

ATHENS
COUNTRY CLUB

Serving Our Members for 60 Years

Serving Our Members for 60 Years

The History of Athens Country Club

Established June 10th 1946

MISSION STATEMENT

Athens Country Club is a non-profit, private membership, family oriented, social and recreational organization providing Dining, Tennis, Swimming and Golf. Its purpose is to create a sense of community by providing its members the highest quality services and facilities in a fiscally responsible manner. -Adopted by the ACC Board of Directors, August 2004.

A History of Athens Country Club

In honor of our 60th Anniversary, this history was produced by current General Manager, Cindy Ries Davis and interviews were conducted by Lou Sutton (BIG THANKS!!). Special thanks to long time members Gerry McGuffey, Dick Dwelle, Bob Gould Jack Hardee and Lester Kinabrew for their contributions.

Here's how it all began ...A group of men frequently met at Stirman's Drugstore on the Athens square to visit and drink coffee. Hobson Green and others began to discuss in earnest having a membership type club in town, a club that would be a credit to the Athens community. Hobson was an attorney and owner of a title company in Athens. The story goes that Hobson, an avid golfer like Joel Lusk and "Pappy" Hart, frequently had to play courses in nearby towns like Corsicana or travel quite a distance to enjoy a day on the links. They began to stew about having a golf club handy and soon Hobson solicited the advice and help of A. P. Smith and his brother Milton, owners of the Chrysler/ Dodge dealership, and Leon Barron, the International Harvester dealer. They were ready to invest in such a venture. Soon, other Stirman "regulars" Wofford Spenser, Winfield "Doc" Stirman, and Jim Roberts became interested. It was known that R.T. Craig, a local real estate broker, had 120 acres that he would sell for \$25,000.00. This property had changed hands several times. First records show that in April of 1929, it became the property of Nannie Carroll. She sold it to Willie W. Keen in 1931 and on January 25, 1932, she sold it to J.F. Doggett. J. L. Franklin then bought it January 30, 1932, five days later. On February 4, 1933, Franklin sold it back to Willie W. Keen. Mrs. Keen and her husband sold it on September 16, 1935 to F.E. LaRue. In 1944, I.P. and Ruth LaRue sold it to R.T. and wife Clara E. Craig. The land was ideally suited to the building of a nine-hole golf course. There was already an older, two-story rock building on the property, which when renovated and roofed, would make an attractive clubhouse.

Members for 60 Years
In addition to the partially-finished house, there were four stone garden areas surrounding it. The structures were about 30 – 40 feet across. The center of each included: a heart, club, diamond, or spade. The one north of the club is covered by the tennis pavilion. The structure on the south viewed from the dining room is part of one of the four. The other two are gone. The house was to be the home of the owners, R.D. Keen and his wife, Willie W. He was a gambler. They lived in the frame home that was at the bend, on the right-hand side of number one fairway, about 135 yards from the present tee box. The house remained at that location for a couple of years after the golf course came into use. The Keens never completed the house. Some years after, they sold the property. Later, Mr. Keen was traveling in west Texas. He had a flat tire on his car. According to the story, when he got out to fix it, his pistol dropped from his pocket, went off and killed him.

To continue with the story.....the Craig's land seemed the perfect tract, it was perfect timing for the purchase, and the price was right. With this in mind, the group invited "interested persons" to a meeting. They needed at least one hundred people to back the venture with \$250.00 each, which would provide adequate money to fund the land acquisition and building renovation. If a man invested, he would then be a charter member and stockholder in the new Athens Country Club. The meeting was well-attended and the group got the needed money to

purchase the Craig's land and to renovate the existing rock building. According to a records search by Attorney's Title, on May 29, 1946, trustees bought the Craig's land for the future club. Denson Construction of Tyler began work on the clubhouse about mid-June of '47. By year's end, the Athens Country Club opened its doors to members and about a year later, with the addition of the "front nine" ... golfing was at last a reality. Lester Kinabrew was not yet 30 years old. Jack Hardee had just gotten out of the Service and was in Law School in Austin. Other members were young men and women just starting out; some were married and had families already; some were contemplating a move to Athens from Dallas. Today, Lester Kinabrew is the only charter member still a member of Athens Country Club, although we do have many spouses, children and grand children that are members of ACC.

