

Glen Oaks Conversion From War Use Is Big Job

By JOHN BRENNAN

The atomic bomb indirectly led to the biggest reconversion job in American golf.

Glen Oaks club, located among the picturesque hills of Long Island's famous Gold Coast, in the Great Neck area, is just getting back to normal for the first time since early 1942 when Uncle Sam's Army asked officials for possession of their clubhouse, largest on Long Island, for the duration of the war.

Actually, work on the atomic bomb didn't start at Glen Oaks until after the Navy acquired the clubhouse in 1943. The Army used Glen Oaks as a base for its barrage balloons which dotted the skies from Great Neck to Suffolk County. When the balloons were hauled down, the Army yielded Glen Oaks to the Navy and Hazeltine's electronic experts and atomic physicists.

The gorgeous \$2,000,000 clubhouse, which was christened during a lavish party at which the late James J. Walker, then mayor of New York City, was toastmaster, was completely denuded to make room for the scientific instruments of the atomic experts. More than 2,200 scientists and technical wizards worked in the big clubhouse. A 15-foot steel fence was rigged up around the clubhouse and guards stationed every few yards on a 24-hour basis. That was a picture of Glen Oaks clubhouse during the war years.

With no clubhouse, the members of Glen Oaks were lucky enough to lease nearby Lakeville GC, located in Great Neck, for a three-year period from the Prudence Co., owner of the vast tract that was built at a cost of \$4,000,000 and was acquired last year by Fresh Meadow CC for less than a million.

Dynamic Spencer Murphy, one of the most capable professionals in the country, astutely directed the moving operations to Lakeville and operated the Glen Oaks course as a pay-as-you-play enterprise for



Glen Oaks entrance. Clubhouse used as war factory to experiment with atomic bomb now restored to members.

the three trying war years when his own members dug divots at Lakeville. In order to provide shelter for the patrons of the temporary public course at Glen Oaks, Spencer had to buy a small-sized war factory building not being used by Sperry and have it transported some four miles to Great Neck.

Plan to Make Club "No. 1"

After the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities brought the war to an end, Glen Oaks was confronted with a gigantic rehabilitation and reconversion job—to say nothing of reconstructing a course that, due to the exigencies of war, had been neglected.

When notified by the Navy that their clubhouse would again become available for use, Glen Oaks officials, who, incidentally, led the nation in raising funds for the USO, Red Cross and other service funds, decided to transform what was left after the scientists moved out into the top-flight golfing layout in the district.

With money no great concern Glen Oaks has accomplished its goal or will within another few months when its outdoor nata-

torium is completed. The cost of rehabilitating the clubhouse, grounds and making added improvements, including the acquisition of 12 adjoining acres to make room for a mammoth driving range, will most likely run beyond \$500,000 in the opinion of Spencer Murphy, director of most of the work.

When the electronic and atomic experts departed Glen Oaks clubhouse resembled a vast architect's office, with drawing boards all over the place. Costly, imported rugs, exquisite furniture and other embellishments which had been there the gay night Jimmy Walker, along with Supreme Court Justices Mitchell May and Aaron Nova, spoke so eloquently concerning the future of the club, were gone.

So, it was a big job for Glen Oaks to re-carpet the vast floors, restore the gorgeous furniture, paintings, and all equipment needed by a top grade club. Even the lockers had to be bought for the postwar era. It already has cost well over \$150,000 to reburnish the clubhouse alone. It required the services of 125 skilled electricians, carpenters, painters and allied technicians to restore the clubhouse to its former condition.

Leon Chock, green chairman, in 1945 outlined a comprehensive program for the first two years of the postwar period and within a few more months this vast work will have been completed.

Driving Range New Feature

In addition to constructing a driving range on the land recently acquired by a committee headed by Charles Margett, Long Island City attorney, a job, incident-

