

CHAPTER TWO

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

March 1967 was part of a short span of time that changed the nation's soul. The Vietnam War was causing many Americans to distrust their government. In sports the NFL and AFL football leagues had just played their very first Super Bowl, and television was on its way to calling the plays for all sports. Culturally, the Beatles, Bob Dylan and others were changing music from pop to a message that was motivating thousands of youth to head to California for a Summer of Love and the Monterey Pop Festival, America's first rock festival. Revolutions in fashions included mini-skirts and white boots made for walking. And Americans were discussing the new breed of Oscar nominated films—*Alfie* or *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, or possibly the new releases like *Georgy Girl*, *Funeral in Berlin*, and *Doctor Zhivago*. Locally, at the Bay Theater on Main Street presented *The Russians Are Coming* and *The Fortune Cookie* while the The Fox in Rossmoor featured the unlikely pairing of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the Cary Grant-Doris Day romp, *That Touch of Mink*.

The managers and staff of Old Ranch were probably oblivious of all this. They were just happy that the new club was finally open. Almost immediately, the atmosphere, food and member list made the club one of the go-to spots on the Long Beach area social scene. The society pages dutifully noted many of the new members on the scene that night: Darrell and Markie Neighbors, Seal Beach councilman Dean Gemmill and his wife Shirley, Logan and Margaret Jackson, Russ and Merle King, Bill and Ethel Grant, Dick and Virginia Anne Mitchell, Monte and Alene Davis, S&S Homes executive Bernie McCune and his wife Jackie, Neva and Jack Senske, Al and Marie Staskewicz, Roy & Jeri Showalter and John and Pat McKinnon.

Wayne Ferrell proudly pointed out the spike proof carpeting throughout the clubhouse, the television sets in the mens card room and told multiple reporters that the

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While Old Ranch officially opened on March 1, 1967, rains prohibited the first round of golf until March 23. Since the winter rains had washed away much of the grass seed the course was a little barren in its first days. It was especially barren on the back nine where the previous agricultural use had left no room for trees. This might be the old 16th green looking back towards the flight control tower of the air base.

membership waiting list was considerable, but applications were still being taken—for a \$200 entry fee and a monthly charge of \$45 per month.

Rain prevented members from teeing off until some men snuck in some golf on March 23. A group of wives tried to put together a shotgun tournament, but rain thwarted their attempts on March 31 and April 11. Resourceful club pro Willie Barber held indoor clinics. Finally, on April 18, the women completed their first tourney in a light drizzle. Norma Deeble turned in the low gross score. It would be the first of many Old Ranch wins for Deeble, who would be the club champion four times.

Despite the rain, indoors the club was thriving. Heinz Reuter's Sunday buffets and Friday and Saturday night dinners were equal if not superior to almost any local restaurant. Old Ranch became the local go-to spot for weekend dinner outings. Paul Southgate remembered, "This was before downtown Long Beach had any real good restaurants, so friends would call up and say let's go to Old Ranch."

Early *Round-Ups* implored members to make reservations to avoid problems for the kitchen staff. "Last Friday we had only 127 reservations for dinner. We served over 1,000 meals."

"The place was just flying on weekends," said Norm Gordon. "Fridays and Saturdays were jam packed. Most of us were still fairly young and fun and starting to



Rain not only delayed the opening of the club by a few months, it delayed the start of golf once the club opened. The first two women's tournament attempts were postponed, but that didn't stop members of the new Women's Golf Association from posing for a newspaper photo. (l-r) Helen Wilson, Ruth Sandberg, Loralee Turner and Marian Braly.

make good money. The food was the best in the area and Wayne Ferrell knew how to put on a party.”

The clubhouse's single banquet room became a hot spot for luncheons – hosted by the Las Madrinas Guild, the Alamitos Bay Garden Club, a Dental Hygienists Society, an Association of University Women, the Junior League, the Lions, the Rotary, Long Beach Community Hospital Auxiliary, the 600-strong Stanford Alumni of Long Beach, the Rossmoor Republican Women's Club, not to mention the Christmas party for the National Secretaries Association (Queen City Chapter).

Hank Barto wasn't a regular performer at the club at first – until Ferrell came into the dining room a few weeks after the opening and saw that the dining room director had booked a novelty act -- a banjo player with an instrument that lit up. Barto remembers, “Wayne called me and said ‘I want you to play for me every Friday and Saturday.’”

Barto hesitated, “Wayne, I got four kids, I need five nights of work. Ferrell booked Hank as a solo on Wednesday and Thursday and as a trio on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. He's been playing at the club on a regular basis ever since.

Shirley Barto also accepted full time work at the club, beginning at the front desk but soon helping with catering operations. On June 17, 1967 she managed the club's first wedding reception as members Lillian and Bob Terhune celebrated the nuptials

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To help the new members get acquainted, the womens group organized a Jack and Jill tournament. (left) Club pro Willie Barber presented Dorothy Baker an award of golf clubs for some achievement. (above) Tourney director Helen Wilson (left) presents the first place award to Jane Wells, Robert Hall, Ruth Sandberg and Dr. Herbert "Chops" Movius (missing) as WGA President Jeri Showalter watches.

of their daughter Gail and her new husband Tom Panagos. Years later the Panagos returned to Old Ranch to host the wedding of their daughter Patricia to Greg Hicks.

Squeezed in between wedding receptions and outside luncheons were banquets for club tournaments—Jack and Jill, Blind Draw, Scotch Six, Guys and Dolls, Member Guest, Smokers, as well as monthly member group meets, or bridge tournaments, etc.

Ferrell was seemingly everywhere, graciously greeting members, adjusting chairs and flowers, hovering around the kitchen and walking through the bar areas asking if you needed another round, and how was your putting game today. More than occasionally he also found time for a round of golf, or sit in for some gin or one of the other high-stakes card games.

Not that there weren't problems. The adjacent Los Alamitos Naval Air Station was at the time the busiest reserve air base in the nation. On Saturdays and Sundays it was home to over 3,500 weekend warriors -- including almost 500 Navy and Marine air reserve pilots trying to get their required hours of flight time in the Navy's SP2 Neptunes and SF2 Tracker anti-submarine patrol planes, the Sikorsky turbine-powered helicopters, and loudest of all, the fighter and attack jets -- F-4 Phantoms, F-8 Crusaders, A-4 Skyhawks. In 1967 the base averaged over 100 takeoffs per day on each Saturday and Sunday.

