

# NCGA HISTORY

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By Bob Hanna



## GREAT TREES FROM SMALL SEEDS

By October 1971, the NCGA had grown to 250 clubs with 50,000 members. The Handicap System was processing 200,000 scores per month and rendering the handicapping service to 70 women's clubs with 8,000 members. The Annual Report showed \$176,082.90 cash in banks and a gain of \$57,611.48 for the year.

Early in 1972, the NCGA and SCGA joined in a Pension Plan and Trust; The idea of building an NCGA golf course, put forth in the 1960s, was really not practical then with receipts of only \$88,184.58 in 1961; \$34,637.14 in cash and a net loss for the year 1961 of \$479.15. But, the idea never died, even after the completion of Spyglass Hill Golf Course.

There was more and more pressure on the member clubs for the use of their golf courses for tournament and qualifying rounds. After the opening of Spyglass, there were overtures to the NCGA about being involved in the construction of a golf course with a developer in the Ignacio Valley area of Walnut Creek. Clark Glasson, a golf course architect and owner of the short Deep Cliff Golf Course in Cupertino, was planning a course in the Clayton area of the East Bay and also interested in having the NCGA involved.

On April 25, 1972 at a directors' meeting at the California Golf Club, in South San Francisco, Finance and Investment were considered: *It being pointed out that a program for funds of this organization was presently being reviewed by the Executive Committee. It was the suggestion of Director Ledlie G. Blue of the Belmont CC in Fresno that this organization should program its finances to achieve the construction of a new golf course.* The **idea** was still alive and well.

At the next meeting, July 13, 1972, President Gordon Aulik reported: *"On the prior recommendation that the NCGA fund the construction of a new golf course, assign the project to the executive committee for study and report."*

From that point, the golf course project became a regular item on the meeting agendas concerning location, ownership, management and effect on the future financial condition of the NCGA in the construction and ownership of a golf course.

At a directors' meeting at The Olympic Club on Post Street, San Francisco, March 15, 1974, Vice President Robert Foley briefed the Board on recent developments pertaining to plans to construct a golf course. After his briefing he read a resolution regarding the setting aside of funds toward construction of projected golf course.

*RESOLUTION OF THE NCGA CREATING A CAPITAL OUTLAY FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSTRUCTION OR OTHERWISE ACQUIRING A GOLF COURSE FACILITY:*

*WHEREAS, the Northern California Golf Association is a non-profit unincorporated association organized for the purpose of promoting amateur golf; and*

*WHEREAS, this association has, in furtherance of its purposes, organized, promoted and conducted amateur golf tournaments;*

*WHEREAS, the popularity of the tournaments promoted and sponsored by this Association has increased and multiplied with more and more applicants for entry; and*

*WHEREAS, the Executive Committee of this Association has heretofore recommended that the NCGA seek ways and means of acquiring a golf course to accommodate its expanding tournament activity as well as to accommodate its educational programs relative to the rules of amateur golf and its Turfgrass Adaptive Educational program; and*

WHEREAS, this Board of Directors has heretofore approved the recommendations of its Executive Committee by the creation of a Forward Planning Committee which, among other things, has favored ways and means of either creating or acquiring a golf course facility for the use of this Association in addition to those courses now used; and

WHEREAS, this Board of Directors finds the existing golf courses now available to the NCGA to be inadequate for future expansion of its program of promoting amateur golf; and

WHEREAS, an additional golf course, when acquired, will require a substantial expenditure by this Association, and this this Board of Directors deems it necessary and proper to create a capital outlay fund for that purpose.

NOW THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA GOLF ASSOCIATION DOES RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the sum of \$100,000 is hereby assigned and contributed to a capital outlay fund hereby designated as "For Golf Course Acquisition." Said fund shall be implemented from time to time by its own earnings as well as by such future assignments or contributions as may be made from time to time by this Association or by others interested therein.

B. That fund shall be held, accumulated and expended only by order of this Board of Directors for any of the following purposes but for no others:

1. For such feasibility studies or



Poppy Hills No. 2 under construction (above) and today.



other financial, accounting or legal services connected therewith as may be deemed necessary or desirable by the NCGA Board.