The Club House: *According to information gathered by Dick Dwelle, the main entrance to the original club was approximately where it is today. A second way to enter was from the south parking lot which was about a half story lower. It was to the right a few feet west of the bottom of the present steps that parallel the front of the club and lead to the present south parking area. This room was home to the bar. There was a stairway that led from the bar to the ground-floor level. About half way up there was a landing where two slot machines were located. Members left enough small coins in them to meet the note payments on the club house and golf course. Unfortunately in 1957, Texans elected a new attorney general, Will Wilson who almost immediately decided to rid Texas of gambling and prostitution, slot machines became illegal. Ours were disposed of as were those at all places in Texas where they were found. Soon after, ACC's dues went up.*

It was probably the mid or late 50's when Wesley McGuffey ("JuJu") came up with the idea of building a new, bigger, better bar. It was to be located on the main level, in the southeast corner of the club. The club couldn't afford to foot the whole bill for the facility so members who were interested in supporting the project were asked to give \$200.00 toward the cost. Many did. The bar was built and used for several years. The former bar area became a storage area. Just one of the many times our members have pitched in when needed.

Most every Saturday night the old club had dances in the upper story ballroom of the first club. There was a balcony off the upper story ballroom on the east side. Quite often, the men had "refreshment" in their cars because liquor was banned by law for a brief period of time. The girls would sneak onto the balcony. The men would attach a bottle to the cord, which was then pulled up to the balcony. Of course, if the House Committee chairman got wind of it, the offenders could be asked to leave the party. That proved to become a mighty embarrassing situation in a hurry!

Many "name" bands, including the Glenn Miller Band, played at early dances, while members swayed to great music and waltzed the night away. After Glenn Miller was killed in a 1944 plane crash, band members still called the band "Glenn Miller's band", in his honor, and it was the second band that played at ACC in later years. Harry James and his band were hired on many occasions. There were as many as two hundred members and guests at some Saturday night dances. No matter what the year, all members seem to recall a specific club dance. Several

members recall the time Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Jesse Coulter, and Sammie Smith performed for ACC members. They were hired as the entertainment for Athens' Black-eyed Pea Festival. Somehow, Dr. John Young talked them into playing at the club while others of his group were in concert at Hornet Field. The story goes, before his "gig" at the club, Willie was nowhere to be found. Along about midnight, someone located him.....downstairs in the game room, having his own brand of fun! In any event, Willie was roused out and finally gave the crowd what they were loudly wanting – a great show! It seems Willie always traveled in those days with his "family", which included his band, his friends, and their friends, wives, babies, and all their "stuff". During the evening, moms with nursing babies and wanderers from Willie's entourage took over every nook and cranny, even the hallowed halls of the domino room and ladies' bathroom off the main hallway. What an evening! In addition to the "big band" leaders of an earlier era and Willie Nelson, "Fats" Domino also played at a Saturday night event, so you see, things were popping at the club.

In the early years, all members dressed up for dances. No gentleman was admitted to the club on a Saturday night without his jacket or dinner jacket, as the occasion warranted, and women were expected to dress appropriately, too. There were also strict rules regarding keeping and serving liquor. Although the first club did not serve "spirits" early on, within a few years, the rule changed. BYOB was allowed and "set-ups" sold for fifteen cents a cup. Even later, about the time Frank Ward was manager, members could place bottles in private lockers, under lock and key. If a member wanted a drink, the manager poured from his bottles. That worked for a while, but trouble came when some felt free to "borrow" from another's locker when he had run out! Soon, by law, lockers were abandoned for the current bar method of each member signing tickets for bar drinks. Bob Gould remembers well the "Shipwreck Party" of 1972. It was during his year as president that the liquor licensing laws again changed. ACC had to convert from the "locker system" to the "all bottles behind the bar" system. Members kept all kinds of liquors in their lockers, so rather than turn them over to the club or pour them out, they had a party and drank as much of it as possible. Hence, the shipwreck party!

From day one, ACC rules were made and enforced. There was a vigilant "House Committee", responsible for bringing violations to the offender's attention. If needed, the house committee chairman or member had authority to ask that the offender leave the premises or surrender his membership. From a copy of the 1969 club minutes, we know that this committee was still operational. Mack Adams was Chairman. Bob Gould and Robert Fields were committee members as well. Also listed in the 1969 minutes were members of the Entertainment Committee. Elton Myers and Robert Fields co-chaired it. During this time, ACC had a jukebox and also had a committee of one to tend it. Record selections were made by Pat Holiman, Chairperson. The Golf Committee was headed by John Rogers.