The jet engines were loud. Many golfers remember the whine of an F-8 Phantom getting cranked up on a weekend morning. Noise levels on the base could reach 115 decibels. 85 is considered the threshold for humans before ear damage occurs. It was almost as loud on the golf course.

Each jet created 8-10 seconds of rocket-like whooshes and whines. Heading into the



Friday nights were especially busy from the start, especially when it was a celebration for New Year's Eve or some other holiday.

prevailing offshore breeze, the jets headed southwest over the 1.6 mile runway. Once in the air, all aircraft were to turn left to a heading of 165 degrees (flying over old holes 17, 18, 4, 3 and 2) and a maximum altitude of 2,000 feet, and cross over the ocean at the southwest corner of the Naval Weapons Station (Anaheim Bay). All aircraft would continue seven miles to "Point X-Ray" where they could adjust their course for whatever was their destination.

Rodger Karrakoff remembers Ferrell thinking the planes were flying lower and louder than necessary, especially on weekends. One Saturday Ferrell invited the base commander over for a complimentary early Saturday lunch – just about the time when take-offs were most frequent. The base commander was quite impressed with the entire club operation – even more so with the site and sound of his jets. "Ahhh," he said proudly, "the sound of freedom."¹

The members apparently didn't mind the noise. Helen Wilson used to marvel at the blue jets as they took off over Hole 16. "They'd lift off and scream overhead then bank and turn south. Such a marvelous site."

Karrakoff thought the noise made Old Ranch golfers more focused. "I think it's one reason we won so many tournaments against other clubs."

A May Jack and Jill mixed tournament was put off to August with the wives taking

¹ Numerous older members mentioned the "sound of freedom" phrase. Perhaps this was because signs reading "Pardon our noise... that's the sound of freedom" were posted on the base fence across from the exit for College Park East and outside most Navy Air Bases in the country. Los Al base officials also posted signs facing new housing tracts on the south and east side of the base warning "the base is not closing and that our jets fly seven days a week."

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The Halloween parties were very popular. Some of the costumes were quite creative, including the half dressed ensembles worn by Marilyn Salonen and Mrs. Kasabli. From the front they were fully dressed. From the rear there was a decided southern exposure. (bottom right) pirates Hody Lane and showgirl Joanne Brett and her cavalry officer husband, Tom.

over the organizing. Tourney chair Helen Wilson decided a shotgun blind draw foursome would be an ideal “get to know you” format for the new club members. The event was a big success and the winning foursome was Bob Hall, Ruth Sandberg, Dr. Herbert (Chops) Movius and Jane Wells.

The organizational skills of the wives were again put to good use for the Men's first Member-Guest tournament a few weeks later. Twenty wives donned hostess outfits to serve refreshments on the course, check cards and post scores.

While the men presumably appreciated these efforts, they apparently didn't appreciate the ladies' golf skills, at least on the 7th Hole. Helen Wilson said “The old



Bob Mikelson (right) entertains a group of golfers with his array of trick shots with one foot in a tire. Wait... he was using it while giving a golf lesson?

hole was like a hundred yards over the lake, and Board members didn't think the women could clear it. They wanted to move our tee closer and we fought it. So they sent the pro out there and he would give golf balls to any lady who cleared the lake. He ran out of balls in no time and we ended up keeping the tee where it was."

Weekend tee times were at a premium, even though the course was still dotted with stick trees. The immature foliage did not dim the enthusiasm of Baron Lane when he celebrated the club's second ace in July—using a 4-wood on the 210-yard Hole No. 7. Exactly who had the first hole in one is apparently lost to history.

While they waited to get on the course, members regaled their buddies with stories of their businesses, their families. Dr. Bill Dummit spoke proudly of the exploits of his son Dennis, who was setting records as an All-American quarterback at Long Beach City College. The next year Dennis, would be leading the UCLA Bruins to an 8-1-1 mark and a No. 5 national ranking.

Another medical man, Dr. John Messersmith, shared the baseball exploits of his son, Andy, who was working his way up through the minor leagues at the time. Andy, the first star of the Rossmoor-Los Alamitos Little League back in 1958, would make his major league debut the following summer and have a long big league career and play a key role in changing the baseball free agency rules. The elder Messersmith would reach the semi-finals of the first club championship and win many weekend tournaments at Old Ranch partnering with the likes of Joe Brainard.

Brainard often invited his friend Les Harris, whose son Greg would also soon be

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It seemed no Old Ranch party or event was complete without a group photo that included the Wilsons, Straubs and Sandbergs with various other couples. Shown at this Hawaiian luau party was (standing, l-r) Tom Brett, unknown, Joanne Brett, Bob Hall, Curt Straub, and unknown. In front are Helen Wilson, unknown, Ruth Sandberg, and Betse Straub.

pitching in the major leagues and have a 15-year career which included being the only player to ever pitch both left and right handed in a single game. The baseball glove used that day is in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

In September over 300 members and guests crammed the clubhouse dining area to toast the winners of the club's first Roundup, the member-guest tournament. Lynn Levy and his guest, Tom Haines of Meadowlark, turned in the low gross score of 228, while Curt Straub and guest Elwood Taylor of Palos Verdes Golf Club took away the low net honors with a 208.

The rains returned in November and Old Ranch was closed all of Thanksgiving week. As planned, this put five of the fairways completely under water -- not the last time that would happen.

Fortunately the skies cleared, allowing the first club championship to take place. It was a match play format. Don Winge and Dr. Dick McBride had the low qualifier scores. But the big honor went to Dave Becker who bested McBride, 3-2, in their 36 hole finale. McBride twice came back from 3-down to one-down but Becker, clinched the title with birdies on the 33rd and 34th. Finishing in third place for that first event was Jack Fedder and Dr. John Messersmith.



Don Winge, shown here demonstrating his good swing, was low qualifier with Dr. Dick McBride at the opening round of the first club championship. Ultimately Dave Becker defeated McBride for the first club championship. The final 54 holes were a match play format.

