

Cypress Point's super enthusiastic about job

32 years ago Manuel Cardoza took a position he'd never regret

BY PETER BLAIS

Most of the Cypress Point staff had been around for at least 20 years when Manuel Cardoza joined the crew as a part-time laborer in 1957.

"I kept saying there must be something wrong with them," remembered the head superintendent of the world's best designed course (so voted in a recent Golf Course News architects survey). "I couldn't see how anyone could stay in any job for 20 years. One guy told me I'd be here that long. I didn't believe him. But here I am."

And "here" — the Monterey peninsula course in California — is where Cardoza intends to stay, "until they get rid of me. Why leave a good thing?"

The scenery is beautiful, the pay good and the membership treats him well, he explains of his decision to stay at Cypress Point the past 32 years.

Cardoza, who moved to the Pebble Beach area from his native Lemoore (150 miles to the southeast) at age 10, joined the Cypress Point staff after a three-year stint in the Army.

"I didn't want to go back into construction work," Cardoza recalled. "My mother, God bless her, started asking everybody if they knew of a job for me. A relative who was working here (Cypress Point) told her they needed a relief man to fill in for people on vacation."

"They told me the job would only last until the first of the year. But the superintendent, Fred Layton, asked me to stay on steady. I ended up just sticking around."

"Two years later he asked if I'd ever considered running a golf course. I didn't want to leave the area so, even though the pay wasn't that much greater, I became his assistant. Fred left in 1974 and I took over."

The biggest change Cardoza has seen in over the past 32 years is the greater demand for a high-quality playing surface. That has led to more maintenance for him and his 10-man crew.

For example, Cypress Point has more than 1,000 sprinkler heads today, compared to 300 in 1957.

Voters block Crystyl Ranch

Concord, Calif., voters, by a 4-to-1 margin in November, supported a referendum blocking the Crystyl Ranch development, which included a golf course.

The referendum required developers to limit themselves to the 454 homes stipulated for the area in the city's general plan. The city council had approved a limit of 725 homes on the 512-acre site in August, giving rise to the referendum drive.

Those sprinklers reach greens that were mowed just three times a week then compared to six times weekly in the 1980s.

Greens are top-dressed weekly today compared to monthly 30 years ago. They are aerated three to four times annually instead of just once.

Cardoza appreciates the results as a turf professional, though not as a golfer. A bad back restricts his play.

"The last time I played was 13 months ago. It just tears me up for the next three days after I've played," he said.

On those rare occasions he takes

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club in hand, the ocean-side 15th hole is his favorite.

"The setting is beautiful on the 16th and everyone thinks it's the best. But I like the one just before it. I like the way it's just tucked in there. It's a short par 3, just 143 yards from the blue tees (compared to 220 on the 16th) and 127 from the whites," said Cardoza.

There are seven courses on the

Monterey peninsula. All share the same type soil, the same conditions, the same weather. But each superintendent thinks his maintenance problems are the worst, said Cardoza.

As for comparing the beauty of his course to the others, or to any course, Cardoza is diplomatic.

"There are others that are just as great around. This one gets a lot

of publicity. I think we have a wonderful design, great location and some outstanding holes," he said.

The members appreciate what they have. Although their numbers haven't increased significantly, the amount they play has, up from 9,000 rounds yearly in the late 1950s to about 14,000 today, said Cardoza.

The recent earthquake didn't slow them down at all, either.

"We were rattled around a little bit, but there was no major damage. We were without power for a few days and we canceled a ladies invitational tournament. But we never stopped play," he said.

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