

EDITOR'S NOTE:

A TALE OF TWO COURSES

The times have not been particularly kind to the golf course industry.

Whether a casualty of excessive development or a result of the recent economic downturn, you don't have to drive very far before you happen upon a fallow course, its fairways and greens overgrown and its once lily-white bunkers breeding grounds for weeds.

But this dire outcome doesn't always have to be the end result. While investigating what happens to failed golf courses when they no longer serve up tee times we were surprised to learn that many of these abandoned properties receive a second lease on life. And contrary to popular belief, many aren't destined to become the foundations for new housing developments, but rather they're resurrected as viable golf courses and continue to serve their communities as parks and nature preserves.

If you know of other examples, please forward them to us at gci@gie.net. We'd like to share them with you in upcoming issues of the magazine and online.

Mike Zawacki, editor

A COMMUNITY ASSET

Unable to meet the demands of running a nine-hole course, the Grant family, with their local government, converted their facility into a community park. *By John Torsiello*



A 100-foot steel bridge still spans a creek at the former Veronica Valley Golf Course in Leelanau, Mich. Today, the facility serves as a community park.

For 14 years, Veronica Valley Golf Course in Leelanau, Mich., was a fairway of dreams for William and Diane Grant and their extended family.

Dedicated to William Grant's late grandmother, Veronica Schaub-Peplinski, a woman who liked to make dreams come true, the course – a true mom-and-pop operation – opened in 1991 and for nearly a decade and a half delighted visitors with its challenge and whimsy.

"We purchased the property with help from grandma and grew strawberries on it for several seasons," Diane Grant says. "When the bottom dropped out of the market we started to wonder what else we could do with the land. We looked into creating a camp-

ground, but there were already two popular campgrounds in the area. One day, one of the guys from the conservation service told us the property would make a beautiful golf course. A couple of hours later Bill was out in the field and a guy went by with golf clubs in the back of his car. That was another hint and we thought, 'let's build a golf course.'"

Which the couple began to do with some trepidation in 1989, first clearing the land, and then seeding the course in 1990 and opening the nine-hole, 3,203-yard par-35 layout in the spring of 1991.

Diane Grant admits she and her husband didn't know what a tee was when they set out to create their course. "Really, we had no clue what we were doing. Nobody in the