

Orinda in the '20s

A Memoir by Bob Murdock

To: Del Loper

From: Bob Murdock

Subject: Notes and Impressions of Orinda in the 20's

My memories of Orinda Country Club always start with the thrill of driving from the old first tee, all the world seemed to be at one's feet. Just as it is today, the fairway had a definite crown down the middle. To the right was OB and a draw or hook was sure to be big trouble and more often than not meant a ball in the ditch along 18. The connoisseurs of golf course now stress "shot value". It is personified by this magnificent old starting hole.

Located under what is now the end of the parking lot, the tee area was itself a gem, with several oaks to cast their shadows, a small putting green for those waiting to tee off, and with flowerful landscaping and several benches, this was a grand place to gather on a Sunday afternoon in the 20's.

To complete the scene at No. 1. There was that first hazard - a barranca full of small trees and bushes just in front of and far below the tee. The tee blocks were always forward because of the short teeing area, and there was usually a gallery to make your shot of great interest to all.

After teeing off, the golfer walked down a quite steep path to the right of the tee and along the fence. Golfers and their caddies, these of course being no carts and hence no cart path, filed down this trail somewhat at their peril. The effect was complete. You knew you had just shot from a very high and inspirational tee down to a demanding landing area.

One aspect of the early days of Orinda, as with any new club, was that all the members were of a considerably younger average age than in older clubs, and all seemed to want to meet one another and to start up new friendships. So here on the first tee the new- Club Pro, Ralph Longo, spent a lot of Sundays not only arranging foursomes, but introducing people and getting better acquainted with the members. This happy scenario didn't last too long, but it is one of my earliest memories of Orinda.

Too, there must be others who remember the sky as bluer then, the balls whiter and all of one color and the grass a bit greener. And just as happens today, mountains of fog poured over the Berkeley Hills, rolled over like a huge "coamer" (sic. possibly comber) from the Pacific and magically disappeared, leaving only bright sunshine for Orinda.

The history of Orinda as well as all of San Pablo Canyon is well chronicled in Muir Sorrick's book "Orinda" (1970), a book dedicated to my good friend and neighbor Louis L. Stein, Jr. of Kensington. To introduce myself, I am Robert Hamilton Murdock, the son of Orinda's clubhouse architect, Hamilton Murdock. "Tone" Murdock was of course a charter member, and so I was lucky enough to be a junior member from Opening Day through the rest of the 20's. My first interest in Orinda was in watching Dad design the club logo, which he did in his den at home in Alameda. The logo has changed not at all in 63 years and may well be in use for another 63.

It is my hope that I can add some facts and impressions to the history being presented in this book.

When one looks through books such as "Contra Costa County - an Illustrated History" by George Emanuels (1986), one can see the story of the Orinda area in much the same as that of many rural areas around San Francisco, San Pablo and Suisun Bays - a story of land grants, farms and ranches, favorite picnic grounds, steady subdivision of the land holdings to accommodate more and more people, and ever more growth.

So it has been in Orinda with one exception - a section of land was set aside to become a golf course, such an action gives a permanence to at least a couple of hundred acres of property, property that then seems fixed in time and essentially part of the public trust. In the case of Orinda, the golf course was just such a centerpiece as was needed to preserve the green space, open up vistas and give needed character to the immediate area. Development has never ceased, but I believe it has all been as envisioned in the original concept.

After World War I Orinda native son, Edward I. de Laveaga, provided the concept, the land and the funding for his masterplan for Orinda. "E.I." de Laveaga, as he preferred to be called, was a born developer, with the ability to choose the right friends and associates with whom to work. De Laveaga's story is well told in other sections of this book.

Also, after World War I, three men in Oakland started a separate collaboration in real estate development. They were Charles Percy Murdock, James L'Hommiedieu and Hamilton Murdock.

C.P. Murdock, my father's younger brother, started his career as secretary to the legendary Frank M. (Borax) Smith. "Borax" Smith was known locally, besides his 20-mule teams running to and from the company town of Boron in Kern County as a wealthy developer in the East Bay. He is also remembered as the founder and owner of the Key Route System, which is fondly remembered

as the best commute system ever devised for travel to and from the East Bay (Lines A, B, C, D, E and F) and San Francisco, and which is certainly missed today: yellow-orange trains, fast ferries, schedules too-live by, reunions with friends on every crossing, trips that were, along with trips on the Big Red Trains and white ferries of the SP, taken so for granted but which are long gone.

"Borax" Smith was, coincidentally, the last owner, declare his Key system, of the California and Nevada Railroad, when it ran from Emery (ville) to Bryant, with 18 stops or flag stops in between. The total run, in 1891, to Bryant was a scheduled 2 hours 18 minutes. The station we like the best to think about was De Laveaga (2 hours, 13 minutes) which, from maps and photos, appears to have been located some 200 yards up the 12th fairway. The other end of the line was later, after the C & N was abandoned in 1899, developed into the yards and shops and main switching point of the Key System with its long trestle out into the bay, connecting there with its speedy and attractive ferry boats heading for The Ferry Building.

One of Frank Smith's main holdings was the Realty Syndicate Company, the developers of numerous tracts of property and homes throughout the East Bay. Realty Syndicate's headquarters were at 1440 Broadway in Oakland, the 10-story Syndicate Building, and CP. (Perc) Murdock was President of Smith's Realty Syndicate. Not only was he my favorite uncle, but, as I ran an elevator in the Syndicate Building for two depression years to help get through Cal, one of my favorite people. His death in 1932 was a black day in Oakland.

