Orangewood Avenue.

In 1912 Fred and Susannah again split the property. Fred kept the southern half and raised cattle -- a task made more profitable in 1925 when oil was discovered by the present Marketplace. Fred used his oil money to buy more land.

Both ranches leased to tenant farmers to plant sugar beets for the nearby sugar

THE BEGINNINGS



Show above is Los Alamitos Naval Air Station in early 1942. The original base (dotted lines at top) was an auxiliary take off and landing field for the Long Beach Naval Reserve Air Base at the Long Beach Airport. In February 1941 the Navy announced it would build a new base just south of the town of Los Alamitos. By late 1942, a second longer runway was added south and parallel to the existing runway. This required the condemnation of additional acreage on the east, west, and southern borders of the base. The latter meant about 200 acres of Fred Bixby land on the south was taken by the navy. The future Old Ranch Golf Course is just south of this photo.

factory in the new town of Los Alamitos. The factory, built in 1896, helped Orange County become the top sugar producing county in the nation from 1905-1920.

Many of these farmers were Belgian emigrants recruited in the early 1900s. One of the first was Charles Vlasschaert, who with his brother and sons farmed the land that is now College Park East and the Old Ranch back nine. They grew sugar beets, usually rotated with barley, alfalfa and lima beans. Other Belgians also farmed it. The last was Oscar Watte who already worked an adjoining farm covering southern Rossmoor. The Watte ranch house stood where Sprouts now stands. Around 1908 Fred Bixby hired Watte to plant a marshy 46-acre section just east of Los Alamitos Boulevard, with red gum trees (Australian eucalyptus) that could be used as firewood by Bixby and his tenants. The grove became not only a landmark, but a favorite hunting spot for many years. Future Old Ranch member Leroy Williams remembered pheasant hunting there in the 1950s, before the course was built. "It was marshy with lots of little ponds. The bird dogs would run around and get a real good workout."



Jets began flying out of NAS Los Alamitos in 1949 and were commonplace by the mid 1960's when Old Ranch opened. Over 500 reserve pilots were assigned to the base with over 100 flying on any given Saturday to get in their required hours. Many Old Ranch members have vivid memories about jets like the F4-Phantoms shown above taking off over their heads especially by the 17th and 18th Holes.

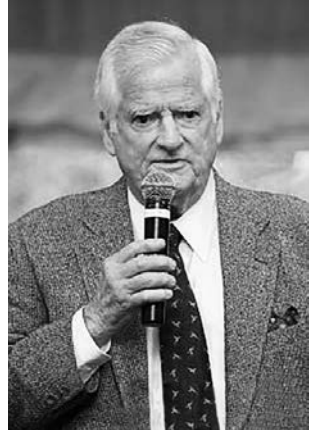
In 1940, with war on the horizon, the government began eyeing land near Los Alamitos for a new Navy Air Training Base. The small reserve air station at Long Beach airport was being squeezed out by the Army Air Corps which would soon be leasing the entire Long Beach Airport.

With Southern California the center of the nation's aircraft production, new planes could be delivered to Long Beach and Army pilots would then ferry them to their next destination for operations or further modifications. During 1943 and 1944, the Long Beach Airport, then called the Long Beach Ferrying Station, would be the busiest airport in the world.

In August 1940 the Navy leased 100 acres by present Katella Deli and Cottonwood Church for an auxiliary airfield to practice take-offs and landings. Six months later the Navy bought 1300 acres just south from Susanna Bixby Bryant's ranch for a bigger, permanent air base. By late 1941 newer, faster planes required longer runways, so the Navy condemned an additional 200 acres which included a quarter mile strip of land from the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Co. land to the south. This established the current boundary line between the air base and Old Ranch.

Originally, Naval Air Station (NAS) Los Alamitos was an "elimination" base. Cadets underwent a series of mental and physical tests. Those who couldn't handle the stresses of being a pilot were eliminated. By mid-1943 the base mission switched to aircraft carrier support. Fighter, dive bomber and torpedo bomber groups now practiced at Los Al and nearby auxiliary fields (and future golf courses) like Mile Square or Meadowlark. They also practiced their bombing on towed targets off Huntington

THE BEGINNINGS



When Fred H. Bixby died in 1952, his oldest daughter Katharine (above left) became the leader of the family's business, but she relied heavily on her husband, Preston Hotchkis (center) who began the process of converting the Bixby Ranch Company into a land development company. But in addition to being a very influential and trusted player in state and national Republican politics, Preston had his own insurance businesses to run as well. Rather than sell off the company, Katharine convinced their son, Preston Bixby Hotchkis (right) to assume the Presidency of the Bixby Ranch Company. It was "Pres" who made the decision to build the Old Ranch Country Club in late 1964.

Beach, and beach assaults on San Clemente Island. Los Alamitos pilots played a huge role in the Pacific Air War --- at Iwo Jima, Guam, Tinian, Leyte Gulf and more.