For the sake of posterity, we mention all the flight winners:

- 1st—Jim Campion defeated Bernie Solomon, 3 and 2
- 2nd—John Russell defeated Burt Moreno, 5 and 4
- 3rd—Buzz Stubbs defeated Barney Hansen, 1 up
- 4th—Wayne Ferrell defeated Bernie Wishney, 5 and 4
- 5th—Ralph Cobb defeated Tom Baker, 4 and 3
- 6th—Bob Smyth defeated Mike Passantino, 4 and 3
- 7th— Bill Davis defeated Roy Showalter, 1 up
- 8th— Len Quamma defeated Bill McDonald, 5 and 4
- 9th—Harold King defeated Doug Smith , 2 and 1
- 10th—Doug Benwell defeated Maury Cohen, 3 and 1
- 11th—Bill Hoppe defeated Lavane Sampson, 2 and 1

Members could play in at least one tournament a week and also attend at least three different social events each month – including numerous costume events and not just on Halloween. Or members could show up for dinner and enjoy the solo piano stylings of Hank Barto on some nights and his full band on weekends.

The staff was also already organizing a trip for interested members – a 10-day Hawaiian Stampede in April. Over the next few years Ferrell organized jaunts to Spain, Scotland, Polynesia, Greece and even the golf nirvana of Pinehurst.

Shorter trips happened as well. Norm Gordon said the Lanes (Baron and Hody), Bernie Solomon and others began regular twice-a-year trips to Pebble Beach. “We’d

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The club's first organized trip was a Hawaiian Stampede in April. Among those who signed up for that first club trip: John and Jane Wells, Judge Max and Norma Wisol, Isabel and Baron Lane, Bettie and Don Barden, Florence and Ely Somerville, Howard Amos and his daughter Arlene, Jim and Bettie Buckingham, Virginia and Mickey Lloyd, Gene and Renee Ashwil, Dr. Senn and Florence Bacon, Marilyn and Bob Solanen, Bill and Virginia Moore, and Maggie and Dr. Leo Goodman-Malamuth.

go once with the wives, and once just men. Then Ferrell started coming along and his best friend Tom Brett would too. It was crazy. In those days you could stay at the lodge and get three meals for \$105 a suite. Greens fees were \$15. Man, it was fun. Nowadays it's like \$2000 for the suite, and to play a round is like \$450."

The Women's Golf Association officially formed in October. Jeri Showalter was the group's first President but Betse Straub took over when Showalter had to step down for personal reasons. Straub not only ran the WGA capably, she also won the inaugural Women's Club Championship—the first of 12 she would win over 16 years. In February 1968, the WGA began their popular and long-running Bridge Social which ran on the fourth Wednesday of each month. That month also saw the ladies play their first President's Cup, with Norma Deeble the victor.

WGA Membership in those days apparently had more stress. Jean McElvie remembers her first meeting. "I was very nervous and hoped I met the dress code. Back then it was skirts only from May to October. Then slacks—no shorts!—until the following May."

As the club neared the end of its first year of operation, club administrator Wayne Ferrell and club secretary Betty Purpura took a few days off to get married on February 24, 1968 and honeymoon for a few days at Pebble Beach. They were back in time for the club's big first anniversary party.

More and more quality golfers became members. Andy Holmes came over from Lakewood, and won the second club championship in November 1968, using a strong putting game to defeat long-hitting Jack Augsburger 2-1 in a 36-hole final match.

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Getting ready for the club's first anniversary celebration (and the requisite helium party balloon) were club manager Wayne Ferrell, Board anniversary celebration chair Dave Cohee, Romer Kennedy, an unknown board member and perennial party helper Ruth Sandberg. (right) Cutting the cake at the club's first anniversary was Board Chairman John Wells, Maury "Mr. Golf" Luxford and Ferrell.



Almost every early member agrees Friday nights at Old Ranch were the big thing. Great meals by Chef Heinz and then the dance floor would be cleared. It became so crowded members were warned to call ahead for reservations because they were having to turn away people. One of those who got their reservation on this night was Abe Azar, (left) wearing his snazzy Old Ranch Governing Board Member blazer. (right) The original Old Ranch waitress uniforms were the height of restaurant fashion at the time (right out of Charley Brown's Steakhouse.



Augsberger, who had golfed at UCLA and won club championships at Meadowlark, Mesa Verde and Irvine Coast (now the Newport Beach Country Club), rallied to add the Old Ranch title to his collection in the following year.

By early 1968, club pro Willie Barber had succumbed to the lure of the senior tour and in March he resigned. On May 16, 1968 John Eperjesi took over as head pro, moving over from Virginia Country Club. Before that Eperjesi had played his

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With rain affecting so much of the first year's play, the incoming WGA Board members showcased their suggested golf gear -- raincoats, showercaps, goggles and umbrellas at their 1968 Installation Day. (Right) The group also honored Joan Hoskins, as the "lady of the lake." When wind blew a sign away at the member-Guest tourney she stretched to reach for it, lost her balance and slid into the lake.

golf at Oregon State and been an assistant pro at El Dorado and Yorba Linda.

Longtime member Barry Sher actually began his association with Old Ranch as a 13-year old employee for Eperjesi. "I'd ride my bike down from Rossmoor and hang around. Finally Eperjesi gave me work carrying golf bags around, then I worked on the carts and later in the pro shop. During college I worked nights on the range." Sher also picked up some good golfing tips – enough to later earn him a state junior college golf championship, defeating future pro tour star Mark O'Meara.

Another worker who developed his game was Mike Belmar who played golf at Western and at UCLA. While working the range shop at Old Ranch, he also won the Lakewood Country Club Championship five consecutive times.

Eperjesi was a popular head pro. He also had some old school methods on how to deal with club problems. One night, around 1972, Eperjesi asked Sher to show up at 9pm. "When I get there, Eperjesi had a shotgun and he handed me a shovel and we drove a cart out to the wet areas by old Number 17, near the Navy base." Here hundreds of coots, black swamp mudhens that were the plague of many a golf course, had been making themselves at home, not only messing up the greens with their droppings and their digging for worms, but often bothering golfers lining up a putt by flapping their wings against the water. "The coots drove Eperjesi crazy," said Sher. "So he shoots them with his shotgun and tells me to shovel them into a tub in the back of the cart."

They did this for about a week—Eperjesi shooting and Sher shoveling, until one night, they see cars with flashing lights speeding towards them on the Navy base side of the fence. "We got out of Dodge as fast as we could," chuckled Sher.

