

KNOW YOUR HOST SUPERINTENDENT by Lee Huang

FERNIE ESPINOZA was born in Yuma, Arizona in 1929. He moved to Imperial Valley at the age of 7. Then he moved to Modesto area in 1946. After he finished high school he went to work as a truck driver for a produce company. After that he and his family started in the strawberry farming business. Then he got married and went into strawberry farming himself. The idea wasn't so good; he went broke so he went back to driving a truck which he had to give up for reasons of health around 1964. That is the time he met Cliff Wagoner and started working for him as a maintenance man at Del Rio Country Club. He stayed until 1965 and during that time Cliff gave him many opportunities to increase his technical knowledge. He also attended Modesto Junior College courses in turfgrass management. His first job as a superintendent in 1965 was at the Spring Creek Golf Course in Ripon. He started in the construction stage and stayed with them until '68. In 1968 he was visited by the management of Valley Hi Country Club who offered him the job at their golf course.

At present he is living with his wife Eva at their new house in South Sacramento with 4 of his 6 children. The two oldest are married. They are his oldest daughter Eleonora, and his son Fernie, Jr. who incidentally works for his Dad at Valley Hi and who also is the father of his only grandson Fernie "III" who is 8 months old. The rest of the family is Larry 17, Ruben 14, Debbie 12, and David 11.

V A L L E Y H I C O U N T R Y C L U B was constructed in 1961. The architect was William Bell. The course covers 132 acres and is very unique in that all the acreage is in Seaside Bent. This choice of grass has given a great deal of problems because the native soil is very dense red clay. The Seaside Bent grass does not have the ability to penetrate this clay. In the summer the soil bakes so hard that aeration plugs can be hammered back into the soil without breaking. The soil is underlain by a hard pan layer which in places is 2" from the surface and often 4 feet deep. This has given rise to problems with the installation of the irrigation system. A hydraulically controlled Toro system was used; but because of the shallowness of the soil plenty of the lines are within 2" of the surface. Consequently Fernie cannot aerify his fairways because of the danger of puncturing the lines.

In order to plant trees they had to auger a hole and then enlarge it with dynamite. His attempts to change the grass to bermuda have not met with approval from the members who do not like dormant bermuda on the fairway. The course is otherwise very well laid out and Fernie hopes the Association members will enjoy themselves playing the course.

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"Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves."