A Tillinghast tour de Forse
Ron Forse renews several designs by the master
By Mark Leslie

NEWPORT, R.I. — The year 1998 was "The Year of Tillinghast" for golf course architect Ron Forse, and it is spilling over into 1999 with work on one of the great historic clubs in America: Newport Country Club.

"It's really a restoration 'tweak,'" said Forse of his work at Newport CC, which was one of the original five clubs that formed the United States Golf Association. "The course is so pure. The character is very strong and it's still there. The [A.W.] Tillinghast greens are magnificent."

"I'm really excited about this," he added. "They approved the master plan a couple years ago, and it's great to get started."

While awaiting the go-ahead here, Forse was busy restoring the Tillinghast mark elsewhere:
• Last fall he restored the bunkers on three holes at Sunnehanna Country Club in Johnstown, Pa., "a job done wonderfully by Frontier Construction, by the way."
• Last fall, working with Zona and Henderson Construction Co., he also restored half the bunkers at Valley Country Club near Hazleton, Pa., and rebuilt three green sites because they were too steep for today's low-cut turf.
• He is in the process of "one of the best projects we've ever done," at

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Charlton returns; Jones, Phillips ink an alliance
PALO ALTO, Calif. — Bruce Charlton, who in January left Robert Trent Jones II International to form a design firm with colleagues Don Knott and Gary Linn, has re-joined RTJ II as a senior designer.

Robert Trent Jones Jr. announced that Charlton and Ty Butler are his new senior designers.

"I spent 18 years of my career working with RTJ II and I'm excited about carrying forward Bobby's and Mr. Jones Sr.'s legacy of building the world's great golf courses," said Charlton. "I wish my good friends, Don Knott and Gary Linn, who I believe to be among the finest golf course architects anywhere, success in their new venture."

Charlton is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and a graduate of the University of Arizona.

Butler, a graduate of Kansas State University, has nine years of experience with RTJ II in all aspects of golf course design.

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Las Vegas — Several million dollars have been spent remodeling Sunrise Country Club since June 1977, when Southwest Golf bought the 640-acre property from a group of individual investors.

Now known as Stallion Mountain Country Club, the facility includes three 18-hole golf courses — Secretariat, Citation and Man O'War, a 16-acre practice facility and an 18,000-square-foot clubhouse.

Southwest Golf has enhanced and refurbished Stallion Mountain and its clubhouse.

More than 500 pine trees and 2,000 shrubs were planted, and a number of colorful flower gardens were added. Irrigation systems have been upgraded to improve watering schedules and to prepare for the planting of a new hybrid Bermuda grass next summer.

Remodel turns Sunrise into Stallion Mountain
Classic Newport CC returned to ‘old self’

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Golden Valley (Minn.) Country Club. Using old photos, Hartman Construction Co. is restoring bunkers. “Jeff Hartman is doing phenomenal work there,” Forse said. He added that Golden Valley is a unique par-73 track with one extra par-3 and two extra par-5s — meaning six par-5s and five par-3s.

• He is in the midst of a master restoration plan for Brooklawn Country Club in Fairfield, Conn., site of the 1987 Senior Tour Open.
• He is wrapping up a master plan for Williamsport (Pa.) Country Club, preparing to restore many of the bunkers this fall.

Meanwhile, Forse is one-third through his work at Newport CC, which he described as “sort of a hidden gem. It’s only a par-70, but you’d never know it was that short because it is routed so beautifully over the ground.”

The course was originally designed by Donald Ross in 1915 and had hosted a couple of U.S. amateur competitions, including one in which C.B. Macdonald, one of the classic course designers, lost in the finals. Tillinghast was hired in 1924 to design seven new holes on property across the road and to rework the entire property of Ross’s design.

Working with those 1924 plans, Forse is performing this “gentle renovation.”

Already he has restored some of the key bunkers and intends to expand the greens to their original size.