James (Jimmie) L'Hommedieu was perhaps "Perc" Murdock's closest friend. His survey company, L'Hommedieu and Wilson (another Jimmie) was located on the second floor of a building on Franklin Street, just behind the Syndicate Building. L'Hommedieu and Wilson were the surveyors for all of the Realty Syndicate work as well as for all of the projects of note at Orinda. My first ever job was as a chain boy on one of L'Hommedieu - Wilson's survey crews for the summer months of 1928. I was then aged 15. I was probably the only chain boy in the country who had nothing to wear but knickers or plus fours.

At the end of the summer, I headed for Montgomery Ward's where I put my entire earnings on a full set of MacGregors. What a thrilling day - my first set of clubs without hickory shafts!

L'Hommedieu - Wilson's office staff was headed by Frank Draeger, who was one of the better left-handers I ever played with and, as was the entire staff, a very nice fellow. Sid Berwick, a true Scot, headed the survey crew with which I worked. These were the men who had subdivided the Orinda properties for de Laveaga.

Jimmie L'Hommedieu in particular was a very popular man, liked by all and particularly by my uncle, by my father, and by "E.I." de Laveaga. In both appearance and personality, I have long considered him an earlier Jimmy Demaret.

In the late 20's a corporation was formed for the sales of further large real estate development. It was Murdock - L'Hommedieu Corporation with the full top floor of the Syndicate Building as their offices and with "Perc" Murdock as President. Both men were among the founders of the prestigious Athens Athletic Club. Again my father was a charter member. Another book could well be written - about this fine club, with its great facilities, athletic teams, such as the swim team headed by the famous Al Kallunki, and in the magnificent ball room, a perfect place to dance to orchestras such as Tom Coakley's, Carl Ravazza's and other top aggregations of the 20's - and 30's.

Should anyone want to picture Hamilton (Tone) Murdock, just imagine the night at the Athens Club when Jack Dempsey was the honored guest. Dad was late, but Dempsey was later, so Dad received a long standing ovation when he appeared in the ballroom.

L'Hommedieu also formed Oakland Title Company, with its offices on Franklin. The building, circa 1930, was designed by Hamilton Murdock and is unchanged to this day. Sadly, there are no L'Hommedieus in the phone book today except, strangely, James L. L'Hommedieu of Danville, a now retired World Airways pilot who moved here from Louisiana some number of years ago but knows of no relatives in California.

Hamilton Murdock was born in San Francisco in 1880, but grew up in Alameda. Tall and athletic, he was a quiet man with a fine sense of humor and with many friends. His favorite game was tennis, until Orinda opened, when he soon found golf to be his lifelong favorite. Having chosen architecture as a career, he graduated from Lick-Wilmerding, with an education in both architecture and engineering. All of his work, once he had established his own office, included the engineering as well as design. His notice of having passed the California State Board of Architecture exams, - with the very high score of 90%, and dated January 17, 1907 is one of my proudest possessions.

On that fateful April day in 1906 Dad was the Architects' rep in charge of construction of the De Young Building in Market Street, with offices on the 2nd floor of the steel skeleton then rising. After the quake, with construction again underway, he spent much time at the Gladding-McBean plant in Lincoln working with their staff in producing the De Young Building's many tile and ceramic features. Other of Hamilton Murdock's work in this area included designing and carrying out the details on San Francisco's Alcazar Theatre, now one of the last true movie palaces, and much admired by critics.

By 1911 Hamilton Murdock was the junior partner in Crim and Murdock, Architects, with offices on Kearny Street in San Francisco. Married the next year to Bess Valleau, of Alameda, the couple moved into a home on Broadway, just off Gough Street, where I was born. In 1916 the Murdocks moved back to Alameda.

After some time out for World War I "Tone" Murdock joined with brother "Perc" in the development of tracts such as Montclair and Piedmont Pines, both by Realty Syndicate, and others such as El Portal, in the Castro Valley area. The numerous "show" homes in these tracts, all designed by Hamilton Murdock and completely furnished by Breuner's, along with a number of homes for individuals in other areas, established Hamilton Murdock as a top designer of Spanish and Spanish Mediterranean homes.

Always a fine artist in watercolor painting, Dad was intrigued with the style of the California missions. He painted many of these, along with historic Spanish-California buildings of the Monterey style. These paintings, along with many fine landscapes and seascapes, brought a number of his friends to believe that he might well be in the wrong field of art. When asked to submit a painting or two, possibly to be hung in the annual Oakland Art Museum show for local artists, he couldn't decide, so submitted six. All six were hung. Some years later we heard that no other artist had ever had more than two selected.

So, by 1923 Hamilton Murdock was an obvious choice to design Orinda's new clubhouse for his friend "E.I." de Laveaga, of which he always spoke highly and whose liking for the Spanish style of architecture is apparent, a legacy of Orinda.

By 1919 the water company's San Pablo Dam was completed, thus assuring de Laveaga that only the land south of Wildcat Canyon Road was of importance to Orinda. And although the roads and the automobiles of 1920 were antique by all present standards, at the very least the picknickers and sightseers had another route to get to Orinda if they so desired. With the old single lane road from El Sobrante, San Pablo and Richmond - now inundated by San Pablo Reservoir, a higher road had been built, with two lanes - a terribly twisty road but then considered a highway. Also, the opening of Camino Pablo (The Dam Road) gave Orinda an access - with no heavy grades to worry the motorist. And these were the days when the old 2-wheel brakes caught fire, as mine did on a trip down from the old tunnel. Chuck Wilson, of Walnut Creek, recently recalled this incident of the late 20's, as we headed for a game of golf. So, in the 20's E. I. de Laveaga went to work on his many plans for Orinda.