After the war Los Al was the busiest Navy reserve air base in the nation, supporting the Berlin Airlift, the Korean Conflict, and Cuban Missile Crisis, in addition to its coastal patrol duties. But faster jets needed longer runways. In 1960, the Navy obtained a 25-year lease for a safety zone at the end of the runway, and in November 1960 began cutting down over half of the eucalyptus trees in the gum grove. They left only a strip along Los Alamitos Boulevard, 100 feet wide and 2700 feet long, to provide a noise barrier for residents of Rossmoor.

Fred Bixby and his wife Florence had three daughters — Katharine, Elizabeth, and Deborah, then two sons, John and Fred. Jr. John was heir apparent until he died in a car crash in 1929 and Fred Jr. became a little too friendly with the gambling tables. His inheritance was placed into a trust with oldest sister Katharine the trustee.

When Fred Sr. died in 1952, the new nearby housing tracts had dramatically increased the heirs' property taxes. Plus, freeway plans were making continued ranch operations unfeasible. In addition, Fred Jr. had been suing to break the trust. The years-long court battle (which included a fist fight in court between the lawyers) put Katharine in the hospital for stress.

Company management fell to her husband, Preston Hotchkis, a successful businessman and influential player in Republican politics. He had co-chaired the gubernatorial campaigns of Earl Warren and Goodwin Knight and became a close advisor of rising California politico Ronald Reagan.

HOW NEAR IS YOUR WORK TO Rossmoor?



New Rossmoor Shopping Center Will Serve 500,000 in L.B. Area

Ground was broken Saturday for the \$20 million, 80-acre Rossmore Shopping Center, adjoining the new, exclusive 3,400-home community near Long Beach State College.

Some 200 civic and business leaders attended groundbreaking ceremonies for the project which is bounded by Alamos Blvd., Montecito Rd., Bradbury Rd., and St. Cloud Dr.

Guest of honor was Orange County Supervisor Willis A. Warner.

The center will serve a population of more than 500,000 in the greater Long Beach area alone, reported developers Judge Alfred Gitelson, Lakewood Ranch Land Co.; Preston Hotchkis, president of the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Co., and Ross W. Cortese, Rossmore developer.

Designed by Burke, Kober & Nicolais, project architects, the center's motif will be rustic. A mall, display fountains, benches, and other shopper conveniences will add to the park-like aura.

TOTAL COST of the first phase, which will comprise about 25 acres occupied by 200,000 square feet of buildings and parking facilities for almost 1,000 cars, will be about \$5 million, the developer



BREAK GROUND

Reason for smiles on these faces was ground-breaking ceremony Saturday for \$20 million Rossmore Shopping Center. Shoveling first spadeful of dirt are Judge Alfred Gitelson (from left), Preston Hotchkiss and County Supervisor Willis A. Warner. Mrs. Kenneth Welch, past president of Rossmore

The Bixby Ranch Company's first venture in subdivision was Rossmoor. The company provided the land for the southern third of the tract (south of Mainway) and beginning in 1960 they partnered on the construction of the Rossmoor Shopping Center. Bixby Ranch President Preston Hotchkis participated in the traditional first dig photo shown above.

To maximize tax write-offs Preston separated out the oil production and began converting most agricultural sections to land development. Preston also knew good lawyers. Fred Jr. lost his lawsuit, but used gossip to create even more family drama.

Selling the ranch and ridding themselves of dealing with brother Fred was appealing, but Katharine wore the Bixby legacy proudly and she asked her oldest son, Pres, now a young attorney, to step in and run the company.

Like his grandfather Fred and his father Preston, Pres had attended UC Berkeley. After college he joined the Los Angeles law firm of Gibson and Dunn, whose clients included the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Company.

Pres and his wife Maurine lived in Pasadena, and were involved with clubs there. He was also President of the University Club, and the Hollywood Bowl Association.

The family politics made Pres unsure about running the Bixby Ranch Company. But he too had many memories of the place. He had spent summers on the rancho, riding across the land with his grandfather. He remembered being tasked to thin out the old gum grove just south of Los Alamitos. “Those things grew like weeds, and we were sent out to thin out the shoots, cut off all but the three straightest growing shoots around each stub. The muscle on my right arm must have been a couple inches bigger than my left after I spent a few weeks doing that.”

And being his own boss had its appeal. “I told her I’d give it a shot. In October 1963 I took over management of the company and I probably gave a ten extra good years of life to my mom.”