The Navy filed a complaint and the club had to adhere to federal fowl regulations



Betse Straub not only won twelve of the first sixteen Old Ranch women's club championships, she was also a top local player in tennis and contract bridge, a great dancer and championship diver, losing an Olympic qualifying spot to eventual gold medalist Pat McCormick. She also found time to attend law school and pass the bar. And she also set the course record at Skylinks soon after it opened in early 1959.



Bill Deeble Jr. carried on the family tradition of championship golf by winning Old Ranch's first junior golf title in 1968 with a score of 72 and getting his name on the club plaque which is carried by John Eperjesi. Finishing right behind were Mark Morrow with a 75 and Jeff Barton with a 78. .

after that, which still allowed for some coot management by shotgun – and not just by staff.

Les Harris remembers he and a couple other members heading out and shooting the birds with shotguns. “We must have emptied 3-4 boxes of shells each time. But it was legal. We just had to report how many we shot.”

Coots aside, the golfers were happy and the club social scene was very popular.

Barb Harris said “Friday night was always the big deal.” Marie Nessley agreed that Fridays were “fantastic. We had the twilights— nine holes and then a dance afterwards. We had so much fun. People from other clubs would always ask ‘next time you have a twilight would you invite me?’ ”

Harris remembers it always being crowded. “A dance floor was cleared away in the middle. Some of the women would sit up on Hank's piano as he played.” Over time, some women did more than sit on the piano. Some admit to at least once “streaking” the club. Well, kind of. Some towels were strategically placed.

Sometimes the members had too much fun. It was a different era. “People drank a lot more hard booze then,” said numerous old timers. Pro shop staffers said it was

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The July 4th Hayride in 1971 started out as comedy of errors. The haywagon was too heavy to pull over the golf course, Then the square dance caller didn't show up, so Tom Brett had to step in as an impromptu caller. And by the end of the night the barnyard "roosters" reportedly ended up laying four eggs. But it didn't stop members from having a good time. (top left) Chapin Burke, John Wells and Gaynor Pillsbury enjoy their time riding shotgun on the covered wagon, (top right) Bob and Lillian Terhune ride the rancho tractor. (bottom) The unofficial hosts for every Old Ranch social affair, (l-r, Gordon Sandberg, Betse Straub, John Wilson, Curt Straub, Ruth Sandberg and Helen Wilson) hold court at their table after a delicious meal.

not unusual to show up for work on an early weekend morning and find a member sleeping off a tough night in a golf cart outside.

While younger generations protested about conspicuous consumerism, this generation wasn't buying it. They had endured the Depression and World War. Now life was good and they were going to enjoy it. Three-martini lunches and three pack a day cigarette habits were the norms.

They certainly enjoyed it in the billiard and card rooms where stakes could get high. Barry Sher, then a pro shop worker, remembers making deliveries in the card



In 1970 Mike Blum received the championship trophy from 1969 winner Jack Augsburger. The pair had competed against each many times before, and Augsburger would win again in 1971 while Blum would win five Old Ranch titles.

room and seeing thousands of dollars on the table, usually during rounds of gin.”

One of the club’s top gin players was Ben Baines who joined Old Ranch in 1969. With Glen Plumb he won the club’s Gin Rummy title multiple times. And when not playing tournaments, he was playing gin in the card room.

“And when they weren’t playing gin, they were playing Tonk (a form of Knock Rummy),” said Judge Gordon, “and that could really cost you money.”

One member recalls a pot exceeding \$20,000. Others recall that the gambling pots were not the only outrageous thing happening in the card room or the billiard room, but preferred to leave details to the imagination.

Somehow word got around town about the dollars on the tables and late one Saturday night, robbers crashed the game with guns drawn and took all the money from the players in the room.

There were other bumps. In the late 1960s the economy forced cutbacks, especially in local aerospace defense spending. Companies trimmed expense accounts and workers had to cut back on non-essential expenses – like club memberships.

But for every dropped club membership, there were others waiting to step in—like Ben Baines or Mike Blum who both joined in 1969. Baines not only made his mark playing gin, but as a Chairman of the Board of Governors (1970), and as a memorable caller at the very crowded Bingo games.

Blum would be one of the club’s top golfers over the next thirty years. He won

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2:30 (2) The New Society
(3) UCLA vs. USC for
★ ALL THE MARBLES!
(5) Pacific 8 Basketball USC vs.
UCLA, live from Pauley Pavilion.
(1) Movie: "Texas" (western) '41—
Glenn Ford, William Holden, Claire
Trevor.
3:00 (2) Insider/Outsider
(4) Movie: "Mask of the Gorilla"
(horror) '64—Bella Darvi, Charles
Vanel.
(7) Celebrity Bowling Frank Gorshin
and his wife, Chris, compete
against James Farentino and his
wife, Michele Lee.
(15) [SPECIAL] John Agar Celebrity
Golf Highlights of the two-day, best
of four balls competition at the
Old Ranch Country Club in Orange
County.
(17) (3) Feature
(23) (6) Pacific 8 Basketball USC at
UCLA.

John Eperjesi brought the John Agar Celebrity Golf Classic to Old Ranch in March 1971 and earned the club some nationwide TV exposure. (left) Eperjesi laughs as Agar awards womens pro Janet Caponi a driver for hitting it closest to the pin.

his first club title in 1970, then repeated in 1972 and 1977, becoming the club's first three-time champ. He was also the runner-up 1973, 74 and 75 when he lost to Don Brynildsen, Tom Simmerman and Tom Gorrell.

Shortly before the start of 1971 Pro John Eperjesi announced the club would co-host a two-day Pro-Am Charity Tournament on March 6-7 along with actor John Agar (best known for his short marriage to Shirley Temple and six movies with John Wayne including *Fort Apache*, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, and the current *Big Jake* and *Chisum*). Forty celebrities would each play with three amateurs in a two-day best ball match benefiting the Orange County Peace Officers. Among the celebrities were Glen Campbell, Donald O'Connor, Pat Boone, Mickey Rooney, Fred MacMurray, Jack Lemmon, Jack LaLanne, Forrest Tucker, Alan Hale (the Skipper on *Gilligan's Island*), Jackie Coogan (Uncle Fester on *The Addams Family*), Phil Crosby and Richard Long (*Nanny & the Professor*), Dale Robertson, Clint Eastwood, Efreim Zimbalist Jr, and Gene Barry. Also recruited to play were local athletes such as the Rams' Jack Snow (who lived in Seal Beach), Merlin Olsen, Charlie Cowan, Pat Studstill, Tom Mack, future baseball Hall of Famer Bob Lemon (of Los Alamitos and Long Beach), Olympic diving champion Pat McCormick and US Open Champ Donna Caponi and her sister Janet, also a touring pro. Highlights from the two day tournament were broadcast nationally, a big marketing coup for the club.