The chronology of de Laveaga's promotions is a tale of fine planning. In reasonably short order he followed this schedule from 1920 through 1925:

- 1920 - Subdivision and road grading in the El Toyonal area and down to San Pablo creek, which sported a new concrete bridge that year.
- 1921 - Lake Orinda formed and Orinda Park Pool constructed. Continuous planning and surveying.
- 1922 - Lake Cascade becomes a reality.
- 1923 - Orinda Village laid out. Golf course construction started.
- 1924 - Orinda Country Club clubhouse construction under way. Swimming pool and bathhouse completed.
- 1925 - Clubhouse opened in September; buildings in the Village, all designed by Murdock except for a building, The White Swan, north of the bridge, and additional residences completed. Orinda Country Club open and ready for play.

William (Willie) Watson, as we all know, is the architect and record of the Orinda course. It is interesting that Watson was the architect for two of "Golf Digest's" list of the country's "100-Best" courses - the Interlachen Country Club in Edina, Minnesota, completed in 1910, and our own Olympic Club's Lake Course, remodeled by Watson in 1924. We can thus remember "Willie" as the man who had about 13% of his endeavors still listed in the Top-100. Orinda would make that 20%.

Willie Watson emigrated from Scotland in 1898 to assist Robert Foulis in the building of the original nine holes at Minikahda Country Club in Minneapolis, completed in 1899. He stayed on at Minikahda as pro-greenskeeper during the summers and then headed for the Hotel Green Golf Club in Pasadena, where he worked as a golf instructor during the winter months.

Watson's early roots were in the Midwest. Although he did travel west to lay out the Dublin Country Club course in 1914 (more on that later), his earlier work included beside, the aforementioned Interlachen, two courses in Charlevoix, Michigan, at the top of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, Charlevoix was and is a resort town close to Traverse Bay and a mecca for many Easterners during the summer golf and yachting seasons. The two courses, both completed in 1917, were the Belvedere Country Club and the Charlevoix Muni. During this period Watson also designed two courses in Illinois, Momenoe Country Club and the no. 2 course at Olympic Fields Country Club, both completed in 1919.

Moving back to Southern California, Watson then designed Hillcrest, in Los Angeles (1920), and remodeled the Annandale Country Club course in Pasadena. In 1921 he designed Arnold Canyon Golf Course in Burbank, a 9-hole executive course, and later, the original nine at Lake Arrowhead (1924).

Moving north, Watson then had his best years as a golf architect. In 1924 he completed the Olympic Club's Ocean Course in conjunction with Sam Whiting, the Olympic Club's famous Pro; remodeled the Lake Course, again with Whiting, and finished the year with the completion of design at Orinda.

It is thought, too, that Willie Watson also collaborated with the same year, with Robert Hunter in designing the Berkeley Country Club course (now Mira Vista), although Hunter is given full credit for this course, no doubt the most panoramic course in California.

Watson's endeavors in 1925 include Harding Park, in San Francisco, and Fort Washington in Fresno. He is also credited with the remodeling of Burlingame Country Club, and, possibly, the construction of Sonoma Mission Inn course in 1928.

In any event, Willie Watson designed a fine course for Orinda, with the possible exception of the 12th, which is named after him. I'm sure he would have packed another hole with which to be so honored.

Robert Hunter probably collaborated with Watson in some phase of Orinda's design. Hunter seems to have been a man totally enamored with the game of golf. Born Wiles Robert Hunter in Terre Haute in 1874, he graduated from Indiana University in 1896.

Hunter was able to travel extensively, with time to study the great courses of England and Scotland. At the same time, he became a world-renowned sociologist and author. His attempts to solve the current social problems resulted in a number of books such as "Poverty" (1904), "Labor in Politics" (1915), and "Why We Fail as Christians" (1919), and much work in various fields such as abolition of child labor and the fight against tuberculosis. After failing in a bid for the governorship of Connecticut, he resigned from the Socialist Party and moved, in 1917, to California.

In 1926 Hunter published what is considered to be one of the finest books written on golf course design, "The Links". The book contains illustrations and details of many of the fine links courses in Great Britain as well as those of early American courses. One of the book's features is of the view from the tee at the 15th at Orinda, a hole which Hunter compared favorably with the "Redan", the 15th at North Berwick, Scotland, at the time the most famous Par 3 in all of golf.

I have had through the years a copy of "The Links" (1926), showing just what the golfer faced at the 15th in 1924 and 1925. While the "Redan" was 200 yards and Despair (I recall it as "Desperation") is listed at 182 yards, the hazards seem much the same, with San Pablo Creek substituting for North Berwick's deep sleeper-faced bunkers. While my father passed the book on to me, my guess is that the book was given to C.P. Murdock by Robert Hunter.

For a man who seemed not to want any credit for his talents in golf course design, Hunter must yet be credited with the design of Berkeley Country Club (1924), Cypress Point (1927), with remodeling of the bunkers at Pebble Beach (1927), and the design of Meadow Club, Northwood, the Valley Club of Montecito, and the remodel of Monterey Peninsula Country Club, all in 1928.

Hunter retired to Santa Barbara. I do think his contributions to the design of Orinda were considerable. He was a staunch friend of Willie Watson, and the course closely follows his precepts as presented in "The Links".

The Orinda course was built using horses, mules, "Fresno" scrapers and a couple of Caterpillar tractors, over the span of some three years. The layout crosses Lauterwasser Creek six times (if you consider No. 10 as twice) and San Pablo Creek twice, with more trouble on 1 and 18 from the remains of Cascade Creek which once joined down the middle of 18. The course has sand bunkers on those holes without these natural hazards. For the long-hitter Orinda has always been "tough". Bob Callan holds the course record of 65, higher than most courses.

