

## CHAPTER 4

# RENOVATION TO RENOVATION

The renovated Old Ranch Clubhouse hosted a two-night Open House on June 28 and 29, 1989. New General Manager Bill Elvins welcomed over 1100 guests.

The old wood exterior was replaced with a more modern stone and plaster look. While guests viewed the lavish remodeling, chef Dan Street and his staff provided gourmet hors d'oeuvres. And Hank Barto's music again enhanced the festive atmosphere

The front desk also had a new "old" look as long-time employee Shirley Barto was "welcomed back to the reception desk" after a two-year absence when she was running Francois' Manhattan, a long-time Long Beach fine dining restaurant. The restaurant's failure was Old Ranch's gain as she was welcomed back by all.

Also getting a new look was the men's locker room whose attendant, Lupe Torres, was by now almost an official full-time employee. Lupe's father, Benito, was a busboy at Old Ranch. Lupe started at the club as a maintenance substitute. When his full-time job at the Hyatt Edgewater and part time work at The Golden Sails allowed, Lupe would work extra hours at Old Ranch doing maintenance, waiting, busing, whatever. One day when the locker room attendant didn't show, Bob Silver stuck him in that slot. Lupe says to this day no one has ever officially told him the locker room job is permanently his. "I was afraid to ask Bob Silver. I thought he might say 'no, you're not experienced enough' and give it to someone else." Despite the uncertainty, Lupe is still there 31 years later.

As Lupe became a fixture in the locker room, he also began operating a de facto employment service -- consistently providing reliable hires and "outside services" for club members who needed some minor home improvement jobs.

Seeing talent in Lupe, the club paid for his courses in club and hotel hospitality management at Cal Poly Pomona. Tim King used Lupe as a translator when the

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In mid 1989 Bill Elvins, who had been overseeing the clubhouse renovation, took over as Old Ranch's fourth general manager. Elvins had a long career as a club manager and private club consultant before taking the Old Ranch position.



In early 1989 John Passanissi (above) won his first Governor's Cup,

Bixby Company wanted to provide all employees with a 401k plan.

Another worker who would also become a club institution was chef Alfredo Gonzales who joined the snack shack staff in 1991. He came over from the Mustard Seed in Long Beach and was soon serving up some of the best hamburgers and breakfast burritos around. Alfredo was no stranger to the club as his dad Angel had worked in the dining room for many years. Coming over just after was Leobardo Ramirez. All three originally hail from a small town in Jalisco state in Mexico.

One of the first beneficiaries of Old Ranch's new "look" was the Women's Golf Association which inaugurated the new changes when they resumed their big August Member-Guest Invitational tournament. With Helen Wilson and Ruth Sandberg at the controls, the theme of "In the Good Old Summertime" wowed the members and guests alike. Plus, the event came in \$602.91 under budget, no doubt helped by the fact only two of the day's husband helper/greeters took advantage of the budgeted two free drinks for their hard work.

Subsequent themes were "Up, Up and Away," "A Day at the races," and Farm Aid and Country Music

Longtime member Marilyn Hull said, "Elvins was good about giving the women lots of help during their tournaments." Elvins said the support was not just good for member morale, it was also good business. "You always wanted to do things that would help sell memberships, and these Member-Guest tournaments brought in potential members and good word-of-mouth."

A more official inauguration of the

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1989 saw two returns. Ruth Sandberg and Helen Wilson (right) returned to chair another August Member-Guest Tournament; and The Ranchettes (above) returned with another entertaining show.



clubhouse occurred in Fall 1989 when Jim Ream won the first of his 11 club championships. Dennis Murphy won the honors the next two years, but then Ream rolled off seven titles in a row to finish the 1990s.

Elvins' focused on the food and beverage side. "We had a good chef, Dan Street who stayed with us for awhile but when he moved back to Maryland with his family, we hired Jim De Leo." Elvins also brought on Peter Lam as assistant manager in charge for food and beverage operations. Lam was previously at Dove Canyon Country Club and Ambrosia, an opulent French restaurant in Newport Beach. He brought over some of Ambrosia's reputation for fine dining with flaming dishes like Steak Diane, and newer trendy samplings like a spinach salad, both prepared tableside by waiters.

The new dining offerings were a big hit, said Lam. "We were open for dinner three nights a week – Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, and we stayed very busy."

The catering side was the challenge -- the small banquet area made high quality weddings difficult. "For anything over 100 guests we had to include the dining room which was part of the bar area. So we would still have members coming in

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(left) Frankie Olsen was a very popular dining room hostess for over 20 years, (right) Here even longer were Alfredo Gonzales and Lupe Torres. Since 1990 Alfredo has been cooking up delicious breakfast burritos, english muffins and tuna cups in the snack shack. Lupe came to Old Ranch five years earlier, but since 1986 he has maintained the men's locker room and an unofficial employment office. The two are cousins from Jalisco, Mexico and their fathers, Angel and Jose had also worked at Old Ranch.

after a late round on the course in their shorts and golf shirts interacting with wedding guests in suits.” Lam quickly learned not to book a wedding that would start too early.