A joke by comedian Buddy Lester (second from right) gets big laughs from (l-r) club pro John Eperjesi, unknown, Tom Brett, Pat Willingham, John Agar, and club GM Wayne Ferrell.

Old Ranch golfers were also making a mark on SoCal Association team play. They captured the Group 11 title by defeating visiting Mesa Verde 28-20 after both teams had come into the match undefeated with 4-0-1 records.

Helen Wilson, still a regular in the club's bridge room to this day, was elected the second President for the WGA and continued the process of organizing and certifying a women's team to compete against other clubs in the WSCGA – the Women's Southern California Golf Association. The work paid off in March 1969 when the Old Ranch women hosted their first certified Member-Guest Invitational.

She was followed as President by Joan Hoskins, then Loralee Turner. As the 1970s arrived, over 200 women now belonged to the WGA.

The trees and shrubs on the course were growing and were being enjoyed by golfers -- well, most of the trees. Les Harris recalled that one tree on old Hole No. 2 caused Wayne Ferrell so many problems, he had the course superintendent remove it. It apparently didn't bother anyone else. Over 200 people entered the 1971 4th of July 36-hole Jack and Jill tourney -- so many that they played the shotgun format in six-somes. Afterwards the golfers and others enjoyed a western barbecue -- and weren't too disappointed when a hayride had to be cancelled because of mechanical failure. The attendees got a pleasant surprise when some of the "roosters" borrowed to add flavor to the event, ended up laying eggs.

When the Board suggested it might be a good idea to expand some facilities, even skeptical company President Pres Hotchkis conceded they may have a point.

"Every new Board always wants to put their mark on something," he said, re-



Anniversary parties were always among the most popular events on the club calendar. In 1971 it took a bevy of Board members to help head pro John Eperjesi cut the anniversary cake. (l-r) Bob Salonen, Ed Losch, Maury Bernsen, Bernie Solomon, John Wells, Eperjesi and General Manager Wayne Ferrell.

membering his term as President of the University Club. “One board wanted a swimming pool. Another wanted a steam room.” Hotchkis declined -- “how many people actually use a steam room?” Paramount above everything, Hotchkis noted, “the club was a business. And expenditures had to be justifiable.”

What was justifiable was expanding the dining and cocktail areas. In 1971, the company pushed out the dining room and cocktail lounge walls, and added another 2500 square feet of space to the facility. Then in 1974 another 1900 feet was added for additional office space, a ladies card room and lounge... and a men’s sauna.

After Ferrell, probably the most visible presence at the golf club in those early years was Tom Brett, a big, former Marine sergeant. Mike Blum described Brett as “a larger than life character,” and a close friend of Ferrell which sometimes made him act like he was part of management. Judge Norm Gordon says the two met when Brett sold hotel book advertising and Ferrell managed hotels.

Blum remembers Brett holding court at the bar, which in those days was near the front and you had to walk through it to reach the dining room.

Helen Wilson said that whenever the women’s golf team returned from a tournament, Brett would be at the bar, waiting to buy all of us a drink.”

“Around the women, Brett was always the Southern Gentleman,” said Ted Pollard. “But around the guys he was great one night and one ornery cuss the next.”

Judge Gordon recalled a trip to Lake Tahoe for gambling and golf. “Tom lost a lot of money and his credit was cut off. Then he started getting belligerent with a security guy and the next thing we know, Tom is knocked out and on his way to the



(l-r) Marian Braly, Robert Salonen, Carol Greer, Claude Baker, Betty Ferrell, and Paul Southgate show just how seriously they take their golf.

hospital. Three, four hours later, Tom's back with bandages and he's gambling again like nothing happened."

Brett's propensity for pugilism sometimes caused unexpected worries.

"A year or so after I joined in 1972," Gene Novotny remembers, "the club put together this amazing trip to Spain, airfare, hotel and two meals a day... all for \$400 – with tax! The morning of the flight we show up at Old Ranch. Everyone gets on the bus except for Tom and his wife who aren't there. Finally Wayne tells us Tom had been arrested for a fight in Long Beach the night before so we were going to wait until Tom was bailed out and he and his wife get to the club. So we wait and we wait and we're all sure we're going to miss our flight. But finally, Brett arrives and the bus heads to the airport. And fortunately, we made our flight... and the trip was great!"

Whatever one's opinion, all agreed that Brett was one of the more memorable characters of the club's first ten years.

As a sport, golf's popularity surged in the early 1960s thanks to television and the heroics of Arnold Palmer whose late come-from-behind charges made him one of the most recognized figures in the world.

But by the late 1960s golf had competition from tennis which in 1968 became an "open" sport — i.e., professionals were now allowed to compete in the big tournaments formerly restricted to amateurs— the US Open, Wimbledon, etc. The Bixby Ranch Company saw an opportunity for a local private tennis club.

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When the Bixby Ranch Company decided to capitalize on the growing popularity of tennis, Wayne Ferrell tapped his old Newport Beach buddy Glenn Turnbull to manage the operation. Turnbull (right) hired two local college players, Mark Elliott (left) and Bob Litrich (third from left) to assist him. Terry Albert, daughter of all-time great San Francisco 49er quarterback Frankie Albert and later a player at Stanford, was hired as the pro shop attendant. Six months after opening Turnbull left to run the Balboa Bay Club and the Bixbys turned the tennis operation over to the 22-year old Litrich. He ran the operation through 2004.

“It just seemed a natural thing,” noted Pres Hotchkis. “Tennis was becoming so popular and we had the land.”

By late 1969, the Bixby’s had a staff in place and were constructing a new tennis club across the street. To run the tennis operation, Ferrell reached out to Glenn Turnbull who had been managing the Newport Tennis Club. Turnbull, a former dancer in movies, brought with him two young professionals – Mark Elliott and Bob Litrich, recent tennis stars at San Jose State and Long Beach State.