To resolve the family dissension, Pres gave Fred Jr. a seat on the board in exchange for his agreeing that if he or any other family member filed another suit

THE BEGINNINGS



The Bixby Ranch Company and S&S Homes partnered on many housing and apartment developments. College Estates in Long Beach in 1959 was the first. Uncertainty over future freeway locations forced them to skip four miles East to build Garden Park Estates, which then expanded west. After the Garden Park Estates tract crossed Valley View, Shappell told Pres Hotchkis they were ready to build College Park East and they would pay an extra \$2 million dollars if they could direct their drainage west through the Bixby agricultural lands. This initiated a Bixby study which determined that because of government drainage easements and airbase height restrictions, a golf course was the best use of the drainage lands. The golf course first showed up in the College Park East brochures printed in 1965.

against the trust and lost, the suing party would be responsible for ALL legal fees.

The Bixby Ranch Company's first foray into subdivision was a 1955 partnership with Ross Cortese. Bixby provided land for the southern third of Rossmoor and the Rossmoor Shopping Center.

In 1959 Bixby partnered with Nathan Shappell's S&S Construction Company to build College Estates in Long Beach, east of Studebaker and Anaheim Road. Then, because of uncertainty over future freeway routes, they skipped four miles East to build a 160 acre tract northwest of Knott and Garden Grove Boulevard. This was the 3,000 homes of Garden Park Estates which grew west one section at a time, crossing Holder, then Miller (now Valley View).

In early 1964 Shappell told Pres that S&S was ready to exercise options for two parcels of land. The first was 13 acres where the current Centex (Target) homes sit across the boulevard from the Rossmoor Center. The Navy was resistant to homes being built here so they traded S&S for an equal-size area at the southeast corner of the base where S&S built Parkewood tract. S&S also told Bixby they wanted to exercise the option on a much larger property -- the parcel which became College Park East. But S&S would pay an additional \$2 million for the property if they could direct the tract's drainage west across the Bixby's undeveloped property, south of the air base and through the old Vlasschaert-Watte farm and the remaining gum groves.

Hotchkis said "Naturally a chance to make an extra \$2 million attracts your attention, but were we messing ourselves up for some future use, especially if the Navy were to ever close the Los Al Air base?"

The base closure was not a fantasy. The government had discussed it. Seal Beach

and Los Alamitos both had plans covering a military departure. To oversee the cost analysis of all possible ramifications of Shappell's proposal and other Bixby projects, Hotchkis hired Rodger Karrenbrock as Bixby's Executive Vice-President for financing. He would be the main Bixby contact for Old Ranch over the next fifteen years.

Karrenbrock's team saw nothing to financially justify reconfiguring the drainage. They also determined that the local post war housing explosion was not matched by a growth of recreation facilities. Water sports had been served with the 1957 opening of the Alamitos Bay Marina but land-based recreation areas -- especially golf courses -- were in short supply.

The planned Navy Base Courses and the Leisure World Golf Course were restricted. The Los Alamitos course was popular but not challenging. Meadowlark and Lakewood were crowded. Long Beach's Recreation Park was more crowded, one of the busiest golf courses in the nation. Skylinks, which opened in March 1959, barely made a dent in the demand, prompting Long Beach to buy out the town's last remaining dairy on Spring Street to become part of a new 18-hole course at El Dorado Park.

Old-timers like Dave Scott say it was not uncommon for golfers wanting an early Saturday morning tee time, to get in line at a course at 2am. Judge Norm Gordon recalled getting up at 5am to start calling the Lakewood pro shop reservation desk "and getting that damned busy signal for a couple hours before ever getting through."

Demand dictated that a private golf course made the most financial sense.

"Other than Virginia Country Club, there was really no other private golf courses between Palos Verdes and Newport," said Hotchkis, "and Virginia was pretty restrictive in its membership at the time."

Others had reached similar conclusions. In late 1957, the Tioga Country Club, was announced for where Forest Lawn cemetery now stands in Cypress. Bing Crosby was reported as already signed up, as were many local golfers who would later join Old Ranch (Bernie Solomon, Mickie Lloyd, Hody Lane and John Tate). But by 1958 no more is heard of Tioga.

Ross Cortese explored building a private golf course on Bixby land. In 1958 his Los Alamitos Golf Corporation had optioned 268 acres (including the present Old Ranch site) to build an equity golf operation to be called the Del Rey Country Club -- "the course of Kings." It would include two 18-hole courses, a swimming pool and \$350,000 clubhouse. An architect was hired and ads soliciting members ran in local newspapers for over six months. But response was weak. After six months, we hear no more of the project.

It might have been too soon. In 1958 Rossmoor was barely 20% populated, and Los Alamitos and Seal Beach both had less than 4,000 residents, and Eastgate and Garden Park Estates in Garden Grove didn't yet exist.

The area was more populated now but Hotchkis still had to sell the idea to his company stockholders-- Fred H. Bixby's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren who all owned stock in the Bixby Ranch Company. Plus, by this time Pres had decided to build the club as a non-equity operation funded and owned entirely by the Bixby Ranch Company.