2. Land acquisition, rental, or lease payments for golf course and practice area;

3. Golf course practice area acquisition, rental or lease payments;

4. Golf course and practice area architecture, engineering or design fees;

5. Golf course construction, including attendant irrigation and maintenance facilities;

6. Design and construction of course, clubhouse, professional's

equipment and sales area, office, locker, shower, bath and toilet facilities; and

7. All other facilities or materials directly related to the development, operation and maintenance of a golf course and practice area, including but not limited to golf carts, practice area equipment, course maintenance vehicles and equipment, markers and related items.

The above and foregoing is a true, correct and accurate copy of a resolution entered into unanimously by the Board of Directors of the Northern California Golf Association at a regular meeting held on March 15, 1974.

It was moved by Robert Foley and





*Poppy Hills No. 2 from a different view.*



seconded by Director John Rhodenbaugh that the resolution as read be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

Through the remainder of 1974 and 1975 the golf course project emphasis was on locations for such a course including Spanish Bay at Pebble Beach, the Martin property in the Ballybunnion-like sand dunes on the south side of the mouth of the Salinas River, Mulligan Hill (the name on a **surveyor's marker in the sand dunes**) on the north side of the mouth of the Salinas River in the area now occupied by the Monterey Bay Dunes Colony, the Work Ranch in Monterey, Rancho Murieta at Sloughouse, Monter-

the coast south of San Francisco which carried with it an offer of 200 acres of land without cost, Half Moon Bay and the Roth Estate, "Filoli," in San Mateo County. The name Filoli is a sort of anagram for Fidelity, Love and Life.

In determining a location it was necessary to avoid any competition with existing fee golf courses and still provide access to NCGA members. Water was also a prime consideration. Director Charles Van Linge and Executive Director Robert Hanna researched the Martin property and Mulligan Hill. That was at the time of the implementation of the provisions of the recently passed Coastal Com-

mission Legislation. Director Richard Meffly did a water study on the areas at the mouth of the Salinas River. Water in that area was a gamble.

Director Van Linge met with Harry Holmes, president of the Del Monte Properties Company concerning the Spanish Bay location. Holmes advised that the NCGA would be invited to the next company meeting with Western International.

In November 1974 a meeting was held at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco concerning an NCGA golf course at Filoli. Present were William Royer, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors; John Griffiths, a developer; Emmet Cashin, Fox and Carskadon Realtors; Dwight Johnson, a Roth Family representative; and NCGA directors Sylvan Frank, Robert Foley, Van Linge and Executive Director Hanna. Environmental and other problems seemed insurmountable.

At an NCGA directors meeting in December 1974, Director Richard Ghent *moved that the committee pursue to a conclusion as soon as possible on a golf course at Filoli or in the Del Monte Forest*. The discussion turned to financing the project through founder memberships, donations, contributions, advance green fees, NCGA members assessments, separately or in combination.

By February 1975 the Del Monte Properties Company ruled out the use of Spanish Bay. Director Van Linge continued discussions with the Company on the possibility of a joint venture between the Del Monte Properties Company and the NCGA at Spanish Bay with no conclusion. The

company would eventually build its own course at Spanish Bay.

In an informal meeting with Jack Marshall, vice-president in the Real Estate Department of the Del Monte Properties, Marshall indicated to Director Ghent and Hanna that the Company would consider the sale of any or all of two parcels of land bisected by Lopez Road in the Del Monte Forest. That location became known as the Hilltop location. In a meeting on Nov. 21, 1975, Ghent summarized the golf course project to that date:

1. *Carmel Valley Ranch Note, (a newcomer), The side is*

*good...however; their proposal is not acceptable as it would cost us approximately \$200,000 per year.*

2. *Del Monte Properties:*

a. *The hilltop location– Director Ghent stated that it is possible that the Del Monte Properties Company would be agreeable to the sale of 140 acres at that location to the NCGA. He added that the use of our excess funds as a down payment would indicate our good faith and desire to pursue all of our interests in common with the DMPCo. President Van Linge, Director Ghent and Bob Hanna will meet with Holmes in the im-*

*mediate future.*

b. *Spanish Bay site was briefly discussed.*

3. *Half Mood Bay– Half Moon Bay has offered everything; land, will build course and it would be our course. However, the NCGA would have to agree to put on one major tournament a year. This was discussed with the proviso that the DMPCo project first be pursued to some kind of conclusion.*

At the 1974 NCGA Annual Meeting, Raymond Luce, chairman of the Golf Course Committee gave a brief progress report on the proposed golf course emphasizing the desirability of a Monterey area location.