The only changes of importance in the last 63 years have been the relocation of the 1st tee and the remodeling of the No. 2 green. Originally this green was some 120 yards from front to back. I remember sinking a blind putt of 35 paces from the right front to the left rear of this green, but the entire right front is now a sand trap, a change for the better. Otherwise, the Greens Committee has apparently been well satisfied with Willie Watson's design.

Holes 1, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were played before the course was officially opened for play and before there was a clubhouse, but soon the present "Cardiac Nine", 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 was heavily played. Twice around was a good golfing day. Holes 4 through 12, up and down Lauterwasser Creek and Miner Road, were not far behind and Orinda was at last a complete and challenging country club golf course.

Only once do I recall a serious threat to the course. Late in the 20's a blight on the beautiful natural oaks, leaf worms almost cost the club all of the oaks around the 17th green and 18th tee. For two years the battle waged between the stately oaks and Cal's entomologists. With the 17th green under a full inch of dead oak leaves, we were all worried. The good guys won!

Diablo Country Club, as mentioned earlier, was Willie Watson's first course design job in the West. Why Diablo? Why was there a golf course built there, so far out in the country? The contrast between the Diablo and Orinda stories, is, I think, of interest. George Emanuel's recent history of Contra Costa County shows the Diablo area to be far ahead of Orinda in its development.

The story goes back to 1876, when a few cronies - Crocker, Fair [*sic. possibly Hopkins*], Huntington and Stanford - bought 10,000 acres of the slopes of Mt. Diablo and built themselves a superb ranch. The two-story main house contained all the room and amenities the Big Four were accustomed to. The barn was 5 stories high and surrounded by corrals and pastures for 100 thoroughbred horses and 300 pedigreed cattle. A "Billiard Hall" was built some yards from the main house, and a bowling alley in the basement. After some changes in ownership, the property was named "Oakwood Park Stock Farm" in 1899.

This was the property bought by Robert N. Burgess, of Danville, and a small investors group in 1913. His plan was to develop the properties into the finest of resorts. Land sales for homesites would follow. First, he had an auto road graded to the top of Mt. Diablo for visitors and prospective buyers of homesites, as well as a continuation of the road down the other side of the mountain. Burgess then converted the old mansion to an inn, and, the following year (1917) he built the "Red Horse Tavern" and "The Chalet," the three - story building facing the 1st tee.

Burgess's finest effort, I should think, was to persuade the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railroad, a most attractive electric line to build an extension from Saranap Junction, just west of Walnut Creek, directly to his "Diablo" project. This extension, through Alamo and Danville, was sometimes called the "Toonerville Trolley," after a famous syndicated cartoon of the same name, and also the "millionaires special" when the line ran its finest cars to Diablo on weekends.

The Oakland-Antioch was no doubt the most attractive of California's inter-urban lines. Each car had its own distinctive palms. All had lots of stained glass, with clerestory windows. Some were observation cars, with open end platforms for through-trains to Sacramento.

With a terminus of 40th St. and Shafter Avenue in Oakland, the line ran through Temescal, tunneled from Montclair to near Moraga, with train stops at St. Mary's College, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Concord, Pittsburg and Antioch. It then followed the river to Rio Vista, Walnut Grove and on to Sacramento. Branch lines ran both north and south in the Central Valley. While this railroad had no ferry connections, it survived long enough to run scheduled trains across the Bay Bridge and into the Bay Bridge Terminal. It was the ideal train for the Diablo run.

The Diablo extension was opened in March of 1914 but soon abandoned in March of 1924 - all too soon.

Robert Burgess had not forgotten to offer a golf course to complete his plans for a full resort with land development to match, just as is done today. Willie Watson was selected as Architect.

Watson was most probably only ally and close friend of George Smith, Diablo's Greenkeeper for many many years, and his two golfing sons. George Smith was the father of Alex Smith and MacDonald Smith, star golfers both. Alex Smith was U.S. Open champion in 1906 and 1910, and Mac Smith was still one of the legendary stylists playing in the 20's. Mac played beautiful iron shots and was unique in that he "picked the ball clean" - no divots, Diablo, as stated before, was laid out in 1914 - with 9 holes ready for play in 1916 and the full eighteen playing in 1917.

My first attempt at the game of golf was at Diablo, a guest along with my mother and father, of Judge Dewey Weinmann, of Alameda, who had built a fine summer home along the 17th. The year was about 1923.

Robert Burgess and his group, facing the problems and realities of World War I, went bankrupt by 1919.

"Mount Diablo Country Club" took over the property, and after more financial problems and bankruptcies, was finally bought by the members from Larry Curtola in 1948.

Diablo could well have been a world-famous resort. William Randolph Hearst advertised the development in all of his papers, but never did put up the money he had talked about to complete the full resort plans. But what try by Robert Burgess. And let us remember Willie Watson for another fine course.

The Mokelumne River, source of the East Bay's water supply, plays a vital part in Orinda's history. The water tunnel carrying our most appreciated drinking water, goes directly under the golf links on its route from Lafayette to Orinda, and No. 13 is named "Mokelumne" to remind us of it. Besides tunneling from both ends, a shaft was located a short way above the head of Lake Cascade from which tunneling progressed in both directions. Thanks to my mother, she, my younger brother and I were allowed to don hard hats, go down in the lift and inspect both heads of the tunnel, guided by the Superintendent. I wish now to thank, very belatedly, EBMUD for this exciting tour under Lake Cascade.

Secondly, as Muir Sorrick's book "Orinda" points out (Pg 73), the cascading waterfall to a landscaped pool, feeling water from there to the main free-form swimming pool, was patterned

after the famous "Blue Hole" on the Mokelumne River. The "cascade" was truly beautiful and opened, with the bathhouse and lawns, in 1924. The design arose based on "Tone" Murdock's paintings of the Blue Hole's cascading waters and the still pond below, all now under many feet of reservoir water. Dad's annual fishing trip, which his cousins, entailed a long auto trip to Dorrington, a hamlet in Calaveras County, no longer on the map, on the Ebbett's Pass Road. Then came a long pack trip down to the Mokelumne to the north. The "Blue Hole" was ideal. So was the replica at the Orinda County Club.