There was no food service that anyone can recall in the original ACC. After food service was initiated, one of the first customers was the Athens' Rotary Club, and they still meet at the club every Thursday.

Some years, according to Jack Hardee, the club barely made ends meet, but eventually someone would have an innovative idea that would help it get by. If you talk to the club managers from years past, you might find that even though membership changes, financial woes afflict most clubs. Hardee said in his day, if extra money was available, it was usually split equally between the golfing end and the clubhouse end. Several remember past club managers such as Frank Ward, Lucile & Edward Fourhands, Luann Geisler, Dennis Gilmore and Janet Adams, the only managers that lasted long enough to remember names....the current manager, Cindy Davis, is the first General Manger the club has ever employed. Mentioned frequently is long time manager, Luann Geisler, she married Jim, the bartender, while she was employed at the club. It was during Luann's tenure that younger members first heard the ACC ghost stories. Apparently, the club boasted a ghost, a female, who was seen by several people over the years, affectionately known as Mrs. Keen, as you read earlier, she and her husband had built the original stone club house as a proposed home. She never got to actually move into the house. She wore white and floated around the premises and club house. On several occasions, Luann reported hearing and seeing unusual things at night after hours. One of the stories circulating over the years involved sounds of pool balls breaking on the table in the game room AFTER they had been rounded up and racked for the evening. When she got to the pool table, the balls would indeed be scattered over the table. Very well remembered managers were the Fourhands, Lucille and Edwin. Carol Barton remembers that they managed the club as a team. Carol remembers coming to the club on Wednesday nights for Family Night, families would come out for dinner, then play canasta. Although unsure about the dates, Carol remembers the couple managing the club in the late 40's and early 50's.

When asked, Gerry McGuffey never believed these silly stories, until an odd thing happened at a bridge game. Two persons at the table had the ace of diamonds in a lay down hand. The manager was called to check the decks. They were checked over and over, but no two aces of diamonds appeared. Gerry said all four persons at the table were witness to the incident which goes unexplained today.

From the first, club members used the facility for domino and gin games, while still played at the club, the numbers of avid domino players have declined over the years. Until recently, members enjoyed domino tournaments, held at least once yearly. Quite often, younger players, knocked out of the tournament by older members with more expertise, would stay until the wee hours, just to watch an exciting match play itself out. Top Domino players were invited to other clubs and vice versa. Men took pride in passing their favorite strategy to the next generation. On any given day, one can still find Lester Kinabrew, Bob Jenkins, Jack Hardee, Charles Elliott and friends, shuffling the ivories in the Men's Game Room. Some things never change.

There was no bridge game at ACC in the first years. Ginny Rogers and Margaret Middleton got the Bridge Club up and running because bridge was a very popular pastime for women in the cities and those who moved here wanted the game played at Athens' club. Periodically, professionals gave lessons. ACC's Bridge Club is still active today. Gerry McGuffey and Ginny Rogers have been bridge partners for over forty years and have apparently

enjoyed every moment of it. Women moved in and moved out, but over the years, just like the domino games, bridge earned a permanent place on ACC's list of "Fun Activities".

Several recall the burning of the first club house, the rock building that was part of the original land purchase. As reported by Lester Kinabrew, the rock club house burned in the heat of the summer. Mack Adams was president in his first term, so we THINK it burned in 1969. He (Mack), his wife, and the Hardees were in Europe on vacation. Kinabrew got a call from Wesley that "big smoke" was billowing in the southern sky, in the direction of the club. The men raced to the site, finding exactly what they had feared - Athens Country Club burning. By the time the volunteer fire department got there, the entire structure had burned, leaving nothing but a shell. Lester and Wesley had no choice but to place an emergency call to Mack in Italy. Hardee recalls being in the room when Adams received the call. Apparently, Mack wasted no time in thinking the situation over. He replied, "Get the building down and hauled off. Start making plans for a new club immediately!" Within two weeks of the fire, men were golfing and the bar was back in business. Lester Kinabrew, recalls the Domino Club being back in business as soon as debris from the stone structure was cleared. Someone set up a table behind the old building. A game was in progress the very next morning. That is basically how club house #2 came to be - from the ashes of ACC #1. Less than three months later, the new Athens Country Club opened its doors. Only the outside dance pavilion, the stone spring house beside the lake, and parts of the original stone fencing remained. The new club had a stately look and was decked out inside. Soon, members were dancing on Saturday nights in a new, larger ballroom, now located on the main floor, and socializing with friends in a new bar area. Golfers lined the fairways and crowded the greens.