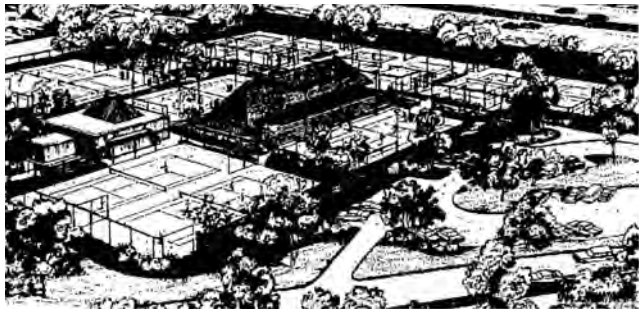
The Old Ranch Tennis Club opened its doors in June 1970 and was another success. But after six months Turnbull accepted a very attractive offer from the Balboa Bay Club, and Litrich assumed control, holding that position for the next thirty four years.

“I was young,” Litrich recalled, “but the Bixby folks said we feel you can do it. Have fun and make it the best tennis club around.”

Many current Old Ranch members joined the club through the tennis side – Arnie Wilkins, Jerry Waletzko, Mike Baghramian, Tom and Bunny Burns, Les and Marsha Fatone, Jane Lavarias, and Ted Pollard to name a few. Tennis members could also utilize the main clubhouse dining room and other facilities. And Norm Gordon said golf members could join the tennis side “for peanuts.” The amount was \$90 annually and \$36 per month.

“I joined the tennis club because the lumber company I worked for encouraged it,” said Pollard. “But tennis was not as good a sales tool as golf. In golf, you take out a client and over three hours or so you get a chance to talk to him and get to know him. Then you have a few drinks and next thing you know, you’ve made a deal. In tennis you’re usually facing a client across the court, and when you’re done you’re tired and sweaty, and you just want to go home and shower.”

Despite such drawbacks, the tennis club thrived. Litrich worked hard to develop



the club's youth program and worked with USTA and other groups to bring tournaments to Old Ranch. In the process, the club played a small part in the women's sports revolution.

In January 1972 Litrich arranged for Old Ranch to host preliminary qualification matches for the Long Beach Press-Telegram's Women's Tennis Championships, the second stop for the new Virginia Slims tour. Long Beach was a key city on the tour because it was the home town of Billie Jean King. A year before King had convinced nine other players to start their own tennis circuit when the US Lawn Tennis Association would not support them in their quest for comparable pay. The result was the Virginia Slims tour which eventually became the Women's Tennis Association.

Old Ranch would host the preliminaries for the Long Beach stop for several years and at first Old Ranch Tennis Club members even housed some of the participating international players, becoming adopted families who lived and died by their guests' fortunes. The club earned special mention in the early Virginia Slims' tournament programs. Twelve world class players, including King, were seeded into the final rounds and the Old Ranch survivors filled out the rest of the brackets.

The club's first men's tournament was the Old Ranch Invitational in November 1971. The event had a \$1,000 prize and featured mainly former local college stars -- but the Long Beach Press-Telegram called it the best



TAKING TIME FROM TENNIS for small talk, Billie Jean King enjoys a relaxing moment with her mother, Mrs. Eda Martin, and tennis partners, Mrs. Harold Quiver, left, and Mr. Quiver.

Tennis tourney pledge: Action on, off court



DREAMING of the day people will be watching her, Terry Frazier, 12, watches the pros in action at old Ranch Tennis Club.



EXCITING volley during exhibition tennis match highlights Mrs. David Geiss and Bill Wright, tennis lovers.

By JUVIE CHRISTENSEN
Women's Editor

Generating on-site excitement for the forthcoming Billie Jean King Invitational, tennis balls and ballers gathered at Old Ranch Tennis Club to host the brand new and to find a line to sign up for tickets.

Hosted by Old Ranch Club Manager Wayne Farris, and club President, manager of the Tennis Club, the party was highlighted by an exhibition match featuring Pat McCabe and Barbara Wright, and resident pros, Bill Laddock and Mark Tisdell.

Early the most talented of spectators were stars, Mrs. Long and Beaumont Canada of San Francisco, who will be among 18 outstanding professional women tennis players scheduled to appear in the tournament Jan. 14 through 17 in Long Beach.

And guests also heard from Joyce Dale and Mrs. Frank McClellan, co-chairmen of the women's tennis committee, that if the tournament action won't take place on the tennis courts.

Plans are underway for an invitational event and Mrs. Quiver party at Frazier's new Quiver Center of Industry, Jan. 16, preceding Stanley's conditional matches.

UNEXPECTED incidents also were heard to help address matters, answer telephone and line up. Inquiries are being answered by tennis players to live with during their stay in Long Beach.

Among those aiding those, Dale and McClellan is coordinating the tournament's on-site site and Mrs. Moore, Richard Johnson, and Mrs. William Lewis, Mrs. Williams, Harry E. Aggers, Bill Martin and Harold Quiver.

Tournament bid information may be obtained from the Independent, Progressive-Promotional Department, The LPF, along with Long Beach Recreation Commission and Long Beach Tennis Club. It is expected the event, Mrs. King's husband, Larry E. King, is tournament director.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Over its 35 years under the Bixby banner, no tennis player had more success than Norm Slomann who won “well over twenty club titles” according to tennis director Bob Litrich. In 1972 Slomann (above, right) not only captured the singles championship, he also won the doubles title with partner Steve Gordon. (center). They are shown above with tennis director Bob Litrich.

tennis in the area for well over ten years.” In 1972 the prize grew to \$3,000 and \$4,000 the year after that.

In 1972 Litrich brought in a sanctioned seniors tournament which was won by the legendary Bobby Riggs -- who would frequently stop in at Old Ranch over the years, “He loved the snack shack hamburgers made by Marilyn Dodd.”

Riggs indirectly helped Old Ranch’s tennis success. “His nationally televised match against Billy Jean King in September 1973 sent tennis through the roof,” said Litrich. “Within months we were maxed out.”

At the tennis club’s third anniversary ball in late September, plans were unveiled showing the addition of four more courts, two practice alleys with ball machines, and a three-tiered seating area to accommodate 500 spectators at the club’s center court,

Litrich also enticed Kathy Harter, one of the top players in the world, to teach at Old Ranch. Although originally from Lakewood, she had been living in Seal Beach for some years. “Kathy had reached Number 3 or 4 in the world,” said Litrich. “Then she fell and broke her wrist in a South American tournament. Her recovery required several operations and lasted almost two years. While she was mending I got her to come out and give some lessons. That lasted for about two or so years.”