Golfers were a breed apart in the 20's. Imagine boarding a streetcar with a bag of clubs on one shoulder, dressed more like a bagpiper than not, heading for your favorite links. You looked like a person from another time and place.

Your clothing was the product of tradition. Basic to all were woolen knickers, or, on hot days, linen "plus-fours" gathering in just below the knees. Either required argyle stockings with decorative bands of cloth, like small ties, it to hold up the stockings. Commonly called "tassles", these came in a variety of colors. Have you ever seen a "piper" without his "tassles"? Never! The knickers were usually of gray wool and the "plus-fours" in plain or lightly checked white.

A photo in Robert Hunter's book "The Links" shows Orinda's Assistant Pro, Joe Longo, teeing off on the 15th hole, dressed in the traditional outfit of the day, with knickers, white long-sleeved shirt, black tie, sleeveless argyle sweater and tweed cap. You could see by the photo that Joe was a trusty golfer!

The golf sticks of the 20's were, again, traditionally Scottish. The woods-driver, brassie, spoon and cleek – usually had persimmon heads, ivory inserts of red, white or black, and hickory shafts. The irons - the iron cleek or driving iron, midiron, mid mashie, mashie iron, mashie, spade mashie, mashie niblick, niblick and putter - were often Scottish imports, again with hickory shafts. Many golfers carried a jigger, too, a very hardy short chipping iron for shots just off the green. The wedge had not yet been invented. It was clubs such as these that allowed Bobby Jones to reach the 14th at Pebble Beach in two shots. While not blessed with identical scoring weights and matched to perfection, one got used to each of his clubs on a personal basis, and a golfer quickly developed his favorites.

Today's array of golf balls is awesome compared to those available in the 20's. First, they don't cut. 60 years ago you had better bet the "sweet spot" if you wanted to wind up a round with a usable ball left. But this may have helped in producing cleaner, sweeter shots. As to the brands of balls there were a number like Dunlops and the early Acushnet products, but as I recall, the two most popular, at least in our groups, were the Spalding "Kro-Flite", with a grid pattern, and the

"Reach Eagle", a dimple ball by Wright and Ditson. My own favorite was the "Fairway", put out by United States Rubber Co. - a fine dimple design, with a good extra-white cover, and the best of prices - 50¢. As I recall, only the word "Fairway" was printed on the balls, but this word could be had in several different colors for identification.

I don't recall that any of us wore golf gloves – if so there remains only the matter of teeing up the ball. As all golfers remember, there was, and sometimes still is, the rack at each tee holding a bucket of sand, some water and a towel. Another choice was a celluloid cone with the top cut off and a split side. By far the best was the "Redhead", tee sold by the Reddy Tee Company. It was made in two parts, a deep cherry red conical cap pressed over a pointed white stem. It was beautiful. At Orinda, this all-plastic creation was known only as the "Fleishhacker" tee, named after the famous Bay Francisco banker, Herbert Fleishhacker, who opened his immense saltwater pool at Ocean Beach in 1925, I treasured them so much that I once played 110 holes of golf with one, having to find and rejoin both parts for about the last 20 holes.

Being a junior golfer at Orinda was much like being a full member, but with no bills to pay. No other club I've heard of was ever more kind and thoughtful to its juniors. Perhaps there have been such clubs, but here is a part of the nice things the charter members of Orinda gave to their teenagers:

Number one was the inclusion of any junior with a respectable handicap in all of the club's golf activities. First, I should list some of the juniors who were always welcome - John Hosford, George Eberhardt, Ned de Laveaga, Dick de Laveaga, Dan Moser, Jim Moser, Bob Carpenter, Jim Diedrich, Allen McLenegan, Archie Andrews Jr., Glen Kaesbier, John Woods, Stan Johnson, Murray Johnson, and Bob Murdock. Obviously, there were others, and a new generation came right behind.

By golf activities I refer to a lot of things: First, we could play at any time, including busy Sundays, without restrictions except for Ladies Day. Secondly, we were welcome in any tournament - Spaniards and Indians, men's and mixed club tournaments except for the Men's Club Championship, and Home and Home tournaments with other clubs. Then, the Handicap Committee took the time (pre-NCGA computers) to figure and post each of our individual handicaps which applied just as with any senior member. We were welcomed, and to prove it all were awarded prizes and cups equal to any of the members' trophies. Plus, our chits were good at the Pro Shop and the Grill. All we had to do was replace our divots and act like young gentlemen.

As to the distaff side, I think most of the teenage girls tried the game, perhaps a few times, and then retired to the pool, the tennis court above the 18th Green, or took off on Miss Graham's horses

from the Village. I don't think Willie Watson had three young ladies in mind when he designed the course. Jane Lasell writes from her long-time home in Hawaii - "We did spend a lot of time at the pool. I was the only "kid" who had a portable Victrola and we always took it to the pool on weekends. Bing Crosby was in vogue, and I had all his records. The fellows were great. They kept the Victrola wound up and the records playing. I recall the two lots my dad (Loren Lasell) bought and how we used to go out and take a picnic lunch on a Sunday and plan a home we would build. Of course mother, living in Claremont, scratched all these plans as she didn't want her children on the old road going back and forth to school for years to come". So many felt the same way, Bob Carpenter, as do so many of us, recalls Ed de Laveaga's annual lunch at the picnic grounds at the head of Lake Cascade. It was a great sight to see "E.I." ride in on his white horse and in his white "leathers" - a real "vaquero" - to add to the spirit of Orinda.