Outside new course superintendent Don Parsons focused on one of the club's recurring issues...drainage. Bob Silver recalled, “I remember after a big rain seeing him stand out in the middle of a fairway turned lake in four feet of water and just studying everything. He finally just said. We can make it work – French drains.” Within a few weeks, Parson and his crew began to dig trenches and place lines of perforated pipe buried in gravel to carry the surface water away from the course's normal wet spots. Members weren't sold on these at first, but they did a good job.”

However, the Bixby Company had even bigger plans.

For 25 years Bixby had focused on large scale development — housing tracts like College Park East and commercial projects like the Marketplace.

However, by 1983 the large parcels were developed, leaving only the smaller, odd-shaped lots. One was the 18-acre parcel between Rossmoor and the 405 freeway that had been removed from the original Rossmoor development because it was under the Navy base's aircraft takeoff path.

But now the Navy was gone and Army aircraft didn't require such a long take off path or “accident zone.” They also had smaller surrounding height restrictions.

Bixby's 1983 master plan proposed the parcel as an office park with two restau-

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The 1989 Old Ranch WGA team: (Front Row, l-r) Capt. Patti Ornelas, Norma Deeble, Linda Stadler, Sylvia Duncan, Barbara Harris, Margie Horn and Co-Captain Kathy Meltzer. (Middle row) Patsy Mosley, Betty Sichel, Kay Maggio, Betty Noonan, Jeanne Leonard, Helen Wilson, Anne Diamond; (Back row) June Welker, Jan Etter, Mali Kearns, Sue Ewart, Betty Pfahler, Glenna Geary, (Not present for team photo: Cathy Blackmun, Marie Hall, Peggy Hamilton, Arlys MacKay, Teresa Nichols, Laura Reed, Pat Schneider, Jean Walsh and Jackie Wang.)

rants and three five story towers.

Residents from College Park East and Rossmoor protested – traffic was the main reason. Two years of discussions and concessions followed. Bixby reduced the buildings to four stories, moved them 90 feet south (away from Rossmoor), and agreed to build an access road connecting Seal Beach Boulevard with 7th Street. Still, the Seal Beach Planning Commission denied the plan. However, a six-hour city council meeting ended in an approval. Even then, the opposition forced a city-wide referendum on the issue in February 1985. College Park East voted strongly against it, but an even stronger Leisure World turnout (perhaps motivated by a Bixby promise to provide a regular tram bus to the Rossmoor Shopping Center) carried the day. The company commenced construction and buildings, including Spaghettini, were occupied in mid-1987.

The next development more directly affected Old Ranch. In 1985 the military lease on the 80-acre “accident zone” at the end of the runway expired. The land --

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The theme for the 1990 WGA Member-Guest was Up, Up and Away, and the entertainment provided by a raunchy, scantily clad marionette had the full attention of all the ladies.

occupied by strawberry fields and a sod farm – reverted back to Bixby control.

Some locals believed Bixby was waiting for the entire base to close so they could reclaim the property taken in late 1942, then close the golf club and build a new College Park size residential tract.

Bixby's Ron Bradshaw disputes this. By the mid-1980s Bixby believed the airfield was not going away, in part because of its importance to the Seal Beach Weapons Station. More importantly, they had already decided to dissolve the company itself. In 1983 Pres Hotchkis retired as President and none of the thirty-plus heirs wanted to head the company. "They had their own lives in other fields at this point," said Hotchkis, "and didn't have the same attachment to the company and land that we did."

Equally important, noted Bixby CFO Tim King, as the older generation died off, the younger would be hit hard by taxes. "From this point on, it was assumed the company would be dissolved and assets should be made ready for sale. If it made business sense, the company would invest in improvements to maximize value before any sale." This was the case for Old Ranch and the surrounding parcels.

In January 1991 the Bixby Ranch Company asked Seal Beach to rezone 213 acres of company land. Most of the seven acres south of Lampson, currently used for golf course Holes 2 and 3, would become a park although a slice along Seal Beach Boulevard would accommodate a hotel and two restaurant pads. The golf

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In 1991 and 1992 WGA entertainment committees outdid themselves with their Fractured Fashions show. The bit was so popular the ladies were asked to perform it at other women's clubs. (l-r) Vange Morey wears her version of a sack dress. (a burlap sack from Sak's); Marie Hall in a seersucker dress (those dots are actually lollipop suckers) Betty Pfaller wears a box cut dress and Sylvia Duncan showcases a sale dress.

course would expand from 117 acres to 158 acres and 168 homes would be constructed in two private communities within the golf course. Ted Robinson, the course's original architect, had already been hired to design the reconfigured course. A third tract of 40 or so lower-priced homes would be set on the north side.