THE BEGINNINGS

Belonging
To a
Country
Club
Is a
Family
Affair



The Del Rey Country Club
Can Make Your Social Life
More Interesting

This is a private, exclusive Country Club • Membership Limited

Be a Club Family . . . JOIN NOW

Just Look at What You Get When You Belong to Your
Own Club: You can choose your own companions . . . You
can arrange a definite starting time . . . You can get social
activity for your family . . . Finest nursery facilities for
children . . . Instructions — Golf — Swimming — Tennis

To be located just out 7th St. beyond
Los Alamitos Blvd. There will be
planned activity for every member of
the family . . . that could be the real
hub to all of your social life!

LONG BEACH OFFICE
810 E. PAC. COAST HWY.
PH. ME 7-0001

I am interested in a membership in the new
Del Rey Country Club. Please send literature.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____



DEL REY COUNTRY CLUB

Wishes to make the following announcement
in answer to questions that have been raised.

1. The Club is a California non-profit corporation.
2. The number of Class "A" full golf playing memberships will be limited to 1000 members, by the time full 36 holes are completed.
3. All memberships will be transferable and saleable (subject to approval of membership committee).
4. Dues will not commence until after official opening.
5. There will be two 18-hole courses, both to be completed as soon as humanly possible after start of construction.
6. All monies paid will be held in trust accounts at local banks and will be returned in full without deductions of any kind if ground is not broken before September 17, 1958.
7. The club lease rent will be based on 6% per annum on the fair land valuation.

There is still a very short time to take advantage of the special introductory charter offer. For any further information call us at HE 7-0801 or drop by our offices at 910 E. Pacific Coast Highway.

DEL REY COUNTRY CLUB

The idea of a golf course at the Old Ranch location had first been explored by The Del Rey Country Club in early 1958. Interest was apparently low. By September 1958, nothing more is heard of the idea.

This decision was based on Hotchkis' own experience with private clubs -- as a board member and club President. "People wanted a place to play golf and do some socializing. They weren't that interested in the equity or expensive initiation fees. Most of the young people we were targeting weren't at that level of income yet."

There were other factors. A non-equity operation made decisions easier and the land would still be available for more profitable development (homes) should the Los Alamitos Air Base close. Plus a nearby private golf course could become a selling point for any future Bixby residential developments in the area.

Rodger Karrenbrock remembers these family stockholder meetings as contentious. "They were making good dividends through their ranching and oil. And so far in their development, other parties had taken the financial risk. Was taking on debt to construct the club worth it? With no equity to show, would people be willing to pay club fees and dues?"

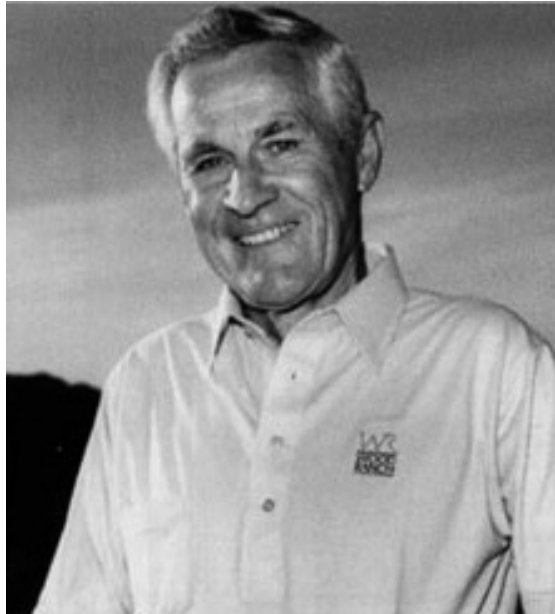
Ultimately, Pres won them over. A private non-equity golf course it would be.

Newspapers say veteran company secretary George Salzer, an avid golfer, was assigned to visit private golf clubs -- and make notes on what should be copied and what shouldn't. But Karrenbrock was the man in charge. "Over the years other Bixbys would visit the club from time to time," said long-time Old Ranch employee Shirley Barto, "but Old Ranch was Rodger's baby." Karrenbrock minimized his input. "I was just a numbers guy. The creative stuff was never my strength"

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Neil Crawford, a noted architect in his own right, was hired by the Bixby Ranch Company to oversee the design of all their in-house projects. For Old Ranch, Crawford brought in Ted Robinson to design the golf course, Paul Sterling Hoag for the clubhouse and Robert Herrick Carter for the exterior landscaping.



Old Ranch golf course designer Ted Robinson Sr. was known as King of the Waterscapes. Old Ranch was his 24th golf course. In the three previous years he had designed two nearby golf courses -- El Dorado Park and the Cruiser course at the Navy Base, as well as the Rolling Hills, Braemar and Westlake Country Clubs, and courses in Oregon, Washington and Maryland.