By May 1975, President Foley urged board action to decide upon a golf course location and abandon unlikely locations.

By November 1975 the matter of the golf course location was still far from finalized. On the strength of correspondence between the NCGA and Henderson, a principal in the Rancho Murieta golf course at Sloughhouse near Sacramento, President Van Linge and Foley were to investigate the possibility of using Rancho Murieta as an NCGA golf course, and advertising it as such, at a reduced fee for NCGA members.

And, the meetings went on. By February 1976, the discussions turned to the specifics involved. Ghent reported that the hilltop location in the Del Monte Forest included about 166 acres appraised at \$7,200 per acre amounting to something like \$1,700,000. But at that stage of the game, the cart was before the horse.



*The par-3 sixth at Poppy Hills.*





There were questions about the availability of water, use permits, the legality of the NCGA's right to purchase land and build a golf course. The burden of researching the legal questions involved fell primarily upon Director Francis A. Watson, Jr., a Richmond attorney. It was determined that a bylaw change was necessary and that approval by the NCGA member clubs was needed to proceed with any golf course project. Watson reviewed the pros and cons of incorporating the NCGA and stated that any changes in the bylaws should be presented at the Annual Meeting to include all the necessary changes rather than to consider them on a piece-meal basis. Watson met with Del Monte Properties Company representatives to discuss mutual options involved in the NCGA purchase of the hilltop property. He further examined the legal aspects of such purchase with Robert Foley.

In April, another meeting with Marshall, of Del Monte Properties, considered more specifics—an option for \$5,000 on the required acreage through December at approximately \$7,000 per acre; resale of property if not used; home sites on the property; etc. The \$5,000 option to purchase was approved by the NCGA Board of Directors.

It was then determined that a feasibility study was needed to determine the possibility of such a project. In May, Ghent reported on another meeting with Marshall in which tentative agreements were made on price, \$7,000 per acre; up to 170 acres; down payment of \$225,000 with balance at 8 1/2 percent to be paid off in

seven years; rights to sell to others and first right of refusal by company in the event of such a sale.

The needs to incorporate the NCGA and obtain approval from the member clubs were now more apparent. The William Sherman Company was engaged to produce a feasibility study on the project and various NCGA committees were appointed to pursue it, legal, finance, architectural, information and public relations.

In a July report by Sherman, the salient points concerned the purchase price which could be financed by an increase in the per-member fee in the amount of \$4 per year; the availability of water and buy back options. Sherman was optimistic about the success of the project, especially if water was available.

Director Carl Dawson of the Menlo CC met with Dick Sullivan, vice-president, California-American Water Company, consultant Sherman



*The 10th at Poppy Hills.*



and golf course architect Tom Fazio to determine as accurately as possible the facts of the water supply; completion of effluent treatment plants; potential changes; timing and alternatives. The possibility of water availability for a new golf course in about three years was considered high.

The Sherman feasibility report was digested and with the end of the option year approaching, Watson indicated that the Del Monte Properties Company would be agreeable to an extension of the land purchase option to April 1977 for \$2,500. Crunch time had arrived. It was resolved that **the NCGA's individual member fee** be increased from \$6 to \$10 per year; the increase to be allocated solely to the acquisition costs of a golf course with a reduction in the fee if the golf site were not acquired in the year 1977.

At the NCGA Annual Meeting in November 1976, member clubs approved proxy voting and changes in the bylaws to allow the NCGA to own, lease, manage and/or operate a golf course. That was not an approval of the project but would allow the directors to continue to pursue the feasibility of the project. The motion for the changes was approved 129-36 by written ballot.