The Bixby project was caught in a controversy over a larger local housing project – 1000 homes on the Hellman Ranch land south of Leisure World. This was originally called the Ponderosa Homes. It became the Mola Homes when Newport Beach builder Frank Mola bought and altered the project to 350 homes on a new private golf course. The projects were lumped together and over-simplified — growth vs. no growth — and heated up city politics. The intense opposition forced the Bixbys to regroup.

The politics did not stop club activities. On the tennis side, although it wasn't like the 1980s, Bob Litrich and Lynn Stein kept members busy and active. Norm Slomann was still winning tournaments but there was more competition. Ken Parker, a former star and coach at Los Alamitos High School, won a couple singles

## BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

### Bixby proposes up to 291 houses on the Old Ranch



In 1991 the Bixby Ranch Company unveiled plans for a drastic renovation of Old Ranch which included two private communities within the course. Most of the land for the north and "Westgate Village" homes came from the 80 acres of the base "accident zone" which reverted back to Bixby a few years earlier. Room for Eastgate Village came from making the golf course shorter and smaller. Most of old Holes 2 and 3 would be given to the city to construct a 7-acre park.

championships and some doubles titles as well in the 1990s.

Elvins suggested to Tim King that tennis should be broken off into a separate operation. "Bob knew more about tennis than I did plus his operation existed in its own world, so we separated that off."

Elvins also gave Bob Silver free reign to manage the golf operations -- and the 1990s were an interesting time in the golf world. When some gender dissatisfaction surfaced over a couple issues, (one being the club remodel which minimized the women's cardroom) Silver tried to calm tensions by giving the women a bonus tournament. He re-instituted a mixed team Derby for the 10 lowest men's and women's handicaps. Unlike Dean's Derby where teams were paired via a snake (#1 man with #10 woman), the Silver Cup Derby was a blind draw format.

Sometimes Silver and Litrich worked together to organize trips, but on his own Silver put together popular trips to Canada, Broadmoor in Colorado, to Pinehurst, North Carolina, Ireland and finally a big trip to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.





Bob Silver organized The Silver Cup Derby as a positive, fun event which included the women of the club during some contentious times. The 1995 competition featured a final hole battle between Sue Ewart and Bob Bonin and Dennis Murphy and Kathy Meltzer.



“The Ireland trip was a lot of fun. We actually ran into Bill Murray (the TV comedian and film-star) twice.”

In part because of Ream’s dominance Bob Silver tried to organize other events for the men golfers as well. He recruited many club golfers for the Oldsmobile Scramble in which a pro put together four golfers from his club. The team would qualify locally and then have their pro join them in the Sectional tournament. The winner advanced to the National Finals at Disney World in Florida.

“I had taken a team to the Sectionals every year since 1982, with little success. That ended in 1990 when we won the Sectional and advanced to the National Finals which was a huge tournament, played right before the PGA Tour stop, the Disney Classic.”

In 1991, the Old Ranch squad won the Sectional and again advanced to the National Finals at Disney World and finished 37th among some 200 plus teams nationwide. The 1994 team also reached the National Finals. But the 1998 squad topped them all, tying for first at the Sectionals, then winning a playoff thanks to a great set-up shot by Denny Despairs, to advance to the National Finals at Las Vegas. Although because of scheduling conflicts, Silver had to send assistant pro Bobby Frazier in his place.

1992 marked the club’s 25th anniversary. To celebrate, the club hosted a four-day weekend of events from May 14-17, including five golf tournaments, a special



The Oldsmobile Scramble was a nationwide competition which teamed up four club players with their club pro. Silver and Old Ranch took a team to the sectionals every year since 1982. The 1990 squad became the first of four to qualify for the Nationals. But the 1998 team took first at the Sectionals. On that team (shown above) were Bob Blanchard, Tom Spotskey, Bob Silver, Shawn Ward and Denny Despairs.

Friday night chipping and putting contest, and a Saturday night gala at which charter members were honored with a special 25th silver anniversary medallion [that could be used as a golf bag tag]. Also honored were fourteen employees with over ten years of service. The club's original general manager Wayne Ferrell and his wife Betty traveled from their home in Escondido for the event.

To match its original March 1967 opening, Peter Lam and Chef Dan Street set up similar tables of hors d'oeuvres. But the most memorable moment may have been when some ladies of the WGA paraded out to the dance floor, between songs by Hank Barto's band, and then flipped up their skirts to reveal "Happy Birthday, Old Ranch!" spelled out on their panties.