Bob Gould remembers him and brother Peter often played in and around the old club house during its renovation. They would jump out of windows into sand piles below. Bob also remembers the second building's burning in May of 1984. Within days of the fire, a new, spacious pro shop had been constructed. It was used as the club house for the rest of that year. The club saved thousands of dollars in operating costs during the ensuing months and used those funds toward the cost of the second full building. Construction on the new, larger club house, the present one, was started in September that year. Adams was at the site almost every day, seeing that construction moved forward without delays. The club formally opened December 31, 1984.

Although the clubhouse hasn't burned again since 1984, the Pro Shop burned January 1st, 2001. The Pro Shop cat affectionately called "CC" perished in the fire, and a plaque was placed in her memory on the new pro shop.

Our club has employed many great people throughout its sixty years, the one name and face that has been constant throughout the clubhouse in the last thirty is Jerlene Stevens. Jerlene started out as a bartender at the club, now runs the dining room like a "well oiled" machine. When you think of Athens Country Club, you can't help but think of Jerlene. Just as important, though not seen as much is long time kitchen employee Lupe DeLaCruz. Lupe has been employed at the club for 20 years, she is now our kitchen manager.

Swimming Pool: Sometime around 1967, ACC built a swimming pool, rather than a swimming hole (the lake!) Its overseer for 1969 was Ralph Sholars. .

The Tennis Courts: Bob Gould, club president in 1972, told us about the tennis courts. Several members expressed a need for tennis. There was enough interest for Bob and members of his board to look into the matter. Immediately, Herbert Gatlin, then President of Texas Clay in Malakoff, volunteered the use of his equipment. Velvin and Weeks volunteered to engineer the project and several others donated enough money to get the project started. At the end of the day, two courts were built in their present location, over objections from Mr. Fourhands, who said they should be located to the south side of the clubhouse. "There will never be anything built over there", said Mr. Forehands. As we know, golfing holes 10 -18 were shortly to become a reality. Bob swayed others to his way of thinking when he promised that project costs would be fully paid before his term as president was done. He is still hearing about that promise today! In the end, however, the project was a done deal. The board could boast that they had ACC's courts covered with the best surfacing materials available at the time. The cost to ACC was \$10,000.00, even with donations of time, service, and dollars. During the building of the courts, ACC formed its own tennis league. Over the years, members Mary Lou Williams, Nancy Williamson, Nell Velvin, Pat Estep, Mary Tarrance, and Peggy Dwelle have all been active in the tennis leagues. Members played both singles and doubles matches at ACC and with clubs around East Texas. Few Tennis Pro's were remembered, Karen Crampton and longtime ACC Pro, Fernando Navarro came to the club in the early 1980's.

The Golf Course: The club first hired Winston Allen's brother to oversee golf and the course. He was the first "Pro" anyone remembers. Other pro's mentioned were John Lively, Jack Wright (doubled as the "super"), Ken Hardison, Jerry Smith, Rodney Groom, Bobby Knott (doubled as the "super"), Frank Ward (doubled as the "super"), Ed Gatlin and our current Golf Pro Gaylord Walden, who has been employed by the club since February of 1995. Golf Course Superintendents remembered were Randy Lynch, Tommy Sanders, and our current Golf Course Superintendent Steven Denkler. Golf was a big part of the club's earliest activities, as it is today. The nine-hole course was not expanded to eighteen until Mack Adams became president again in the '80's. During the "Adams years" ('69, '76-'88) the course saw many improvements, including the addition of the "back nine". Mack and his brothers owned a road construction company. They regularly offered the use of the company's equipment, free of charge, for dirt work, paving, and course improvements. It is generally known that Wesley McGuffey, president in '51, '58- '59, '63-'67, '81, and '85, was the person who promoted ACC as being "an asset to the community of Athens". He knew the inside workings of the club and how to solicit new members. Lawyer Hardee, president in 1968, did much to see that rules were in place, precise records were kept, and that all legal matters were handled correctly. Like Jake Gould, who was secretary/ treasurer to the board for years, Jack donated his services. He still maintains files dating back to the early 60's, when he and his wife joined. In their own way, club minutes, deeds, and membership lists tell the club's history, since a fire in the old rock club house and later in building #2, destroyed many early records.