Easter was also done in high style. With a great assortment of eggs to hunt for, in the rose garden (now another parking lot) and all around the pool area.

My own favorite activity, besides playing golf, was reading about the game. The Library, reminiscent of the beautiful Morrison Library at Cal, was full of books and magazines on golf. Sequential photos of all the top golfers of the 20's were available to study and emulate. Articles on the personalities of the game, historic courses and golf lore abounded, all to be read and enjoyed in the most peaceful of surroundings.

There was so much to do at Orinda Country Club in the 1920's.

Golf at Orinda started with a trip to the Pro Shop of a Head Pro, Ralph Longo. His assistant pro was his younger brother Joe Longo. The important part of Caddie Master was held by Joe Varni, who eventually became Orinda's General Manager. Joe had weekend and summer assistant, Bill Ogden, who was the son of the Damkeeper of San Pablo Reservoir, and a popular lad. Edwin Cooper was Orinda County Clubs first Manager.

The Caddie Shack was an important part of any country club in the 20's. Without a supply of pleasant, and, hopefully, competent caddies, the ladies in particular were at a some disadvantage in playing the course, even with less than a full complement of clubs to carry, with no fore-caddie and no one to scramble into the barrancas and thickets to retrieve balls. While many of the "juniors" caddied at times, especially seeming Ladies' Tournament. Orinda had a steady core of regular caddies. Alan McLonegan recalls the "most" faithful of this group, "Belvedere". The group rate was 75¢ per loop per loop per bag. The maximum, then, was \$3.00 for two double loops, plus tips, but most of the time the average for a day was far less. Considering the long trip to Orinda, keeping

was adequate supply of caddies on hand was indeed a problem. Many caddie connections were "by appointment", by arrangement with the Pro Shop.

Ralph Longo was a good example of the typical Golf Professional of the times. With no money to be made in professional tournament golf, Ralph stayed close to home until, in 1942, he was removed by the Board of Directors. In later years he gave lessons to the newly-opened Golden Gate Field's infield course and driving range. His golf game was good enough to warrant Bob Carpenter and his wife Eleanor (Long-time Diablo members now) to call me "Ralph" for the past 62 years and for Bob and Helen Murdock to call Carpenter by the name he always answers to – "Ralph."

Joe Varni went on to make lots of history at Orinda - club manager, and, along with dapper and popular Warren Harrold, Orinda's first resident real estater, a member of many organizing committees and an ever-willing participant in the affairs of the Orinda enclave, Joe was also an excellent barbeque chef. "E.I." called upon these two men early and often.

So, the staff of Orinda Country Club was, to our young minds, just fine.

While every club has a small core of very good golfers the ones I recall from the start of the club were Mike Hadden, Jimmie Miller, Tommy Telfer, Lloyd Warnecke, and Chet Williams. Whether it was because they were the top players (there must have been others) or because they played - so regularly with Ralph and Joe Longo, I remember them well. According to long-ago accounts four of them made golf history on the 15th one fine day - a hole-in-one by Jimmie Miller and three easy birdies for Ralph, Joe and Mike Hadden.

One of the best players, whom I played with, was a Chiropractor. The good Doctor carried nothing over a middle iron in his bag. What a thrill to see "drivers" of say 235 yards up there among the stray clouds! What a pity his awesome hands had little touch around the greens.

The reigning ladies champion was mathematics Marie Strand, a mathematics teacher at Berkeley High School. I don't recall that she had any serious competition for the title, she is remembered as a fairly tall, reddish-brown haired, slim athletic person, and a favorite of Berkeley High. Miss Strand will be mentioned again. I always thought of her as a very worthy person to own the Club Championship.

1927 was, for me, a wonderful year. As was quite standard for the era, the '27 Orinda Junior Championship was played at match play, with only single-day tournaments at medal. I bested

Johnny Hosford in the finals to win the event. What really surprised me was to read all about it in the Oakland Post-Enquirer - not just a footnote, but a headlined article in the sports pages. The new spirit of golf was catching on as fast and a special reporter was assigned to the golf "beat." Next came a Trophy, one that should make Orinda's 1927 Tournament committee very proud were they here today. I hope you can see it in soon in Orinda's Trophy case, where it belongs.

The 1927 Junior Girls also scheduled the Junior Captaincy for 1928. This meant problems, as there was little or no competition for our team. Diablo, I believe, was the only club we managed to play. So why not make some competition? As I was then a junior at Alameda High, I went to Principal Paul Thompson and Dean Willis Minimum, both ardent golfers, and asked them to form an Alameda high school squad, which was no problem. A six-player team came to Orinda, where our "home court" advantage didn't help at all. My opponent was Max Mc Murray, who, on the way to beating me, put his tee shot on No. 10 (299 yards) about 20 feet from the pin. Max went on to become Head Pro at Alameda Muni on the death of the legendary Earl (59) Fry, and ran the Muni layout for many years.

Now with a golf team, Alameda High talked Piedmont High into forming one and they in turn got Berkely High into it. Thus the "new" game of golf was added to the Alameda County Athletic League agenda of sports. Alameda's Chuck Wilson, now of Walnut Creek, was the first ACAL golf Champion.

"Orinda or Bust" could well have been the battle cry of those traveling in from across the Berkeley – Oakland Hills, The Tunnel Road was slow and dangerous. The 2-lane tunnel, completed in 1901 was a narrow, wet, dripping bore, with a curve near the east-end that didn't belong there. The roadbed sometimes iced in winter. "Closed for Repairs" signs were used often. The tunnel that the Town of Alamo had agitated for from 1860 on was not worth the fight.