By the 1990s the Bixby's became more open to hosting outside tournaments. Sue Ewart, now an assistant golf coach at Long Beach State, worked with the WGA

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*Curt and Betse Straub*



### OLD RANCH COUNTRY CLUB SILVER ANNIVERSARY 1992

Twenty-five of 43 charter couples attended the Old Ranch Silver Anniversary dinner-dance May 16, part of four days of festivities, May 14-17, that included five golf tournaments, and a special Friday night chipping and putting contest. (See page 2 for photo of unique course designed for this event.) Some of the charter couples in attendance are shown on this special *Roundup* supplement.

Each charter husband and wife received a medallion bearing the anniversary logo, designed to be used later as a golf bag tag. Fourteen current employees with over 10 years of service were also honored.

Below, Wayne Ferrell (left), ORCC's first manager, and his wife, Betty, were the first couple to arrive at the balloon and flower-decked Club for the Saturday night party. A photographer (right) was ready for them. The Ferrells are now in real estate in Escondido.



*Ruth and Grodon Sandberg*



*Marce and Russ Maurer*



*Isabel and Baron Lane*



*Edythe and Leonard Chetkin*



*Dick and Carol Greer*



*Bill and Joan Dummit*

Old Ranch celebrated its 25th anniversary with a four-day celebration in May 1992. The celebration involved five golf tournaments, a chipping and putting contest (shown at top of previous page) and a gala open house that mimicked the club's original opening night. Charter members were given a medallion that could be used as a golf bag tag. Longtime employees were also honored.

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As part of the 25th anniversary in 1992 the pro staff put together a special condensed chip and putt contest on the practice green. Members had to avoid mini sand traps and (buckets of) water traps.

to organize the Gold Rush tournament to benefit the 49ers women's golf program. In October 1994 the Long Beach State Hall of Fame group held its golf fundraising tournament at the club.

Long-time member Ross McElvie also organized the Youth National Insurance Championship for promising young golfers. One of the local entries was a young golfing phenom from Cypress named Tiger Woods. During one of these tourneys, Bob Silver remembers Wood's coach, Rudy Duran, coming into the clubhouse after a round and saying "Tiger flew the ditch on 16." The drainage ditch was only 290 yards from the tee box, and Tiger was still in high school.

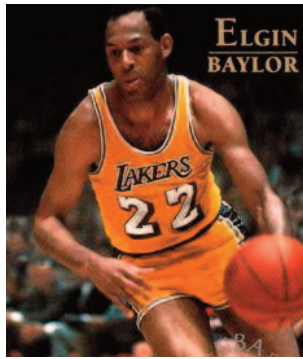
In 1994 Tim King became involved with the Long Beach Grand Prix Charity Foundation and convinced that group to move its charity golf tournament from the Navy Course to Old Ranch.

Toyota, the race sponsor, provided high-profile participants from the races and athletes they had under contract, such as Chi Chi Rodriguez. The golf-loving celebrities included actors James Garner, Tom Poston (the *Bob Newhart Show*), Arte Johnson (*Laugh-In*), musician Vince Neal (Motley Crue), and lots of locally-based sports figures – baseballers Bobby Grich, Jeff Burroughs, and Dave Frost as well as football stars Vince Ferragamo Dick Bass, and Fred Williamson, and even well-known figures whose fame crossed many boundaries – such as Caitlyn (formerly Bruce) Jenner.

Two Indy-typed cars would be prominently displayed by the practice green, easily visible to the 180 players who signed up to play that day.

Celebrities also visited the course on other days. Bob Silver said Harry Davis asked him to play with TV sportscaster Brent Musburger who was in town to announce the SC football game the next day. Basketball Hall of Famer Elgin Baylor played as a guest of Billy Mitchell at a Wednesday smoker. Chuck Connors, best known as TV's *Riflemen*, played as a guest of Tony Thomas. Connors was also a former Dodger baseball player, as was Mike Piazza who also played as a guest of Thomas. Home run hitting champ Mark McGwire played as a guest of George Pabst.

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The Old Ranch course was played by many celebrities in the 1980s and 1990s, not only as part of a charity tournaments but also as guests of members. Some of the celebrities were (clockwise from top left) TV sports announcer Brent Musburger, basketball legend Elgin Baylor, TV star Chuck Connors (*The Rifleman*), home run hitting legend Mark McGwire, Utah Jazz center Mark Eaton, and movie and TV star James Garner (*Maverick*, *The Rockford Files*).

The tallest person to ever play the course was probably Utah Star center Mark Eaton who brought his 7-4 frame onto the course around 1990. Silver remembers the former Cypress College and UCLA center as a poor golfer but a nice guy who had to lean over sideways to be able to fit in and drive the golf cart. Eaton still holds the NBA record for most blocks in a single season.

