

Tom Savage -N-



Photos by Jim Trzinski.

Tom Savage, son Jon and four-legged family member Bailey.



Pine Meadow Golf Club

How ironic is the year 2002!

We celebrate a “new beginning” as the Chicago District Golf Association’s Midwest Golf House marks its one-year anniversary. The Golf House is adjacent to Cog Hill, built on land donated by the Jemsek family.

The MAGCS September meeting will be held at Joe Jemsek’s crown jewel of the northern suburbs, Pine Meadow.

And sadly, we close the book on the life and career of public golf’s champion, Joe Jemsek, the man that has meant so much to Chicago golf.

And how appropriate is it that one of the last pictures we see of Joe Jemsek (*Chicagoland Golf*, April 2002 issue) shows a soft hand gesture. I picture a man saying: “Come enjoy my golf courses—you professionals to beginners. Be part of Chicago golf. Thank you for making my life so enjoyable.”

When I sat down with Tom Savage, Pine Meadow’s superintendent, one thing he reiterated about his track was the beauty, serenity and calmness of the golf course. It’s a place that Joe Jemsek would be so proud to claim as “a Jemsek golf course.”

Other elements of Jemsek golf that Tom Savage embodies are family, friends and customer service.

The day I talked with Tom, our discussion was routinely interrupted as Tom spoke with his family (son Jon works for dad), the staff and the customers. I got the feeling I was at a family gathering.

Tom waxed so proudly about his family: wife Marjorie (30 years together); four children—Erin (28), Cory (26), Jon (22) and Kevin (12); his grandchildren Eric (5) and Madison (3); and we can’t forget his pals, four-legged buddies Bailey, Abby Rose and McKenzie.

Tom has coached baseball for 25 years. He runs the traveling squad for 11- to 12-year-olds. His AABC
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Hole no. 14 at Pine Meadow is a par-4 dogleg right around water.

baseball teams won the 1992 state championship and are the reigning 2002 champs. "Coaching baseball allows me to spend more time with my kids," Tom explains. Besides running a Jemsek jewel and coaching baseball, Tom fishes, has a craft business and plays to a 4-handicap. Unfortunately, the family championship belongs to Jon.

As much as I tried to move on to different questions, Tom's responses gravitated back to the same theme: family, friends, customers. Tom started in the business in 1966 with his mentor and friend Ken Lapp at Fresh Meadows. He spent his summers at Fresh Meadows while completing his high school and college education. From 1972 to 1978, he followed Ken to Cog Hill. There, he worked as Ken's assistant. In 1978, he took the superintendent position at Fresh Meadows, where he stayed through 1988, then back to Cog Hill by his mentor's side. In 1989, he moved up to Pine Meadow and took over the operations.

All of his children have worked for either Tom or Pine Meadow and the Jemsek family. A number of Tom's maintenance associates come from families who have worked for the Jemseks for multiple generations.



Pictured here during the Jemsek family's development of Pine Meadow on land leased from St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein are (L to R) a Village of Mundelein trustee; the legendary Joe Jemsek, champion of public golf in Chicagoland; and Father Richard Schroeder, then procurator of the Seminary (now retired). Thank you to Syngenta's Jim Shone for providing this historic photo.

Pine Meadow is located on land leased from the St. Mary of the Lake Seminary located in Mundelein. The original 12 holes on the site were designed and built in 1929. After numerous years, the original layout was pretty much in disrepair when the seminary finally agreed to allow Mr. Jemsek to build a true Jemsek golf course. Pine Meadow was born in 1984.

Golf course architect Joe Lee came on board to do the redesign. Assisting Joe Lee was a young designer, Rocky Roquemore. None of the original holes exists today as passed down by the seminarians, while Lee built the six additional holes from scratch. The features that remained unchanged from the old course were the open space, mature trees, wildlife and peaceful atmosphere. Pine Meadow opened to the public in 1985 and in 1986 was honored by *Golf Digest* as its Best New Public Course for that year. Once again, Joe Jemsek's commitment to the customer, quality and making upscale courses available to every golfer was evident.

I asked Tom to comment about the unique attributes of Pine Meadow. He said, "You will remember the rolling fairways, mature trees everywhere, no houses scattered around the holes and different types of wildlife everywhere." Tom commented that he loves to drive around the course to see the various species of animals and birds. The greens are large, averaging 10,000 square feet; the course has 84 large bunkers and water on eight holes (one on the front side, seven on the back). Pine



Pine Meadow's par-4 hole no. 18.

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Meadow also offers an extensive driving range and practice area to work out the kinks.

What's in the future for Pine Meadow, I wondered. He said, "More distance, more distance and more distance." The back tees will be lengthened to 7,600 yards. Holes 3 and 16 will receive an additional 30 yards each. Expect more trees—some 800, more prairie grass and ongoing bunker renovation. All the design work is being done by Joe T. Jemsek, grandson of patriarch Joe.

As I completed this assignment, I truly and more deeply appreciated what Joe Jemsek has given to the everyday golfer. Joe truly understood the importance of the daily-fee golfer and due to his leadership, golfers have the opportunity to play truly wonderful, challenging and affordable golf courses.

Thank you, Joe Jemsek, for remembering the everyday golfer. Thank you, Tom, for keeping Joe's vision alive.

See you at Pine Meadow in September!



Reference:

Kosin, Phil. "Pioneer Joe Jemsek." Chicagoland Golf, April 2002

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