The road from, Canary Cottage, at the east end of the tunnel, to the Crossroads, was as precarious as the rest of the route, with frequent slides, plenty of twists and drops-offs and narrow bridges, long-gone sections of creek. One of our Orinda members, the owners of Hutchinson Construction and the Hutchinson and Brown Quarry, traveled this bumpy "highway" once to often. Dynamite he was carrying in his sedan exploded, tearing away one side of the 2-lane highway and closing the road yet again. When all systems were "go", this was the route to Orinda and beyond. But, with no radio in those prehistoric days, one had no warning of impending delays and closures, so many took the route that was open most of the time – The Dam Road.

Here is a typical Sunday, in the life of the Murdoch family of Alameda. Hamilton Murdoch and his son Robert would catch the first Santa Clara Avenue street car, in our best golf clothes, and

with golf clubs on shoulder. As the British freighter Lancaster had hit the end of the Webster Street drawbridge and dumped it into the Estuary, we would get off the street car at the foot of Webster Street, walk down to water's edge and board a Red Stack tug for the trip across the water.

As the foot of Webster in Oakland we were greeted by our good friend, charter member Ken Lowden, who lived in the rambling home on 19th street, which had a back lawn running down to Lake Merritt's water (no Lakeshore Drive then) and which became the famous Snow Museum of mounted big game animals.

Ken would then drive us in his Moor automobile up Broadway, out the full length of San Pablo Street, then through El Sobrante and over the torturous San Pablo Dam Road to the club, for our morning round of golf. If all went well the trip took about two hours.

A little later in the day Mother (best Murdock) and young brother Georgie would leave, with dinner clothes for us, in her car in the appropriate direction – the Fruitvale Bridge, through East Oakland, and Montclair, to Snake Canyon, and Shepherd's Canyon roads, which wound up a then wild route to the skyline, then down the long grade through the redwoods and through the hamlet of canyon to Moraga, thence to the crossroads and on to the club, arriving in time for lunch.

In the afternoon it was usual for the four Murdocks to play another round together, stay for dinner, then drive home by way of snake Canyon to Alameda. This routine lasted until the Posey Tube was finally opened at the end of the decade, when all manner of changes took place.

You could also get to Orinda by-street car. About 15 of us did it one day in 1929. As Senior Patrol Leader of Alameda scouts, Troop 3, I led them on a hike. First came a trolley ride, with transfers, to the top of Euclid Street and Grizzly Peak Boulevard in Berkeley. We then hiked up Grizzly to Shasta Road, which connected to General Theodore Wagner's Road, called Wildcat Road by the 20's, and along Camino Pablo to Orinda Village and on up to the Clubhouse. Never has Orinda's cuisine quite matched the choc shakes and chicken sandwiches, served that day in the Grill Room.

The afternoon route took us on a much more arduous walk - back to the Village, The Crossroads, up the canyon to Fish Ranch Road, up Fish Ranch and then the long hike east up Grizzly, which became Skyline Boulevard. Somewhere above the Merriwood-Thornhill area we took off down through The pine forests, sliding as much as walking, to catch Mountain Boulevard. The rest was easy - through Montclair to the end of Diamond Canyon (Park Boulevard) where the old No. 9 Line, the "San Jose Avenue (Alameda) Flyer", terminated. Not only did it go direct to Alameda via the Fruitvale Avenue Bridge, but let most of us off within, two or three blocks of home!

Street cars to Orinda? Sure.

Where golf and all other games part company is one's ability to remember a round shot-for-shot, and to remember certain shots virtually forever. May I mention a few shots that are as clear to me today as 60 years ago?

Hole No.11, Graveyard, is the scene for three of them. No.17, "Rincon", is the fourth. The last is No.1, "Inspiration".

As to the 11th, quoting from the January 1988 NCGA News, "Wily Scott Willie Watson laid out the first holes of Orinda Country Club in the early 1920's. His touch carried over from his home country, where mounds and natural slope of the land created obstacles.

"You can see the work on the par-4 11th hole. A dog-leg left that is guarded by trees on either side, the drive must be long and accurate. But the appropriate shot is the thing of beauty. The golfer stands on a promontory looking over the green, which is guarded on all sides by high, rounded mounds. It's everything a golf hole should be and it doesn't have a number on it. The mounding is perfection", said golf architect Robert Muir Graves upon first seeing the hole.

A slight fade on "push" on this hole left one a very long shot-to-the green. Junior player Johnny Wood and I stood there one day waiting for a couple to putt out before Johnny's second shot. Doubting that he could reach the pin, John hit away. His towering fairway wood landed squarely on the neck of the woman, who was standing over a four foot putt with her back to us.

She dropped like a sack of sand, and spent some time in the hospital before recovering. We heard that had the ball been either an inch higher or lower it would probably have proved fatal. The felled golfer was Marie Strand.

Yes, she was John's math teacher at Berkeley High. His grade that year was a matter of much conjecture.

Standing at about the same place on another day, but with no one ahead of us, I hit a low, hard wood shot, which we ever sure had cleared the creek, but, although it was headed straight for the pin we never saw the ball again after it went over the slope in front of the creek. After looking along the fence and behind the green we deemed the ball lost. Finally someone noticed what looked like a pile of rags lying alongside the edge of the barranca. It turned out to be an unconscious greenskeeper. His heavy and greasy felt-hat, which the ball had bounced off of, very probably had saved his life. He, too, went to the hospital. So much for Willie Watson's "mounds", like the one in front of the creek below, which left no hint of the hazard ahead.