For that the company relied on architect Neil Crawford. Before joining Bixby, Crawford had worked with noted architects Victor Gruen and William Perreire (UC Irvine, LAX and many other iconic Southern California structures) and was already designing townhomes for the company. He favored a modernist, natural style. So did the architects he chose to design the new clubhouse and surrounding landscape — Paul Steven Hoag and Robert Herrick Carter.

But his first decision was to select a course architect. “I sat in on some interviews,” said Karrenbrock but mainly it was Pres and Neil asking the questions.” By early 1965, the job of designing the course was given to Ted Robinson, Sr.

Hotchkis vaguely remembers Robinson and Crawford having some connection through a golf course in Palm Springs.

Old Ranch was Robinson’s 24th golf course design job, his ninth private course. In the three previous years he had designed two nearby golf courses — El Dorado Park and the Cruiser course at the Navy Base, as well as the Rolling Hills, Braemar and Westlake Country Clubs, and courses in Oregon, Washington and Maryland.

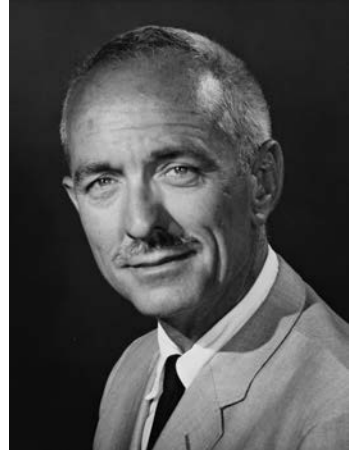
The big challenge for Old Ranch was its drainage requirements. An existing easement bisected the golf course property, running from the southwest corner of the air-base due south. The course had to be able to handle a 25-year flood runoff which

meant retaining over four feet of water above the lowest spot on the course (seven feet above sea level on the middle of the first fairway -- now the current driving range). Although much of the base drained west through Rossmoor, almost two thirds still drained towards the course. And the high water table, and vast concrete runways and tarmacs meant little rainwater seeped into the ground along the way. The same was true for College Park East. The house pads, sidewalks, patios, driveways and paved streets sent most runoff towards Candleberry then west underneath Lampson to empty onto the course's Hole 12, just beyond the old driving range.

In 1950 Robinson had started work as a land planner – a job requiring attention to drainage. To deal with drainage on his golf courses, Robinson utilized multiple lakes – earning a reputation as “King of the waterscapes.” He would also use these for Old Ranch.

The perimeter berms on the south (Lampson Ave.) and west (Los Alamitos /later Seal Beach Blvd.) were constructed to make the entire golf course a retention basin, a bowl storing the storm water runoff. Berms were a minimum 14 feet above sea level. The Lakes were normally nine feet above sea level, and could handle minor overflow resulting from a day or so of light rain, with the help of a pump. Overflows from heavier rains would spill over onto the course fairways. Runoff water from the east spread out over the 12th, 11th and 10th fairways and the old driving range. Runoff from the north spread out successively over the 17th, 18th, 9th and 1st fairways. On really heavy storms, they spread over the 6th and 8th fairways as well.

All runoff made its way to the 1st fairway (the current driving range) and then through two four-foot wide tunnels under the freeway capable of handling 600 cubic feet per second. Beyond the freeway the water emptied into a ditch which ran around the weapons base perimeter and through Leisure World to the flood control basin alongside