Old Ranch played a small part in some milestones in the local Women's Liberation Movement. Thanks to a lawsuit by six Long Beach teenage girl golfers (including Laura Baugh) against the state and local CIF (the state high school sports federation), teenage girls in Southern California had begun golfing on the boys high school teams by the mid-1970s. One of those was future Old Ranch champ Sue Ewart (then Sue Bennett) who played a key role in the Los Alamitos Griffins championship 1974 golf team.

Another was Amy Fruhwirth, the No. 1 golfer at Cypress High in 1984. But her presence on the team became problematic when Cypress played Los Al at Old Ranch that year. As Fruhwirth was finishing her second hole, an Old Ranch club



Anne Wallace. First woman member of Old Ranch was also a pioneer for all local woman athletes when she, her sister, Laura Baugh and three others sued the state high school and local CIF for the right to participate in sports. The suit later dovetailed into Title IX.

member approached Bob Silver and reminded him that women were not allowed on the course on Wednesdays. Silver thought a high school match might slide by unnoticed, but the member was adamant. So Silver reluctantly informed the young golfer and her coach that she had to leave the course. She left with minimal fuss, but the incident did result in some unwanted small headlines.

More significant was a 1988 Supreme Court ruling, penned by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. The act of conducting business – even any discussions resulting in commerce—was a “public” action in the eyes of the law. It was in the public interest to strike down discriminatory barriers, be they racial or sexual, to an individual’s right to commercial opportunities.

This impacted private clubs in two ways, noted Pres Hotchkis. “We were a golf club and social club. You can’t help people discussing business at times, on the course or at a meal.” And if those conversations led to business deals, even if club rules restricted membership, then state and federal laws were being violated.

Just as significantly, said Hotchkis, “If a club practiced discrimination – even if unintended -- it was vulnerable to losing its liquor license and a club can’t operate without that – not without drastically raising dues and annual fees.” Despite some objections, the Bixbys made it clear – women were now eligible for membership.

The first to take advantage of this was Anne Wallace who joined Old Ranch in 1990, but was already a trailblazer. After being denied the opportunity to try out for the Long Beach Poly High School golf team in 1970, Anne and her sister Nancy, were part of the group of six who sued the local and state CIF. Their case eventually dovetailed into the passage of Title IX – unfortunately after she was already out of high school.

Anne continued to golf, even winning the Los Angeles Amateur when she was six months pregnant. She also won the Virginia Country Club women’s title four

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times, first as the daughter of a long-time member then while a spouse. After a divorce, she applied to be a Junior Member at Virginia but was denied. Undaunted, she joined Old Ranch, and showcased her skills, especially her long game. Playing from the championship tees, she outdrive many of the men, and her chipping and putting was a thing of beauty to observe. Anne's schoolteaching career was interrupted by cancer, but after remission she would write articles on golf for *Time* and some golf magazines. She also taught golf at Strawberry Farms in Irvine before the cancer returned and took her too soon.

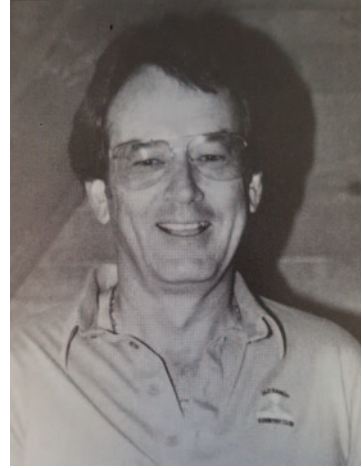
By 1995 there were still only four women members. All other women golfers were spouses of members and didn't have the same rights.

This did not sit well with Linda Gordon. On a late Saturday morning in July 1995, she was ready to play but was informed it was members only until one o'clock so she'd have to wait. A few days later she and Elaine Nevin, another Old Ranch spouse, filed a discrimination suit against the club and sought \$250 in damages.

She got lots of publicity, but the case was quickly shot down – ironically, by a female judge. The club offered memberships to women – so no discrimination there. And the Judge said she could see no law giving spouses the status of “protective class.”

“Both Gordons were very nice,” said Judge Norm Gordon (no relation, but a friend.) “As a friend, I told them there's no case here. He was the member, not her.” Accounts of the resolution vary, but in Judge Gordon's version, when the Bixby's filed for the dismissal, the Gordons offered to resign in exchange for not having to pay the Bixby attorney fees. The company accepted the offer.

Meanwhile, the company returned to City Hall in 1994 with a revised re-zoning and renovation plan -- fewer homes and one million



Ted Pollard originally joined the tennis club, but soon switched to the golf side and won the Governors Cup three times.