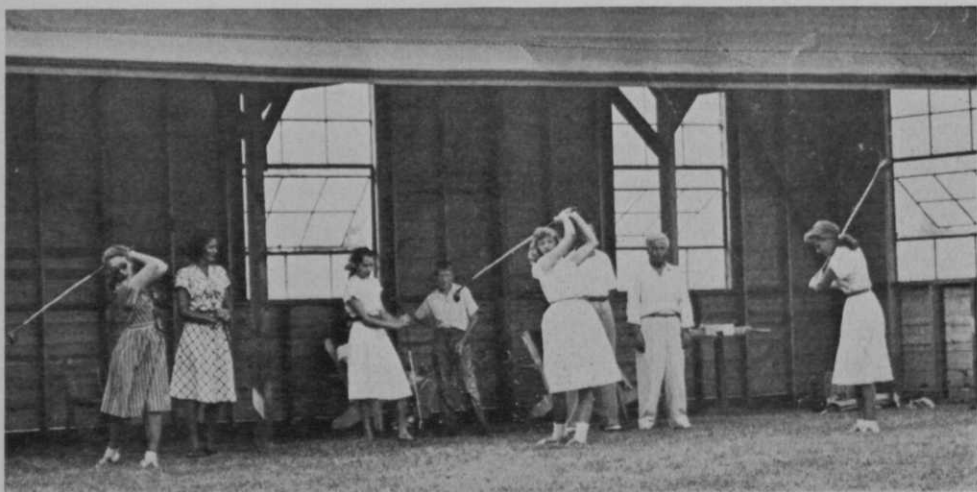
ally, which required the clearing of giant trees and other obstacles, Glen Oaks has completed the work of rebuilding the par-five 505-yard 16th hole, resodded every tee and built 18 additional tees to have reserve tees for weekends and holidays; modernized its giant pumping station and constructed two green clay tennis courts. The club's parking space also has been doubled.

The new driving range offers many unique features, including colored discs in the fairway. These discs, each suspended high in the air, indicate the yardage. The key to the colors is displayed on a sign near a shed that extends the full length of a 200-foot teeing ground.

The job of removing a hill, or hump, on the 16th fairway, cost \$12,000 but Chairman Chock feels the money well spent inasmuch as the hole is a lot sportier and more sensible for the older members, the majority of whom disliked mountain climbing so far out on the course.

Another improvement was the construction of a putting course near the first tee. This vast area was reseeded two years ago and now is being used on weekends. The area is surrounded with hedge and adds to the beauty of the area in front of the pro shop, one of the busiest in the country.

Glen Oaks' greens are mostly a combination of velvet, German and Astoria bent, with fairways and tees well filled with fescues and Kentucky blue. For some unknown reason, the Great Neck club has been immune to the poa annua which has plagued other Long Island courses, including nearby Lakeville and Fresh Meadow.



Part of 200-foot shelter constructed on new driving range at Glen Oaks Club, Great Neck, L.I. Roslyn (Cookie) Swift, who won Metropolitan junior title at Cedar Creek, is at right. Ed (Senator) Murphy is to her left. Others are members.



Approaching 18th green at rejuvenated Glen Oaks. Newly installed tennis courts in background.

Although Spencer Murphy spent the long, monotonous hours seeing that progress was being made in the transformation of the Glen Oaks club from war factory to a golfing paradise, men like Leo Goldberger, M. Lester Mendell, Joe Getz, B. T. Baron, A. D. Emil, Nat Judson, Joe Eaton, Dave Weinstein, Sam Gerstein, Chock and Margett were instrumental in

achieving the feat of Glen Oaks' rebirth.

In discussing the outstanding job being consummated at Glen Oaks, Murphy said he's getting used to moving about at Great Neck. "Why, back in 1928, four years after I took over the job when Leo Diegel resigned, I had to arrange moving from the old clubhouse, the former Vanderbilt mansion, to the present quarters, which, incidentally, are located in New York City while most of the course is outside—in Nassau County," declared Spencer.

"We're lucky those atomic bomb boys quit when they did, or we might have been arranging to move again—if one exploded," suggested Spencer's brother, Ed (Senator) Murphy, who does most of the teaching along with Pete Burke, younger brother of Billy, the ex-national open king.

The decks should be glittering when Glen Oaks embarks on its second half century next season.



Ed Murphy and Alice Sakin of Great Neck study key to discs in new practice range fairway. Different colors, each reflected, give yardage.

JERSEY MANAGERS HOST TO BOSSES—New Jersey chapter, Club Managers' Assn. will have a day's outing for members, their presidents and house chairmen at Essex Falls (N.J.) CC Oct. 7. There'll be golf in the afternoon with prizes for managers, presidents and chairmen and a dinner with brief spiels in the evening. J. J. Bond, Preakness Hills CC, Paterson, N.J., is pres. of the N.J. chapter.