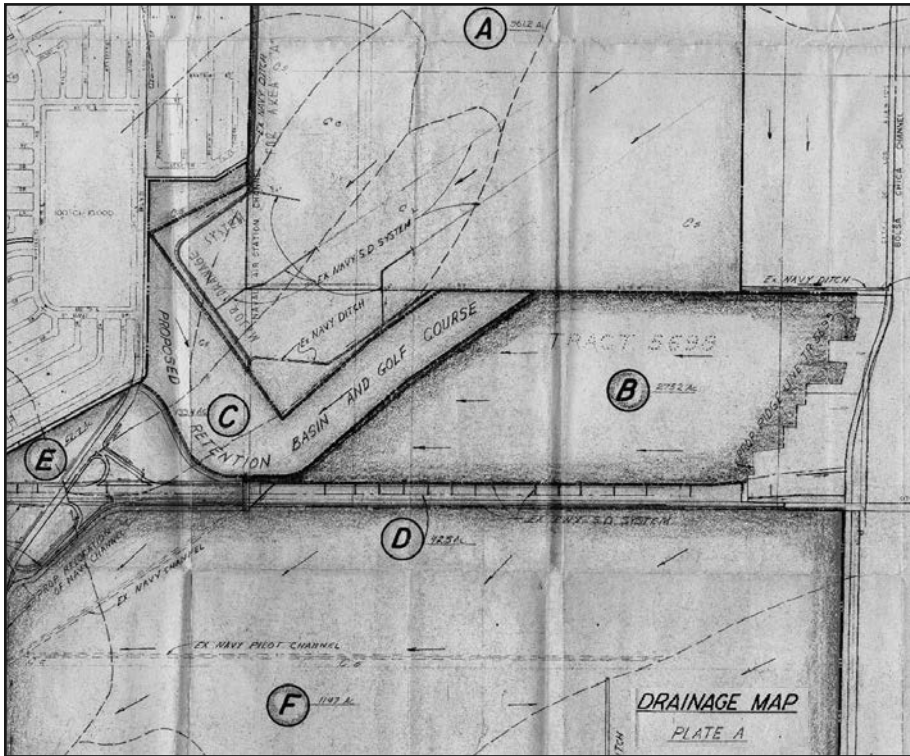


Robert Herrick Carter, one of Los Angeles most famous landscape designers, created the exterior motif for Old Ranch. His other work included the Century Plaza Hotel, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Cal State Dominguez Hills, the Tom Bradley International Terminal at the airport, Caltech, Arco Plaza, and the glass-enclosed pavilions and linked tropical gardens at the Universal City Sheraton Premiere Hotel.



Paul Sterling Hoag, who designed the Old Ranch clubhouse, was a noted modernist designer who had previously worked with Wayne Ferrell on the interior design of then Huntington Harbor Club.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



This drainage map was part of the official drainage plans for College Park East and the Old Ranch Country Club submitted to the Orange County Flood Control District by the engineering firm of Voorheis, Findle, parts of Nelson, Inc. on April 27, 1965.. The northwest parts of Section A (the base) drain through Rossmoor via two channels (along Orangewood/Silverwood and Oak Knoll/ Kempton) while the rest of the base and Section B (College Park East) drain into Section C (the Old Ranch Flood Detention basin). All berms along Los Alamitos Boulevard and Lampson would be a minimum height of 14 feet above sea level so as to contain a maximum water height of about 11 and half feet. The lakes on the course are set at 9 feet and the greens and the tees, clubhouse and parking lots are all above 14 feet. Runoff was directed to two tunnels along old Hole Number One (the present driving range). It noted that a 25-year storm flood would produce a maximum runoff discharge of 174 cubic feet per second (cfs). The plan also required the Bixby Ranch Company to grant an new easement for the berm to "insure the permanency of the basin."

the San Gabriel River.

All greens, tee areas, the clubhouse and all parking areas were placed above 14 feet as well, so theoretically they would never be inundated.

Robinson's drawings were finished by summer and bulldozers were moving dirt by Fall. Bixby's regular contractors, Gates Brothers Construction, did the grading on the course, "This saved us 15% overhead and some margin there," remembered Hotchkis.

According to his son, Robinson wanted the course and greens to have more undulations. Pres Hotchkis advised against this for financial reasons: "The C golfers pay a club's bills. You don't want them to feel humiliated after a round." Robinson was already aware of this. On his courses, holes might look imposing from the tee,

THE BEGINNINGS

Long before Ted Conlin became the first applicant for the new Old Ranch Country Club he had been a pilot during World War II. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with four clusters, four major Battle Stars and was even given the Russian Medal for "Victory Over Germany in the Great Patriotic War."



but fairway traps were almost always beyond the driving distance of the average golfer." Robinson wasn't totally happy with some of the restrictions placed on him.

The first public mention of the golf club (a November 1965 press release for the new development of College Park East) motivated one former World War II pilot named Ted Conlin to drive over to the Bixby Ranch Company offices on Studebaker Road in Long Beach. There, in late 1965, Conlin entered an adjacent tent and became the first person to put down a \$200 deposit for membership in the new club. He would stay on as a member until his death in 2012, after 45 years of golf, backgammon and lots of gin rummy.

A March 1966 article in the *Los Alamitos News-Enterprise*, noted that construction was underway and the course would open later in the year. For the first time, the name "Old Ranch Country Club" was used. Press releases stated "the locale of the club for many years had been referred to as the old ranch area." Pres Hotchkis later said he couldn't recall that name ever being used by him or any of his family, although conceding his Long Beach friends may have said it on occasion. Locals could recall the area only being called the Bixby Eucalyptus Grove (or the old Gum Grove) on the Watte ranch.

In June 1966, the two-mile stretch of Lampson Avenue between Los Alamitos Boulevard (now Seal Beach Boulevard) and Valley View was completed. Potential members could now drive through the gum grove to the golf course on a paved road. Among the earliest to do this was Bill and Norma Deeble who were living three miles north in El Dorado Park Estates with their four children and Norma's mother.

"We golfed at Meadowlark and when we came down the boulevard we could see



Bill and Norma Deeble learned about the new golf club when they would drive down Los Alamitos Boulevard to Meadowlark Golf Club from their El Dorado Park Estates home. "The only thing you could see then was a lot of dirt and the big fireplace that would be in the clubhouse," said Norma who would become one of the club's top women golfers.

the signs for Old Ranch and that big fireplace for the clubhouse. We had four kids who all played, and when we heard they could play free, hey, we were in," recalled Norma.