Dick Dwelle tells about the first golf “buggy” ever seen at the course. Owen Scott owned it and John Carroll, ran around in it. It was a small four person vehicle, without doors, having an “add-on” at the back for clubs. Lewis, John’s wife, and her friends were frequent users, too.

After golf carts became so popular, members owning them were allowed to build private cart sheds on the premises, which accounted for the fact that there was no uniform- looking shed area.

You can’t talk about the golf course without mentioning the many great golfers Athens Country Club has produced or been honored to have played our course. James and Mary Grant were both outstanding golfers. Mary won the women’s club championship several times and it is in her memory that the present-day Mary Grant Women’s Tournament is held each year. James’s father was a friend of the couple that owned the property before the Craigs. From his father’s farm, he obtained several holly trees that were planted on the property by the Grants. Two remain today, according to Steve Grant, the son of James and Mary. He and his family are active members in the club. The two holly trees, Steve says, are near the putting green and the parking lot by the tennis courts. Other great men golfers have been Don Johnson, Earl Estep, Ed Gatlin, Bobby Joe Knott, Brett Daniel, Gary Williamson, Damon Floyd and the late Heath Hampton.

Early members recall big golf tournaments featuring college-aged golfers, young men who were “bought” by members to play in tournaments. During tournaments, Wesley McGuffey served as auctioneer for the Calcutta, as he did for other clubs in the area. A member recalls that some of these young men had “requirements” for coming to Athens. Although many were just talented students at the time, they required local lodging, bar tabs, and food costs be paid. If they stayed in member’s homes, clothes had to be washed and pressed. Some provided home cooked meals. Many of these young golfers were students at the University of Houston at the time. Some member’s wives were not saddened to see the boys leave at tournament’s end. Area people hired on as caddies. The story goes that in the earliest days of the club, caddies were paid about 35 cents per round. In later years, local boys caddied and were paid much better.

Although our golf course workers are not “seen” in the club house, they are a huge part of this establishment. One golf course worker that has been a constant fixture is Danny Stokes, he’s been employed at the club for 23 years and is now the Assistant Golf Course Superintendent.

In conclusion... Napoleon Bonaparte once said, “History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.” All though this history has been a version of many member’s memories, the one thing that we can all agree upon, is that Athens Country Club has been a foundation on which many memories and relationships have been built over the past sixty years. Here’s to the next sixty years!

**Original Charter Members
Established June 10, 1946**

Anderson, A.M.
 Andrews, M.C., Jr.
 Asher, M.A.
 Barnes, A.M.
 Barron, L.R.
 Bishop, Mrs. W.R.
 Bohon, Jess
 Bonner, W.P., Jr.
 Clarke, B.D.
 Carroll, Mrs. E.A.
 Coleman, C.H.
 Craig, R.T.
 Cornelius, E.E.
 Crawford, J.M.
 Chamber of Commerce
 Denius, Mrs. Frances
 Dorbandt, Will
 Dorbandt, Ed
 Dorsey, Frank R.
 Duphorne, Dr. A.
 Evans, Tom D.
 Ferrell, Mrs. Chopin
 Ferrell, Mrs. A.S.
 Faulk, Robert C., Jr.
 Faulk, Frances Stirman
 Faulk, Thomas Pl., Jr.
 Ford, Adrian S.
 Ford, Forrest
 Freeman, Miss Loy
 Gauntt, E.B.
 Gauntt, Douglas
 Gould, Jake
 Green, Hobson B.

Gibbs, F.B.
 Gibson, John R.
 Hairston, Leo
 Hawn, C.F.
 Hawn, W.R.
 Hawn, J. Verne
 Hart, Henry
 Henry, W.E.
 Hodge, Dr. R.H.
 Holland, Sam
 Holloway, D.J.
 Johns, Frank
 Jones, Charles F.
 Jones, Will Paul
 Justice, William Wayne
 Kinabrew, Lester, Jr.
 Kamen, Dave
 Kelly, Pope
 Killingsworth, Owen
 Larkin, L.I.
 Larkin, H.G.
 LaRue, I.P.
 LaRue, E.B.
 LaRue, Frank
 Lawhon, Emmett
 Lee, R.H.
 Life, Jack T.
 McGuffey, W.C. Jr.
 McGuffey, W.C., Sr.
 McKay, J.W.
 Meredith, Henry
 Morris, Jack H.
 Moseley, H.C.