Prior to the option to purchase the land in the Del Monte Forest, architects George and Tom Fazio, were engaged to prepare a route plan to determine the suitability of the land for a golf course. By then the Del Monte Properties Company expressed interest in developing some real estate as part of the project. Company President Holmes retained

Robert Trent Jones Jr. to draft a golf course route plan on the property to include real estate development. The company offered to commit \$5,000 to participate in the final route plan and feasibility study and to have the opportunity to work with George and Tom Fazio. The offer was accepted.

A general meeting of the member clubs of the NCGA was scheduled for March 25, 1977 at Rancho Murieta for the purpose of voting for approval or denial of the golf course project.

*The name "Poppy Hills" was submitted by Chuck Twitchell of Bennett Valley GC and was selected as the name of the course.*

The completed feasibility study had been delivered to the president of each member club. At the Murieta meeting, 135 clubs representing 34,764 members voted for approval of the project. Sixty-four clubs, with a total membership of 13,840, voted against it. It was resolved that the NCGA should exercise the option to purchase the necessary acreage from the Del Monte Properties Company for \$7,000 per acre.

The company was being sold to the Twentieth Century Fox Company and renamed the Pebble Beach Corporation. President Ghent, Watson, Jr. and Charles Seaver met with company executives and counsel at their offices in Monterey on Monday,

April 11, 1977. The agreement to purchase 164.16 acres from the Pebble Beach Corporation at \$7,000 per acre was signed. A down payment of \$227,500 was made and a note given for the remainder to be paid over 84 months at approximately \$14,000 per month. A preliminary report from the Coast Counties Title indicated forthcoming approval of the sale and the issuance of a Title Insurance Policy.

During the remainder of 1977 and 1978, the golf course committee was concerned with the organizing effort necessary to bringing the golf course project to fruition. The project was on schedule. The land was already one third paid for. Plans were before the proper agencies for developing an ample supply of effluent water by the time the construction would begin.

Preliminary steps were taken to secure the various permits and approvals from the agencies involved. No formal applications could be made until the general plan for the area was completed and approved by the County of Monterey and the State Coastal Commission.

Watson, Jr. and Van Linge were appointed co-chairmen of the Golf Course Architect Selection Committee in 1979. The committee represented a cross section of people knowledgeable in golf. Among them were Robert Badger, PGA professional, Carlton Dawson, Edward Gingrich, Hanna, Seaver, Clifford Wagoner and John Zoller.

George and Tom Fazio had submitted eight route plans. All were necessitated mainly because of the **company's real estate requirements**



drawn and because those plans included acreage which had to be eliminated because they included Gowan Cypress trees which the company wanted to protect. The eighth route plan served as the basis for the purchase agreement between the Company and the **NCGA**. **The Association's** commitment to the Fazios up to that point was limited to furnishing the route plans which would not be used were another architect selected for construction of the course.

In addition to the Fazios, golf course architects located in California were invited to submit route plans and bids for the construction of the golf course. They were Gary Roger Baird, William F. Bell, Ronald Fream, Robert Trent Jones Jr., Robert Muir Graves, Robert von Hagge and Bert Stamps. Jack Nicklaus was invited owing to his request to the committee for the opportunity to present a plan. The Committee met in July of 1979. After two days of extensive presentations and interviews with the architects, the committee selected Robert Trent Jones Jr. of Palo Alto. The NCGA Board of Directors approved **the committee's selection on Friday, Aug. 17, 1979**. Jones had plenty of time to refine his routing of the course. The land was being paid off. The project was being shepherded through the tangled maze of the bureaucracies involved and the water problems were still being solved.

In 1980, a name-the-course contest was held for NCGA members with the winner to receive a weekend for two at the Lodge at Pebble Beach including rounds of golf at Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill. Entry dead-

line was June 1, 1981. The name **"Poppy Hills"** was submitted by Chuck Twitchell of Bennett Valley GC and was selected as the name of the course.

## HOME

With the move of the NCGA Offices from Spyglass to its own

building at Poppy Hills, the association was no longer faced with the March 2016 deadline (now 10 years later) which would terminate its occupation of the Spyglass Hill quarters as spelled out in the lease between the Spyglass Hill Golf Club and the Pebble Beach Company. The NCGA was literally HOME!



*Poppy Hills' 18th.*