Hotchkis recruited three golf-playing Long Beach acquaintances as the beginnings of a board of directors. One of these was John Wells, a Long Beach stockbroker who Hotchkis appointed Chairman. Another was David Cohee, a Long Beach accountant who handled some of the Bixby Ranch Company's financial affairs. Hotchkis left it up to the three to recruit the rest of the first Board which eventually included Willard Morris, Dr. Edwin, Potts, a dentist, Robert Hall, Roy Anderson, Donald Caffrey and Malcolm Lucas, a lawyer who would later become the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court. Most were Long Beach men, but Morris ran the United California Bank at Leisure World and Lucas was very active in Rossmoor and Los Alamitos school affairs.

The Board met weekly. Each member was assigned an area for which they developed policies—greens, handicaps, entertainment, tournaments, and membership. But the Board's role was advisory. If the Bixby Company—in this case, Rodger Karrenbrock — liked the idea it happened. Otherwise, it didn't.

Also hired was the new President and General Manager, Wayne Ferrell, a veteran manager of various Hilton hotels (including the Long Beach Wilton—yes, Wilton—famous for its Skytop Room). He had also managed private clubs such as Newport Beach's Balboa Bay Club, and Long Beach's Pacific Coast Club and more recently he opened the Huntington Harbor Club and the Huntington Beach Sheraton.

Ferrell started hiring the club's staff of sixty, at first from the Bixby Company's offices on Studebaker Road in Long Beach, Helping him was Betty Purpura. She had met Ferrell while a receptionist at the Balboa Club in the 1950s. then became his Executive Secretary at clubs in Long Beach and Huntington Beach. Within a year they would marry. Longtime friend Shirley Barto remembers them as a good team. "Betty ran the office, while Wayne managed the other departments."

Betty especially remembers Wayne as being very involved with the layout of the

THE BEGINNINGS



Three of the initial members of the Old Ranch Board of Governors shown above at opening night) were recruited by Pres Hotchkis. He also appointed John Wells as Chairman. Those three then recruited the rest of the Board. (l-r) David Cohee, Dr. Ed Potts, Roy Anderson, Chairman John Wells, President/GM Wayne Ferrell, Bixby Ranch Co. Chairman Pres Hotchkis, Willard Morris, Malcolm Lucas, Don Caffrey and Bob Hall.

new club kitchen. “He had worked with clubhouse architect Paul Stephen Hoag for the design of the Huntington Harbor Beach Club.”

Each Board member brought his own rolodex of potential club members, “The application asked for six business references and six personal references, one of them being your banker,” remembered Betty. “But Wayne’s club experience was invaluable. He knew who was legitimate and who was sketchy.”

Hotchkis wanted membership details to be simple — affordable initiation fee, good credit, good personality, and no restrictions. “I wanted our club to be representative of the community.”

For Pres Hotchkis this especially meant no restrictions on the Jewish community which had not been accepted with open arms at other private golf clubs along the coast, including Virginia. Norma Deeble was very happy about the non-restrictive policies. “People don’t give the Bixby Company enough credit for this.”

Bixby stockholder concerns about a non-equity club proved unfounded. “We had over 900 applications,” remembers Betty Ferrell. By October of 1966, the directors had accepted 450 golfing members, and 250 social members. Karrenbrock and Betty Ferrell said another 200 were on a waiting list. Judge Norm Gordon laughingly recalls he was told by Wayne Ferrell that almost a thousand were on the waiting list.

In any case, “the club was in the black before it ever opened,” noted Karrenbrock.

Word about the club spread among the local golf crowd. Long Beach residents Helen and John Wilson were very eager for it to open. “We had been traveling to Los Coyotes Country Club in Buena Park and then Mesa Verde in Costa Mesa, but this was so much closer.” Norm Gordon recalls “probably twenty couples from Long Beach or Lakewood who came over from Mesa Verde to Old Ranch— Baron Lane,

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Polaroids taken during mid 1966 construction. (Top) the course took advantage of the few existing trees on the former farmland where they once grew sugar beets, alternating with barley, alfalfa and lima beans.. (center) an eager golfer tees off on the 10th hole. alongside the old driving range. (bottom) The Gates Brothers Construction office located just beyond the Ninth green, by the future clubhouse.

THE BEGINNINGS



In November 1966, the Old Ranch Driving range became the first part of the club to actually open for business. The hitting area ran from the current wedding site, thru the pool area to Lampson. The range ended at the site of the current 11th green. At front left, club secretary Betty Ferrell gets in some practice hits during a break from work.,

Hody Lane, the Birnbaums, Bernie and Perlee Solomon, Archie and Miki Lloyd, the Morrrows, Curt and Betse Straub ... there were others. We met with Wayne Ferrell and he accepted us all at one time. I guess we were what they were looking for.”

