

The Clubhouse

1951 to 1985



From 1951 until a major change was made in 1965 this Clubhouse served the members well and it, and the social life centred in it, are fondly remembered by many old timers. The caterer managers lived upstairs and provided light refreshments. It was a couple of years before the Club got its liquor licence¹ but at least one old timer recalls how members overcame this hurdle. George Naylor tells the story of two men who kept 4 or 5 cases of beer in their lockers in the men's room. They sold keys to that locker for 25 cents, which was the price of a beer in those halcyon days.

The first caterers were Mr. and Mrs. George Mills who left soon after the Club got a liquor license. The Shermans occupied the Clubhouse for a short time from 1954 when Archie Sherman, always an active Club member, became too ill to carry on his duties as a Fisheries Officer. He and his wife took over the management of the Clubhouse, but the building had certainly not been designed for a family and Bob, Archie's son, remembers, as a youngster, sleeping during the winter of '54 in a tent in a small wooded area behind the present 1st tee. Sadly Archie died in October 1955 and the family left the Club.² They were followed by Mrs. Balfour who served light luncheons and sandwiches. In 1957 the Club was lucky enough to acquire the services of Tom and Eileen Woodward. Tom Woodward, originally from the UK, was, at this time, the chef aboard the Eaton yacht. One day he saw an advertisement in the *Toronto Star* asking for a manager for a country club on Vancouver Island. He applied and, not surprisingly, got the job. He and Eileen arrived to accommodation which did not

include either a private living room or a private shower and a salary of \$75.00 a month for *both* of them plus what they could make from the restaurant. The Club got the profits from liquor sales, the Woodwards those from the mixer, but, under the odd laws of the time, Eileen was not actually allowed to *serve* liquor. To make a living at all involved very long hours for them both but looking back on it now they say that, on the whole, they enjoyed it. Eileen says "... we had no money, but no one had any money, we had some good times and made a lot of friends." They left in 1959 to open a restaurant in Cowichan Bay and in that year Mel Evans with his wife Hilda came to be the Professional of the Club and Manager/Caterer of the Clubhouse. After their first year Clarence Evans, as retiring President, could say at the AGM that the members were in "for many pleasing and friendly years around our Club if their [the Evans'] first year is any indication."

Through the early fifties the membership remained at about 200 and this relatively small group had a very active Club life. For example Pat O'Brien, as House Committee Chairman, could report at the AGM in 1956 that there had been monthly dances and several Field Days as well as purely golf tournaments.³ These Field Days, remembered with pleasure by older members, involved an Open House to non-members and the organization of many novelty events. One such Field Day described in the *Cowichan Leader* might

1. Exact date uncertain but the 1955 financial statements include Bar receipts. See Club Archives #14.

2. See also below p.53.

3. *Cowichan Leader*, February 21, 1956.

be taken as the prototype of these events; it talks about *Bingo* and *pitching in the tub, long hole* and *approach shot* competitions!

By the end of the fifties it was becoming obvious that the Clubhouse was too small. That fact, combined with the wear and tear on the building, led to a lot of inconvenience and a lot of complaints. The Board gave much thought to solving these problems whilst operating on a very small budget. Proposals for improvement put forward at the 1958 AGM were

considered by the members who approved in principle, but thought that they did not go far enough. They finally settled for some immediate minor alterations and the appointment of a Board member, Dick White, to occupy a new position with the title of Chairman of Building and Improvements. Money was to be raised by assessing every member \$10.00 a year for the next two years. During this time some changes were made to the inside of the building and in 1964 the Pro Shop was taken out of the main building, and a separate building, where the Club storage is now, was erected. This created more space but not enough to cope with an increasing membership, which, by 1964, stood at well over 300.

Andy Baraniuk had done the drawings for the new Pro Shop which had been built by Pete Gard, so, the following year, when it was decided to enlarge the Clubhouse, Andy was again asked to draw up plans for the additions. When completed these plans were publicly displayed for members' input. By



*Above,
the Clubhouse in
the 1970s;
right,
just before it was
demolished*



September 1965 Board President Bradshaw Harrison could report that the new clubhouse plans were in their final stages, had been approved by the membership and were ready to go out to tender. In early 1966 the \$35,000 contract was again awarded to Pete Gard and building started in March with the object of being ready for the Cowichan Open in July.

The walls where the Pro Shop had been were removed, thus creating an open breezeway and from here a staircase led to the second floor. A Juniors' room was created on the ground floor and, on the same level, the ladies were given a small office and their lounge and locker room was enlarged. By the removal of the fireplace in the upstairs lounge and the addition of a large area, the men's locker room downstairs and the lounge/restaurant upstairs were substantially increased. The onetime living quarters were transformed into an upstairs office and storage space. The deck on the east side was kept and another larger one added to the south so bringing the whole course into view. Both this deck and the main room could be entered from the north side of the building. Again the Ladies' Section was asked to accept the responsibility of furnishing the new spaces. Mary Evans remembers going with Jane Fall on a buying expedition to

Eatons to choose new furniture. She also remembers that the opening of this second Clubhouse was celebrated with an Hawaiian Night party that she organized with Betty Laker - palm trees by courtesy of Eatons!

This was the building which, with some small changes and many repairs, was the social centre of the Club for the next 23 years. Under the enthusiastic and energetic initiatives of entertainment organizers like Pete King and Don Miller social life thrived. Everyone from that time will remember Don Miller and his banjo. There are many accounts of Saturday socials and bigger dances were regularly held at least four times a year when an average of fifty couples dined and danced to live music. A bridge club was started in 1972 which attracted many Social Members who had to pay \$10.00 per annum for this privilege, also in 1972 a shuffleboard was added to the bar furniture and became an instant success. Towards the end of this period the dynamic husband/wife team of Gordon and Irene Thomas was very active in organizing the entertainment side of Club life. Gordon sadly died in 1990 but Irene, as a Board member, bought the same sort of enthusiasm to social events in the new Clubhouse in the early nineties.

Outside groups also used the Club facilities. One such was the Chimo Club.



Irene Thomas



*30th
Anniversary
gathering*

“...the personal family atmosphere ... helped and promoted by the various caterers.”

Outside groups also used the Club facilities. One such was the Chimo Club. Chimo is the Inuit word for friendship and the members of this social group, some of whom were golfers, met weekly in the Clubhouse; in return they were generous with gifts to the Club. For example, they gave an ice machine for use in the Clubhouse, they gave the tee signs which were used on the old nine hole course and they gave a trophy, the Chimo Cup, to be played for in the Junior Club Championships. The Cup was first played for in 1975 and won by Bruce Ogg.

There were many memorable parties, some are worth a special mention — the 30th Anniversary celebrations, the Aloha Night for the Evans and the Spring Frolic Dance held in 1972 to honour Pat O’Brien’s retirement and last, but certainly not least, the ‘farewell to the old Clubhouse’ cocktail party in December 1987.

Things did not *always* run so smoothly as is evidenced by a Board meeting in December 1970 called to discuss how to improve the morale of the Club and how to get members to make more and better

use of the facilities available.⁴ But, on the whole, members from those years recall, with great affection, the personal family atmosphere which predominated in the Clubhouse, always helped and promoted by the various caterers. Mr. and Mrs. Tom Smith were a popular choice to take over the catering in the newly renovated kitchen in 1966. Over the next two decades the Club was equally well served by, amongst others, the Gravelles, Irv Smith, Doug Hughes who left to open the Inglenook, the Truebs, Dot Morrow, Hal and Jenny Rees, Pat Dietrich and Bev Harris.



Dining on the south deck

4. Club Archives #36, December 1970.