Larry and Faye Shaver were the low net in the second flight of the 1995 Couples tournament.



The 1995 Silver Cup competitors. (l-r) Golf Pro Bob Silver, Mali Kearns and Tom Mahoney, Steve Pircher and Kari Close, Norma Deeble and Gene Wray, Pam Ewing and Jim Edmiston, Larry Shaver and Sue Ewart. *(continued on next page)*

dollars for traffic improvements.

Opposition remained. Bixby pulled its plan again, but noted that the property on Seal Beach Boulevard was already zoned commercial retail. They could build a bunch of stores there without council approval. They could also sell off the unimproved land in a piecemeal manner which could lead to less attractive strip mall type development.

Bixby even floated the idea it might sell off all 13 acres south of Lampson – most of Golf Holes 2 and 3 (which had first been proposed as a park) *and* the entire Tennis Club facility — to the Marriott Corporation. Marriott would then build a senior citizens assisted living facility known as Brighton Gardens. Up to this point, many assumed the tennis facility would also go to the city, along with the park.

In July 1997, Bixby and the city reached a non-binding memorandum of understanding. The company would “gift” the tennis facility to the city in return for consideration of the zoning changes for the Bixby property. Soon after this, Bixby introduced a new plan which included a 25-acre shopping center on Seal Beach Boulevard, and on the northernmost parcel, a large church. The area south of Lampson would house a hotel, a senior citizens facility, and a restaurant. There would no homes on the expanded golf course, and Bixby would install a public driving range with an entrance off Lampson.

This mega-church idea prompted outrage and lawsuits by the City of Los Alamitos and groups in Rossmoor. Recall movements sprang up but went nowhere as



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Mike Blum and Kathy Meltzer, Teresa Nichols and John Tate, Ed Kearns and Patti Ornelas, Jim Ream Jr. and Linda Shaw, and Patsy Mosely and Wayne Sanders.

Bixby's latest plan made its way, albeit laboriously, through the Seal Beach submission process.

In November 1998 the Planning Commission denied the Bixby proposal. Bixby appealed. The city council then endured two marathon sessions before approving it. There were two key factors. Seal Beach, second to last in Orange County for sales tax revenue, would bring in \$1.5 million annually from the new stores. Secondly, Bixby agreed to replace the mega-church with 75 moderately priced homes.

But approval didn't mean final approval. In early 1999, Los Alamitos prevailed in a complaint that the Bixby Environmental Impact Report (EIR) incorrectly assessed the impact on shopping center traffic. A few months later, Seal Beach voters succeeded in placing a referendum over the shopping center on the ballot. It would be held in March 2000.

During all this, golf continued to be played and planes continued to land at the adjacent air base, When it was transferred to the National Guard (and in effect, the Army) in the 1970s, the number of loud takeoffs over Old Ranch dropped dramatically. But some planes still attracted notice, especially Air Force One.

Les Harris remembered when George Bush Sr. visited Los Al. "He landed and then this whole entourage of other planes also landed.... all the golfers out there on Holes 16 and 17 were just standing around looking."

Other members said you knew when the President was at Los Al by all the hel-

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The 1997 the ladies B1 tennis team showed a little bit of attitude after dominating Canyon Crest in a league contest. Bringing out the broom (symbolizing a clean sweep) were Pam Quinn, Gail Yakstick (captain), Teri Monroy, Betty Innes, Sue Pagett, Mary Beth Serafano, Trish Schooley, and Sharon White (later Wilkins).

icopters in the air. There were other indicators as well. Dan Regan told of an Old Ranch foursome that had a few too many beers on a late afternoon in November 1994. When nature called on Hole 16 they chose to sneak behind some fairway shrubs to do their business. Instead of finding privacy, they found themselves being eyed by Secret Service agents on the other side of the base fence. The agents were watching the perimeter as Bill Clinton presented a speech about the rescued C-17 program at the nearby Douglas Aircraft Company.

Clinton landed at Los Alamitos a number of times, as did George Bush Jr. On one trip in 2003, Air Force One stayed on the ground long enough for the crew to get in three rounds of golf at the adjacent Navy Golf course.

Perhaps they didn't play at Old Ranch because it was busy, busier than ever before because in mid-1996 local youth legend Eldrick Tont "Tiger" Woods, now a 21-year old man, burst on the pro scene.

After Woods' first Masters win in 1997 "The Tiger effect" had almost single-handedly revived the public interest in golf and country club memberships. Country clubs became cool again, the de facto playground for young professionals, armed with good salaries and new clubs just like the ones Tiger used, as well as balls, shirts, hats.