The driving range opened in November 1966, but everything else was behind schedule. Still, when staff moved into their new clubhouse offices by New Year’s. Paul Stephen Hoag’s design met with “unanimous approval.” A lack of concrete and plaster and the choice of rough sawn cedar exterior siding “was in keeping the early California tradition of the site,” as were the long low-pitched rooflines, topped by Spanish tile. Members would enter over muted gold Spanish floor tiles.

Floor-to ceiling windows in the entryway provided light to a wide open which was provided an immediate view of the bar area off to your left, and the dining room to the back . More floor-to-ceiling windows looked out over a large horseshoe lake.

Just beyond the offices (to the right of the entry) was the Trophy Lounge (now the Bixby Room), a great room with a large stone fireplace and big chairs where members could sit in large comfortable chairs and read or wait for their guests to arrive.

To the right of the dining room was a large banquet room, whose modular wall could be pushed back to open up to the dining room.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



This is the original front entry from Lampson before the final landscaping was put into place. It looks a little different now.

The clubhouse's exterior landscaping was designed by Robert Herrick Carter who was just coming off his design work for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the UC Irvine campus, the LA Zoo, the iconic futuristic theme building at LA International Airport as well – projects where he worked with William Perreira and Paul Revere Williams. Carter would also work on the Tom Bradley International Terminal at LAX, the Century Plaza Hotel, Cal State Dominguez Hills, the Travelers Insurance Building, Caltech, Universal City (where at the Sheraton Premiere Hotel glass-enclosed pavilions were linked by tropical gardens and fountains) and ARCO Plaza.

Before the end of 1966, Farrell had hired a chef -- Heinz Reuter – a native of Frankfurt, Germany. Early members fondly remember Reuter's buffets and prime rib Fridays. He also made sure every table always had a good supply of sesame bread sticks to nosh on. "We became known for that," remembers Betty Farrell.

Mike Blum says flatly, "Heinz was the best chef ever at the club."

As the club pro Ferrell hired Willie Barber whose brother Jerry was a successful touring pro. Marian Bowman was hired as an associate pro.

Everybody was raring to go. But while the driving range opened in November 1966, nothing else did. December 1966 and January 1967 were very rainy, washing away much of the grass seed. In a letter to members, Wayne Ferrell noted that "the intensity of the rains over the past several weeks" caused the delays, coming as they did during large scale over-seeding of the course and just prior to some essential drainage improvements to fairways.

But Ferrell ended the letter on a positive note. The club would hold an Open House for members, local officials and Bixby Company VIPs on March 1.

Smash Opening Night Gets Club Off To Fast Start



On opening night, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Watkins were greeted at the door by members of the Board of Governors Roy Anderson (far left), John Wells, and Willard Morris.



Old Ranch's Opening Night was the event of the year in Seal Beach. The photos and captions on the next three pages are from the second issue of the club newsletter, *The Round-up*.

(Above) Over 1,000 members, spouses and special guests attended Old Ranch Country Club's Opening Night Preview. Cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and music went from 4pm to 9pm, and members seemed to enjoy every minute of it.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



(Above) Women take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the normally off-limits men's card room.

(Right) Bixby Ranch Co President Preston Hotchkis and wife Maurine enjoy chef Heinz Reuter's cuisine on the club's Opening Night gala.



(bottom) the new members get their first look at the Old Ranch Pro Shop.



THE BEGINNINGS



TASTING - Lucky they got there early as the Chef's elaborate hors d'oeuvres disappeared mighty fast on opening night! Mr. and Mrs. Check (left) and Ben Lombardo were among hundreds who gave resounding approval to the Club's cuisine.



The plush accommodations of the Mens' Locker Room get the once-over from Mrs. Ralph Hantsch and Mrs. Donald Barden as Allen Peery enjoys their reaction.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



OLD RANCH COUNTRY CLUB
3011 LAMPSON AVENUE, OCEA, CALIFORNIA

N. 28 -28.90CH

MEMBER PLEASE PRINT NAME

DINING ROOM (#14)

Waiter	No. OFF. PHONE	27678
1. Sh. Lube	4	4.25
2. Beer		11.90
3. Picatta		6.50
4. Beer		1.05
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

TOTAL FOOD 23.70

SERVICE 15% 3.56

TAXABLE TOTAL 27.26

SALES TAX 1.64

PAY THIS TOTAL 28.90

MEMBER'S SIGNATURE (Signature)

CLUB NUMBER

CENTURY FORMS (E131) 300-1100



(Top and above) From the beginning the club staff went all out to sell each event theme be it Oktoberfest in 1969 (top) or Cinco de Mayo in 1968 (above). (Left) The food situation has changed a bit from since the club first opened as evidenced by a bill from Gene Novotny's early days with the club in the early 1970s. The \$28.90 total included three beers for \$1.05.