Finally on No.11 came the closest call of all. Dana Murdock - no relation but a close friend of mine at Mira Vista – and I were playing together as guests in a Fourth of July Invitational. After refreshments at the 11th Tee, Dana, who hit a very hard low-ball, and with the "horror" had reached

the top of his backswing when my heart stopped. A "fill-in" caddie from the following foursome, new to the game and the course, had chosen to walk straight up the first slope of the tee instead of the regular path. I saw his head and then his shoulders rising precisely where Dana's shot could have caught him full in the face from about 35 feet. I screamed, Dana dropped his club, the caddie wandered off without a word, and our foursome stopped for a tippie to settle us down. No pars on 11 that day! So much for "Graveyard", one of the toughest Par-4's in all of golf.

Another golf shot I can't help but remember was on "Rincon", No.17. In 1928 in my first match in defense of the 1927 Title, I lost in the 1st round to Bob Carpenter, the match ending at the 16th. Of course, with no carts, we "played in". My second shot on 17 found the cup - my first eagle ever. And totally wasted!

Finally comes this story of golf and why skill can be a minor factor. In an international match with Sequoyah, I had a match with a Doctor White, a fine golfer and a legendary gentleman. The match was very close, and I halved it with a par on 18. We went to the old, high 1st Tee to go into "sudden death", although there was a better way to describe it then. Ralph Longo cleared the Tee of the Sunday alternative members so we could play away. My carry-over honor. I drove the green in front of what seemed like a third of the Club's members. I had never before reached the green and never did again.

Doctor White retaliated by bouncing a huge "banana" off Chet Williams' tile roof. It fell just in bounds. His second shot was "grumbled" to the right, finally stopping near the present bed of "impatiens" About where the car path is now. From here it was simply a matter of hitting a Larry Neige (Augusta, 1987) shot into the cup. What could I possibly do but 3-putt?

The halcyon 20's at Orinda Country Club ended, of course, with the Crash of October 1929 and the Depression which followed. Many people were not too directly affected, but for so many others it was the end of a way of life. To relive it is impossible. To moralize about it is not at all necessary. Most of us did live through it all, and many were able to continue their favorite game of golf without delay, but very probably with some new partners. Orinda and Claremont were two courses that were able to carry on. Others, such as Berkeley Country Club, Diablo, Oak Knoll Country Club and Castlewood all either "went under" or changed hands.

In the case of Orinda, which lost many members, the remaining members were able to "hold on." Ed de Laveaga, however, lost his personal fortune, but, in spite of lack of sales of lots in his subdivisions, he eventually paid off all of his real estate loans. The opening of the Caldecott Tunnel in 1937 was the saving grace for business in the Orinda area. Edward de Laveaga died on the last day of 1958. Of all the plans he had made for Orinda, this forceful man had somehow seen them

all completed, with the exception of a hotel, a chapel and a theatre in Orinda Village. It is hard to imagine what might have become of the Orinda area without him.

Building construction and, of course, the sale of building lots just stopped! One year the entire value of building permits issued by the City of Alameda was \$700.00 — for a detached garage. Except for on-going work to complete, the building construction industry came to a halt. The Murdock-L'Hommedieu Corporation was gone within a year and a half.

With no chance of more golf courses to design, Willie Watson returned to Michigan, to be Head Professional at his Watson-designed Belvedere Country Club — a summer job only. His designing days were over.

Robert Hunter taught Social Studies at Cal-Berkeley for some years before moving to Santa Barbara, where he died in 1942.

Hamilton Murdock, with no buildings to design, turned to other endeavors, such as drafting and designing for Bethlehem Shipbuilding, as he had in World War I. He and his twin sister had a memorable 80th Birthday Party at Pine Inn, in Carmel, but both died at age 81.

After dropping out of various clubs, including Orinda, he, as well as Mother and I, found all the golfing anyone could ever want just 12 minutes from home — the Old Course at Alameda Muni. Full monthly tickets were \$3.00 per month. The clubhouse, which Dad had also designed, was a tile-roofed, stucco and brick building with a Mission-style facade and very attractive. It has been enlarged and is still in use as the Bay Island Club. Dad and I played the Old Course from about 6 AM to about 7:45 AM almost every weekday, usually with Dick Fry, Mark Fry, Tom Fry or Charlie Shepherd, all well-known young pros of the time. We had our fun, day after day!

Playing Orinda as a guest some years ago I was very surprised to hear that none of my three partners, all members, had ever heard that each hole had its own name. As they all were rather new members I thought no more about it until my wife and I ran into Robert J. Foley in the gallery at the 1966 Open. I laughingly told Bob, who was then the President of Orinda Country Club, that I'd run into three of his members who had never heard of Mousetrap, Long Tom, Dead Horse and the rest.

What a shock I got! Bob Foley had never heard of them either! Somewhere between 1927, when the Greens Committee named each hole, and 1966 (a mere 39 years) a tradition had been lost.

I am delighted to say that President Robert Foley acted promptly and well, and the Oversight Committee rectified the matter forthwith.

As I might have said before, No. 10 was always "Ed's Delight" to me, instead of just "Delight". Looking down over the 10th from the Living Room of the de Laveaga home, "Bien Venida," was a spectacle that I'm sure gave "E.I." much delight over his accomplishments, but I feel sure, too, that it was equally meant to be a tribute to Ed's Delight de Laveaga.

The 15th also bothers me, in that I remember it as "Desperation", not "Despair". I'll check on it. Some of the "juniors" may remember. One who should is Jimmy Dietrich, who has gone from "Junior" to "Senior" at Orinda Country Club — the only one! Jimmy was Patrol Leader in Orinda's first Boy Scouts of America Troop, and scouts rarely forget the important things.

I surely hope I can be remembered as one who contributed to the traditions of Orinda for what little I did to bring the names back to the holes, in the old Scottish style.