Kathy was soon joined on the Old Ranch staff by her brother Craig, one of the sport’s hardest servers. He stayed there for many years.

In early 1970 the Navy announced that the Los Al Air Base was on its closure list. This was not a surprise. Salesmen at the Rossmoor and College Park East sales offices, eager to close deals, had almost guaranteed it for years.

The Los Alamitos City Council had even drawn up plans which called for 1200

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



Cutting the cake at the Tennis Club's third anniversary celebration were Governors Chuck Steele, Don Desfors, Dr. Ben Parks, Old Ranch GM Wayne Ferrell, Dale Jensen, Lee Gray and tennis club director Bob Litrich. Litrich was effusive over the support of the Board and club members right from the start.



ABOVE: Being an anniversary gala emcee is tough work for Bob Litrich. Madge Wigod makes him drink champagne from a shoe, while he is also helping Connie Tuttle cut the anniversary cake.



RIGHT: Nancy Trainer (left) and Madge Pizer were among the most successful women tennis players at the club.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Over the years the club continued to schedule not only long trips but also weekend excursions for members. The trips sometimes went to Palm Springs, Lake Tahoe, or Pebble Beach. The 1972 outing above was a weekend trip for golf and gambling in Las Vegas.

residences, a shopping center, hiking and bike trails, riding stables and a lake with boating and fishing concessions, and continued use of the Navy Golf Course. The county plan made the runway available to commercial aviation and constructing a new terminal with an entrance off Lampson Avenue.

But in the summer of 1971, the military changed course. The Defense Department recommended regular flights be resumed at the base, along with more helicopter operations by the Air National Guard and Army Reserve units.

By now Old Ranch was facing a more serious issue. Membership in private golf clubs was declining. Private clubs were deemed “elitist” driving players, especially younger ones, to public clubs. When the economy again went south, memberships again dropped and Old Ranch no longer had a waiting list to fill it.

Jerry Hutton, a former college baseball pitcher from Oklahoma, had just transferred here with his office supplies business. He joined Old Ranch when there was no longer a waiting list and remembers some others who joined about the same time.

“Fox Hills Country Club had shut down to become a shopping center and Ferrell convinced three or four of those members to join Old Ranch.” Many recall these guys as amazing golfers and colorful hustlers. Two, Ward “3-Iron” Gates and Smiley Quick, had stints on the pro tour. But Ed Elliott made the most lasting impression.

“Elliott was a hustler like you wouldn’t believe,” recalls Hutton. “He was about 5-6, 250 pounds, a World Class 9-ball player in the billiard room and just as good on the golf course. He’d hit balls over the clubhouse to the practice green. Guys would drink a bit and try to do it,” usually losing money to Elliott in the process.

Mike Blum remembers that some of the Fox Hills hustlers didn’t join Old Ranch. but played there frequently, even the legendary Titanic Thompson – a role model



One of the club's most popular special holiday events has always been the Fourth of July celebration, for members and staff alike. In the early days a Firecracker mixed pairs event started off the day's activities followed by a great lakeside barbecue and then a 4th of July fireworks celebration. After taking a break for some years during the 1999-2000 renovation and its aftermath, the event was re-instated in 2011 and has become even more popular.

for the character of Sky Masterson (in the musical "Guys and Dolls") and a mentor for the noted hustler Minnesota Fats.

For some, the club's initiation fee, now \$250, was reportedly waived as were the monthly \$60 dues. Management probably assumed they would get it back from the additional revenue on the bar ledger.

"These guys would gamble on anything," said Hutton, "and they were always looking for an edge." Elliott used the Titanic Thompson trick of leaving a garden hose on the practice putting green overnight to leave a groove that a putt would follow.

Elliott also duplicated a trick shot made famous by another legendary golf hustler, The Mysterious Montague. Montague bet Bing Crosby he could beat him in golf using a baseball bat, a shovel and a rake for his clubs. At Old Ranch Elliott used a sledgehammer. "He used the sledge hammer to hit the ball to a golf path, then used a rake to hit the ball down the cart path ... and it would roll towards the hole."

Hutton remembers Elliott betting Tom Brett he could walk on his hands from the entrance to front desk... and then did it.

Although memorable and entertaining, these gamblers presence wasn't always welcome elsewhere. Gene Novotny remembers the Los Angeles Country Club declining an Old Ranch player a spot in a tournament. "Other clubs wouldn't play in our Member-Guest tournament," said Ed Copelin. "And we had to cancel our Member-Guest tournament for a couple years. It wasn't until the 1980s when we got

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY

everything calmed down.”

As word (or rumors) of the waived fees and dues got around some full-paying members were understandably upset. Bob Lovejoy, who had taken over as Head Golf Pro in mid-1975, said Ferrell was caught between “some members who thought they were equity owners of a private club and an owner who wanted a profit.”

Mike Blum agreed. “Wayne had built up the club and he ran it like it was his own personal fiefdom. Wayne was the King, but he was a good King... a great King. Sure, there were issues, but in all my years here the club was never run better than the way Wayne and Betty ran it,” a point echoed by Judge Norm Gordon.

1976 and 1977 were big years. The country (and Old Ranch) celebrated the nation’s bicentennial in the former, and 1977 marked the club’s tenth anniversary which of course required another big celebration —this one with two big bands.

But by early 1977 the economy was struggling again. Post-war cutbacks and deflation. Inflation and a stagnant business climate created stagflation. Interest rates rose to 20%. Plus societal changes were forcing all private clubs to change their marketing and financial models. Old methods were going to have to change.

Ferrell had been in the hotel and hospitality business for 38 years and he was now willing to let someone else make those changes. In February 1977 he announced he would be resigning on May 31. He and Betty then moved down to Escondido.



One of the biggest events for the WGA was its August Member-Guest tournament and chair Darlene Allen (top left) and her committee set a very high standard to beat with their Derby Days theme. (Back row, l-r) Darlene Allen, Ginny Wierk, Jeanna Anderson, Carol Slasson, Joi Aubrey; (front) Peggy Ordway, Mary Pearson, Peggy Lickwar, Marcella Lonergan, Betsy McCuiston.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



In 1972, Hank Barto and his five piece group entertained at the New Year's Eve celebration. Barto and his wife Shirley were at the club's opening night and have had the longest employment at Old Ranch — through fifty years and eight general managers.