Murchison, John W.
 Nowlin, W.R.
 Oliver, T.H.
 Parsons, Homer Lee
 Payne, Mrs. Ann
 Pickens, J.P.
 Pirtle, Orval
 Robbins, Forrest L.
 Robbins, T.F.
 Richards, W.C.
 Robinson, Eugene
 Sanders R.B.
 Scarbrough, C.R.
 Scott, Owen
 Smith, A.P.
 Smith, Milton
 Smith, W.B.
 Smith, Miles B.
 Spencer, W.W.
 Spencer, Eugene
 Stirman, W.B.
 Stirman, Newbern
 Tipton, George
 Titsworth, Ruff A. Jr
 Tompkins, A.L.
 Wardlo, J. Lewis
 West, V.E.
 Williford, R.L., Sr.
 Williford, Joe L.
 Waddell, Miss Wilma
 Wathen, Ben
 Wolfe, Dr. Dan A.
 Wynne, Toddie Lee
 Underwood, Arch S.

Establishing Board of Directors

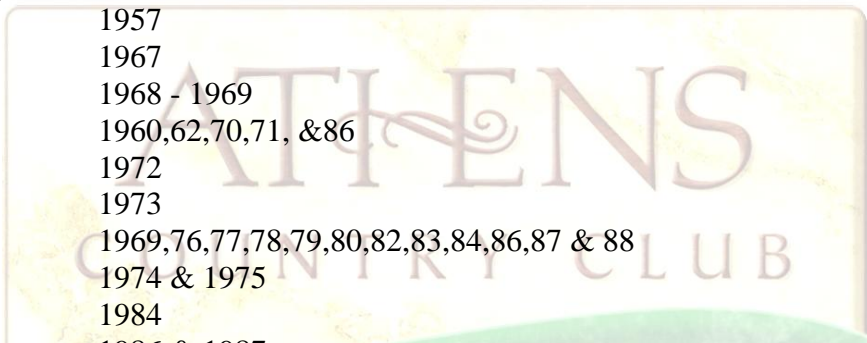
H.C. Moseley, President, A.P. Smith, Vice President

Hobson Green, Secretary & Treasurer

L.R. Parron, W.W. Spencer, Frank LaRue, E.B. Gauntt, R.T. Craig and Winfield Stirman.

Athens Country Club History of Presidents

H C Mosley	1947
A P Smith	1948
Winfield Stirman	1949
W E Henry	1950
Hobson Green	1952
Lester Kinabrew	1953
C J Holloway	1954
Donald Murphree	1955
R L Williford	1956
W C McGuffey	1951,58,59,63,64,65,66,67,81 & 85
Frank Dorsey	1957
Paul Lindsey	1967
Jack Hardee	1968 - 1969
John Rogers	1960,62,70,71, &86
Bob Gould	1972
Jay Benson	1973
Mack Adams	1969,76,77,78,79,80,82,83,84,86,87 & 88
Leo Jones	1974 & 1975
Wayne Stelter	1984
Paul Irvine	1986 & 1987
Jack Ward	1987 - 1990
George Van Cleave	
Donny Campbell	1990 - 1994
Jerry Mack Adams	06/94 - 03/98
Glenn Wilcox	03/98 - 06/02
George Taylor	06/02 - 06/03
Billy Norwood	06/03 - 08/03
John Dickens	08/03 - 11/03
Richard Bandy	11/03 - 06/04
Jeff Weinstein	06/04 - 06/05
Brett Daniel	06/05 - Present



*Produced by current General Manager, Cindy Ries Davis.
Interviews were conducted by Lou Sutton.
Member's interviewed: Gerry McGuffey, Dick Dwelle, Bob Gould,
Jack Hardee and Lester Kinabrew
December 2006*

Current Board of Directors:

Brett Daniel, President, Steve Green, Vice President, Michael Neill, Vice President, Carol Barton, Robert Craig, John Jones, Joe Mike Murphy, Shea Phillips and Mamie Stafford.

Current Executive Staff:

Cindy Ries Davis, GM; Gaylord Walden, Golf Pro; Fernando Navarro, Tennis Pro; Steven Denkler, Golf Course Superintendent; Lupe DeLaCruz, Kitchen Manager.