Tiger's impact on golf cannot be understated. The sport was again a good investment which affected Bixby's thoughts on their golf course renovations. And it affected what Ted Robinson drew... and re-drew. Yet throughout all the changes dictated by city politics – one constant remained -- a need for more drainage and

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increased water storage. More lakes were included -- eight total, all but one connected via 12" pipes so the water level on all would be around 7.5 feet above sea level. The only exception is the lake now between the first green and second tee which is independently fed by a well located in the maintenance area. A couple pumps were installed to aid the runoff. These are now primarily used prior to expected heavy rains to make the lakes able to hold more runoff.

The delays and re-drawings made Robinson weary of the project. When final approvals were received, after Bixby settled with Los Alamitos by agreeing to pay for improvements on Seal Beach Boulevard, he was rarely on site. His son, Ted, Jr., remembers doing some of the final drawings himself.

But some adjustments were made. Robinson Sr. followed Silver's suggestion of moving the driving range to the west side of the clubhouse. Insurance was the main reason. "We were putting out \$45,000 a year in unfunded liabilities because of errant golf balls hitting the condos, cars, and gas station."

But Robinson drew the driving range so golfers could hit from two sides. One side would be open to the public, just like one he had already built in Tustin.

Finally, on June 28, 1999 the course was shut down to begin the renovation, beginning with the new driving range. The old range was left open so members could hit balls during construction. Work also began on the west side of the clubhouse--the golf shop, and snack bar. But the dining and catering operations remained open.

Bill Elvins arranged for golfing members to play at Los Coyotes in Buena Park. The drive wasn't too far and the course was challenging. In fact, the beginnings of the Saturday International group got its start during the Los Coyotes days.

In October 2000 the tennis club celebrated its own 30th anniversary. The 2001 season then kicked off with the Chili Bowl, followed by a plethora of Holiday mixers and culminating with the annual Turkey Shoot.

Some Old Ranchers showcased their tennis skills on a bigger stage. Bill Haislett became the first Old Ranch member to win a PTCA (Private Tennis Club Association) crown, winning the 3.0 division. And Teri Monroy and Gail Yaksitch not only went undefeated in the Pacific Sun League 4.5 bracket, breezed through the Southern California finals and finished second out of 16 pairs at the USTA National.

The club's youth program continued sending players to quality college programs. In 2001 Kate Thomas of Wilson High, went to Michigan. Gia Naffarete, two-time Sunset League single champion at Los Alamitos High, went to Boston College in 2003. A few years later her sister Alyssa would head for Hawaii. As quality players moved on Litrich and Jeff Gevertz' camp system turned out more.

Across the street the Gates Brothers again handled the primary renovation construction. The golf course grading was handled by the Wadsworth Company, which had Steve Wynn's exclusive Shadow Creek course in Las Vegas on its resume.

From the skeleton "pro shop," Bob Silver keenly watched the grading as the con-

## OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



In October 2000 many tennis club members and former members gathered together to celebrate the club's 30th anniversary. Among those who returned were (above) Earl and Shirley Feiwell, Bill and Sadorus Lower, Gail and Norm Slomann alike, shown above with Bob Litrich.

Shown below are (front, l-r) Christine Martine, Jaynella Anderson, Duane Kramer and Judy Senn. (back row) Gail Haslett, Mary Williams, Loretta Christy, Heather Campbell, Sandy Wilkinson, Karen Silver, Maria Cueto, and Suzanne Harris.



touring took shape. After crews had gone home for the day, Silver and some of his staff tried out some of the holes – sometimes making suggestions to Robinson.

Robinson didn't like all of them—especially putting nets on the driving range. "Just put up a six-foot chain link fence and lots of tall trees." But Silver was adamant. "The range would be along one of the busiest freeways in the world, and Lampson at rush hour. And who knows how many slicers we'll have on the public side?"

The Bixby's put up the nets. Silver also convinced Robinson to place a practice chipping area in the private side of the driving range.

## THE 90'S: RENOVATION TO RENOVATION



Despite more lakes and larger drainage lines, Old Ranch was still located on low-lying land and the new pumps couldn't be used during heavy rains for fear of flooding out Leisure World. So rains like this one in late 2000 would still fill up the first and ninth fairways (above), and the sixth, and 18th, and 10th, and others. Fortunately, the course was still shut down, so it provided a good trial for the new equipment.

Occasionally members came to check out the progress. Dave Scott said he probably dropped by every day on his way from work to his College Park East home.

Others came by too. "The excitement built among prospective members, even before there was new grass," said Shirley Barto. "I was selling more memberships than ever before. My husband asked, 'Isn't there some kind of law against selling dirt?'"

In May 2001 the new 6,831 yard course opened for play and was met with almost universal approval. The one known exception was Ted Robinson. "One day we were out by Hole 7," said Bob Silver. "He had designed it so the bunkers were hidden and you had a beautiful view looking south. Then he tells me 'this was his favorite hole... except for those g--d-- nets on the Drivers Range.'"