(Above) The Half-Rounders were a womens group that liked to sneak in nine holes on a Friday or Sunday. They were frequently joined by their husbands who apparently didn't mind practicing some tricky putts using toilet seats.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



In 1968 the club instituted a Junior Summer Program for youth 9-17. Receiving trophies for their age groups were: Boys 9-11: Tom Brown, Tom Cheer, Bart Brainard; Boys 12-14: Jon Allen, Jim Steponovich, Tim Cohee; Boys 15-17: Steve Steponovich, Rich Johnson, Jeff Sweeney; Girls 9-11: Kelly McCarty, Maggie Wells; Girls 12-17: Meg Fergus, Wendy Bowen..



The 1976 youth winners: (l-r) Assistant Club pro Kim Porter, Randy Holmes (Jr. Champ), Margaret Parson (Girls champ), participants Mac Parson, John Hall (yes, the future club head pro), and Meredith White. Not pictured was B-flight winner John Passanisi.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



Doug Brynildsen, a native of Ohio, had just recently relocated to California when he won the Old Ranch Club Championship in 1973.



Tom Gorrell became the first golfer in club history to win in consecutive years when he captured the 1975 and 1976 titles. "Gorrell was a monster," remembers Barry Sher. "He could hit the ball a mile -- probably the only guy in the club who could hit the ball longer than Mike Higgins." In 1976 Gorrell finished fourth in the Los Angeles City Open.



Old-timers remember Ed Elliott (left) as one of the true characters of the club's first ten years. He was an expert trick shot artist and some say he would bet on just about anything. With Tom Brett he won some Member-Member tournaments at Old Ranch and placed high in open tournaments around the area.

OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



Bob Litrich presents awards to the finalists of the 1972 tennis doubles championship match between Annie Ross-Misako Yamazaki (on left) and Helen Calderon-Georgia Kolsky. Calderon-Kolsky won.



Tennis club members were a social group as evidenced by the above photo. Among the guests are Stan Miller, Linda Shea, Cheri Lieske, Chuck Bartell. One of the early stars of the club's youth program was Kevin McClintic (far right), shown with Mark Broersma. McClintic starred at Los Alamitos High School, Long Beach State and had a short stint on the pro tour. In 1972 Old Ranch began hosting USTA sanctioned seniors tournaments. In the first, #1 nationally ranked doubles team of Vern Hughes and Robin Hippensteel lost to Bobby Riggs and Larry Davis. Riggs, who in 1973 would defeat Margaret Court and then lose to Billy Jean King in nationally televised matches, often returned to Old Ranch-- he was a big fan of Madalyn Dodd's hamburgers.



OPEN FOR BUSINESS



At the end of the year the club directors would host a party for club employees. Shown above at the 1977 party were (seated) cocktail waitresses Sandy Perry and Anita Osgood, bartender Don Beeler and waitress Jane Hibbs. Standing behind them are Board Chairman Abe Azar and Director Tom Brett along with Cindy Culpepper (who was then the tennis club secretary). At this same gathering, Hibbs, an original employee, was honored for her 10 years with the club (along with chef Pete Mata, Sammy Madarang and Bert Funnell.



A simple team challenge among a couple golfers of different nationalities turned into a full-blown politically incorrect "Ethnic Tournament" in Oct. 1974. The Israelis (left) outlasted the Magyars 131-132, the Camel Jockeys, FBI (Full-Blooded Italians) and "Ireland Forever." Shown left are Mike Blum, Bing Birbaum, Mike Richman and Norm Gordon and scorekeeper Dolores Movius. They wore shirts with the Star of David and the word "Mazeltoiv."



Dr. Herbert "Chops" Movius (above right), who won the Charter Members Tournament on the club's 20th anniversary, receives his award from another charter member, Maury Cohn. Movius reportedly once served as a double for Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and eagled every hole on the old course. When asked why he continued working so late in life, he said "I was married six times and Wife No. 1 got the IBM stock."



Kim Porter came to Old Ranch in 1975 as an assistant pro. He so impressed GM Dean Kring that when Kring departed in 1980, he lured Porter away to be his new head pro at Mission Viejo Country Club. Porter later was pro and GM at Mesa Verde Country Club.



Robert L. Marshall with his menagerie collection of golf balls
—Staff Photo by CHRIS JOHNSON

**Barrage of golf balls
tees off links resident**

Some people collect tennis rackets, but Robert Marshall would prefer not to be thought of as a "tennis collector."

A housewife in the Old Ranch neighborhood in San Diego's College Park East, Marshall doesn't find much time to play the 150 golf balls he has accumulated.

They were holed against his house or near it from the country club during years by scores of slivers who managed to hit their feet the empty paved streets, over Kanyon Avenue, the driveway and into his yard. Marshall had to meet it with Old Ranch and sometimes recover his own wall.

Over a visiting granddaughter was hit on the leg by one of the postcard-sized missiles while standing in the Marshall's yard. And in the family dog, Paloma, has even the family dog, Paloma, has become frightened to return to the house.

Paloma and Robert and his wife, Dolores.

"These people here have collected a lot of golf balls. But not on the driveway and we have to hit the house," Marshall said. "I got the most. My wife's a letter

reporter that he and his wife did 'the people and surroundings very pleasant' on San Diego. ... "He, she do have a major problem" — the golf ball barrier.

He later said in an interview that he and his wife have reportedly called and written to officials of the Old Ranch Country Club, asking them to try to get the barrier removed.

Marshall thinks the only real way would be to use rubber screens to act as a barrier for golf balls but by electric shockers and covered by weather wicks.

Marshall, the resident and former member of their picture window hasn't been bright.

Along with the golf balls they have other problems: their houses shake, rattle and almost fall whenever heavy traffic on Kanyon Avenue is in the area.

And the matter is not in San Diego City's hands.

Previously due to lack of sound insulation, the houses were built in 1960s and 1970s, and it is not a surprise that they are in the way of the morning.



Board member Van Harris and his wife admire the cake at the club's 13th anniversary party in 1980.



At the Tennis Club's 10th anniversary Bob and Marina Stinson (center) were presented the Family Achievement award for accumulating the most activity points. With them are Bob Litrich and Social Director Lynn Stein.