

Golf - MCC vs. OCC?

By Cathy Tyson

What a dilemma, a free afternoon and a desire to play golf. Where does one go in Lamorinda? The decision is easy if you're a member of a club, if not, you need to get an invitation from a pal at either the Moraga Country Club or the Orinda Country Club.

Moraga Country Club (MCC), located on Moraga Way is hard to miss, as part of it fronts this busy road, and winds along behind Miramonte High School. The other, Orinda Country Club (OCC), is tucked away on winding Camino Sobrante off the beaten path. Both clubs have tennis courts, pools and golf courses that will be buzzing all summer long. The golf, however, is distinctly different between the clubs.

Moraga Country Club was initially founded in 1973 as a 9-hole course according to Randy Kahn, the Director of Golf. Homeowners in the "Club" automatically are members, and their monthly dues reflect charges for upkeep of the golf course as well as the tennis courts and the pools. Around 1992 - 1993 the Board of Directors decided to expand the golf course to 18 holes and created a new group, Associate Members, which are equity members but don't live on the premises. Right now there are 521 Homeowner members and 380 Associate Members.

"Some of the best things about the Club are its friendly members, its location in the hills - the visuals are unmatched in the valley, and the greens on 12 and 14 - which have very unconventional designs," reflects Kahn. When he first started working here 13 years ago, the average age of the membership was solidly senior, but there has been a continual shift toward younger families joining, reflecting the turnover of homes inside and outside the club.

Bob McLaughlin, former Men's Golf Association President says, "I like the course because it's challenging. It makes you a better golfer because there are so many difficult holes. The people are great, too. A bunch of family-oriented guys that like to have a good time."

The Orinda Country Club has been around since 1924. Willie Watson, who had just finished the Olympic Club in San Francisco, designed the 18-hole course. But the Club history goes back even farther. Way back in 1887, the deLaveaga brothers, Miguel and Jose bought 1,178 acres north of what is now Highway 24. Miguel's son, E.I. deLaveaga developed the community including the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision, water plant, firehouse, and village to serve the residents of the small enclave. The stately clubhouse has the classic look one might expect of a country club, and has only gotten more attractive over the years with necessary renovations and upgrades.

"I love the course, its steeped in tradition," says Mike Vigo, long-time member, who had served in the past on the Greens Committee. "What you see is what you get, its not tricked up. The golf course is competitive, but fair. Before the 1940's courses were designed that melded with the landscape, there were no bunkers in the middle of the landing area that you might see with a course designed today. It's a challenge every time you play it." He adds the friendly members and staff make it special.

Shim LaGoy, Head Golf Professional at the Orinda Country Club says, "the clientele is the best thing about the Club. Members include business executives, kings of corporations, great athletes, a real cross

section of professional people." OCC is unique in that it is a private equity club. The members own it. To play you must be invited by and accompanied by a member.

Recently two other golf courses have come and gone, at least on paper. Wilder, formerly the Gateway development and Palos Colorados had at one point, golf courses included in their plans. Nowadays, MCC and OCC are the only games in town.



Shim LaGoy at Orinda Country Club
Photo by Tod Fierner



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