In September 2001 Old Ranch hosted for the first time the Los Angeles Marine Scholarship Golf Tournament. "The event had been at Navy Golf Course," said Mike Joseph, "and that's when they had their banquets in tented areas. So Dave Hamblin, who was also a member at Old Ranch tells me we need to get this event over to a bigger place and classier place so we can raise more money."

Joseph approached Tim King who gave the approval "as long as it's on a Mon-

## OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



The renovation included a much expanded pro shop which club officials soon considered to be far bigger than practical club needs. One widely discussed solution was to move the women's merchandise area back into the main pro shop area, and convert that to a new members grille. The current members grille would become part of a renovated bar area with a horseshoe shaped bar.

day." The event was a great success and Joseph continues to organize it to this day, raising over one and half million dollars for two Marine Corps charities, The Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation and the Devil Pups Youth Program for America.

The event quickly also became a staff favorite. Peter Lam recalled that one year the key speaker was Joe Namath. "He arrived via helicopter which landed on Number 18, then got out and started greeting everybody. It was great."

On the golf course, Jim Ream, Jr. picked up where he left off -- winning the 2001 club championship, the first on the new course. Ron Schulze won it in 2002 but Ream made up for it by pairing with Mike Blum to win that year's Member-Member gross title. Ed Copelin and Bob Mills Jr. won the net score competition. Ream and Blum repeated their feat in the 2003 Member-Member while Ream and his wife Myrna also won the gross title for the 2003 Couples Championship.

Jerry Hutton made a smooth transition to the seniors level, winning the his first seniors titles in 2001. Amalia (Mali) Kearns, who won the last Women's Club title before the shut-down, won the first two after it reopened -- in 2002 and 2003.

Six months after the course reopened, renovation started on the clubhouse. "Towards the end of 2001," remembers Peter Lam, "with very little notice, we were told that after we closed that night we were to start moving stuff into trailers."

All dinner operations and banquets shut down. "But we still served breakfasts

## THE 90'S: RENOVATION TO RENOVATION



The new public driving range debuted in 2001. Originally it was just the driving tees, but at Bob Silver's urging, maintenance supervisors Don Parsons and Ryan Porter built an additional practice for chipping and putting green. The new placement of the driving range also helped with course drainage.

and lunch for the golfers in a trailer," noted Mary Warrington. Shirley Barto remembers the special trailer costing the Bixby's over \$100,000 a month in rent."

The staff stayed in their offices as the renovations began said Shirley Barto. "But Tom Gates finally said 'this would be a lot easier and faster if you guys weren't here.' So then we all moved into trailers. It was crowded but kinda fun in there."

The old clubhouse was demolished down to its core structure. Using a design by Denzer Associates, 10,000 square feet was added to the facility, increasing the total to 44,000 square feet. Most of the new square footage went to enlarge the banquet area. The lobby of the new banquet entrance – the entrada – could also double as a cocktail reception area. Public functions of 350 could be accommodated.

Denzer described the changes as a hybrid of the arts and crafts movement without losing the feel of Old Ranch." A stone "hacienda crossed with arts and crafts" exterior with sweeping arches topped by red tile presented a richer, more contemporary look. The interior entryway purposely had the most dramatic changeover -- the old wood paneling was replaced with plaster finish walls

Gone were the posts in the dining room. Huge arched windows still provided a magnificent view of Hole 18 and its lakes and fountain. Gone was the dining room terrace but two new terraces took its place. One was a trellised terrace *between* the dining room and the pro shop, another was behind the new banquet rooms. Both provided spectacular views of the course. The kitchen was also expanded, with a second kitchen line added for banquet purposes.

In late 2002, at the height of the busy holiday season, the new facility opened to great acclaim, especially the expanded banquet area.

For the most part the club ran smoothly for the next few years although a severe *El Niño* rain in Spring 2005 severely tested the new drainage system. Hard rains

## OLD RANCH AT FIFTY



The Marine Scholarship Golf Tournament has become a favorite annual event for members. Since Mike Joseph (top left) helped move it over to Old Ranch right after the 2001 re-opening, it has raised over a million and half dollars and thoroughly impressed golfers who get to walk beneath crossed howitzer artillery as they enter the club.

during mid-February and early March over-filled the lakes which couldn't be pumped out very fast because of the threat to again flooding out Leisure World. The four weeks of rain combined left the course unplayable for over 45 days. Still staff and engineers agreed the new drainage was much better than pre-remodel.

With all golf and club operations now back to full operation, two key figures announced their retirement. In late 2003, Bob Silver announced he would step down as head pro, although he would still give lessons a few days a week. And Bill Elvins would be moving on as well... once the sale of the club was completed.