“Generally,” he said, “the greens are gaining three to five feet all the way around the edges. They have lost very interesting, and sometimes very difficult, intended perimeter cupping areas. So we’re getting all that back, plus the ability to recover from greenside bunkers, so golf balls don’t get caught up in the collar.”

On the famous par-3, Redan-style 14th hole, the green is being extended at least 20 feet on the right-front corner.

The greens “may not be the wildest ones Tillinghast ever did because of the wind off the ocean there,” Forse said. “But the raised spine protruding into the putting surface from the rear on many of the greens separates cupping areas and rewards good approach shots. It’s a very interesting saucer-type configuration.”

In fall and early winter, work was completed on key bunkers, including one on the 4th hole, where sand has been reintroduced to a grass bunker that had become a big grassy hollow.

A huge horseshoe-shaped bunker on the 6th hole has been filled in on the right side of the green, while a long S-curved bunker on the 5th fairway was also returned to its unique flavor.

While keeping true to the drawings on most of the course, Forse did take some liberties on the short, uphill straightaway par-5 17th hole.

“We added a Tillinghast trademark: a sea of mounds or grouping of bunkers all the way across the fairway, kind of a Sahara or Hell’s Half Acre,” he said. “We took the 250-yard mark from the back tee as the center of this mound complex. We also added bunkers from left and right on the second landing area, so there are all these strategic options.

Tillinghast did this a lot at Ridgewood Country Club in Paramus, N.J., and they were successful.”

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T. STERLING, Ky. — Graham Marsh, managing director of Graham Marsh Golf Design, and Bill Kubly, president of Landscapes Unlimited, are developing Old Silo, a daily-fee golf course here. The course will be the first design project in the United States for Graham Marsh Golf Design and the first golf course ownership project for Graham Marsh. It will also be the first course that Marsh and Landscapes Unlimited have teamed up to develop.

Old Silo was chosen as the name because the property has been a farm for more than 100 years and there is an old silo on the property that will be restored and maintained as a landmark.

The course will be routed in and around Silver Creek, a real-estate development that is already underway.

Old Silo will feature multiple tees for players of all abilities and the course will measure 7,000 yards from the back tees. It will feature holes that play along the ridges with vista views as well as holes that run along the creek bottom with many trees and other challenges. There will be a complete practice facility featuring a driving range, putting and chipping greens as well as practice bunkers. The clubhouse will have a fully staffed pro shop, bar and grill, and will offer players all the amenities usually found in a country club setting.

Old Silo is expected to open in October. The ownership team of Marsh and Kubly will operate and manage the facility, which will promote junior golf, host golf leagues as well as tournaments, and encourage players of all abilities to enjoy the course.

Graham Marsh said: 'The site for Old Silo is one that allows us to design and build a first class golf course that will challenge players of all levels.'

Tour de Forse

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needed something to toughen up this short par-5.
“Sometimes in early spring we will continue,” Forse said of the bunker work.

Another aesthetic renewal is the clearing of brush that had obstructed views of the ocean. Some has already been removed, and “we’re evaluating whether more should be cleared to open up views,” Forse said.

“What sets the place apart,” he added, “is, it’s so historic they don’t water their fairways, not even for the U.S. Amateur. And they voted 8-1 on the committee to continue without watering them.

“It’s a joy to work with the people there.”

As historical the course is, so is the property itself, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

According to the club, the 10th fairway and green is the oldest in continuous use in the United States. And on that same fairway Rochambeau and Lafayette camped their troops.

Proof is found in the corrugated cardboard-looking ground itself. The earth was moved to build gentle ridges about 25 feet apart so the troops could set up their tents and rainwater would run between them.

Forse has found himself enamoured with Tillinghast’s work for a number of reasons. He ranks with Ross and Seth Raynor in Forse’s book because of “his strong strategy and versatility,” Forse said. “He changed his style more than anybody. He was so versatile, he was hard to peg down."

— Ron Forse

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