

# Chad Walk -N-



Anne and Chad Walk with baby Hannah and dog Lady.



*Established in 1926*  
*Open to the Public*

*The year was 1926. Life was good. The stock market was on fire and there was money to spend. Liquor was prohibited, but you could get almost anything you wanted at the speakeasies that flourished throughout Chicago. America was deep in the throes of the Jim Crow era. Society was comfortable with keeping the races “separate but equal” – or at least white society was comfortable with the idea. A great migration of rural southern African-Americans was moving north along the railroad lines to find work in northern cities. In this separate (but equal) society many blacks carved out a successful life in Chicago. A group of wealthy African-Americans, including the famous physician Theodore K. Lawless, saw the need to provide black society with their own exclusive country club. Property was acquired in the rolling farmlands around Lockport and the Kinsman Country Club – named for the architect – was established.*

The club flourished for several years even providing horse and carriage service for the patrons from the Stony Island area to the golf course. Joe Louis, the “Brown Bomber” is reported to have frequented the country club, but the club’s success was short-lived. The depression took its toll on the membership and the club was victim of racial attacks that burned the facility at least twice. Legend has it that surrounding farmers even went so far as to plow under several greens on one occasion.

The club fell into disrepair through the depression and WWII years until the mid 1950’s and was re-opened. The golf course was acquired by Justas Lieponis in the early 60’s under the name Old Oak Country Club. MAGCS’ own Peter Lieponis is the current master of the domain, but Pete is the first to tell you that he’s “just” one of the owners. The man with the plan is Chad Walk.

Raised in Mattoon, IL Chad discovered his love of the outdoors and dirty fingernails working at the Charleston Country Club as a kid. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1995, made stops at Bellerive CC in St.

Louis, home of the 1992 PGA Championship, and St. Charles, IL where he teamed up with fellow Illini, Jim Keith, CGCS, during Jim’s first year at the helm of the St. Charles Country Club. In 1998, another Illini grad, Mike Vil-

*(continued on page 8)*



Old Oak’s Clubhouse.

lender, CGCS, was asked to hire his replacement at White Mountain G.C. before leaving to run Bon Vivant C.C. Chad was Mike's choice, (shocking how these Illini gravitate toward each other). Two years later Chad was at Old Oak where he is beginning his seventh season.

Chad married the love of his life, Anne, in 2003 and they have a daughter, Hannah, who will celebrate her first birthday about the time you are reading this. The Walk family has a four-legged member, Lady, a white German Shepherd (I'm told this coloring is quite rare). Chad and Anne enjoy going out for dinner, cultural sites, museums, etc. with Hannah in tow. Anne is even talking about learning to play golf. That should be "fun"!

Chad has received valuable mentoring from several sources over the years. He counts Keith Fuchs, Ted Mochel, Jim Keith, and Pete Lieponis (the boss - nice sucking-up Chad) among those who have helped him grow professionally.



Number 12, 150 yard par three at Old Oak.

Old Oak, as you might expect is filled with old oaks and lots of other big trees. It's a great piece of property. The course has been tweaked over the years, but the majority of it is still the same rolling terrain that captivated the original developers in 1926. Chad (and Pete) are hoping to have put the finishing touches on a five-year renovation project in time for our June MAGCS meeting. If you've been to Old Oak before you'll see quite a few changes, Lots of good stuff has been completed including a lengthened layout, fairway contouring, rebuilt bunkers, irrigation upgrades, three new USGA greens and a couple of rerouted holes.

Part of the tapestry that is the golf course's rich history is the interesting sidebar that a club that was once exclusively African-American is now the home of the Chicago Police Department's golf league. Imagine getting those guys to keep pace.



