

# Fresh Meadow's New Plant

## One of World's Finest

By JOHN BRENNAN

The finishing touches are being applied to swank Fresh Meadow Country Club in Great Neck, L. I., that will make it one of the truly superb golf plants of the world. In fact, so much money has been poured into the former Lakeville G&CC since its founding back in the lush days of 1925 that Fresh Meadow officials, without fear of contradiction, insist the club represents more investment than any other on the globe.

Since the pre-depression days when Nathan S. Jonas, Frederick Russell, George J. Atell, H. A. Harris, Sam Harris, Harry L. Hass, Henry Heckel, Berrian P. Posen and dozens of other prominent New Yorkers launched the magnificent Lakeville organization, the property has undergone several changes in ownership, with resultant free spending on improvements and changes.

Lakeville, as a club, was a depression casualty, the land passing on to the Prudence company, which held the mortgage. Prudence leased the 200-acre tract that sprawls majestically through Lake Success, home of the United Nations; Great Neck and Manhasset on Long Island's enormous

Gold Coast, to the Queens Valley GC when that organization sold its property adjoining the old New York World's Fair a decade ago.

The Queens Valley group folded after operating Lakeville a couple of years and during the war, Glen Oaks GC, which lost its big clubhouse to Uncle Sam for probing into electronics and the secrets of the atomic bomb, leased the property for three years. Glen Oaks' course was operated on a public basis to keep it in condition during the war emergency.

As the Glen Oaks members were packing to return to the own clubhouse, less than a mile away, Fresh Meadow, then located in Flushing, accepted a bid of \$1,075,000 from the New York Life Insurance company for its splendid 140-acre layout which was the setting for several of the Goodall round-robins, the 1930 National PGA won by Tommy Armour and the 1932 United States Open won by Gene Sarazen, then the home pro, after he'd won the British Open a few weeks earlier.

It was a logical step when Fresh Meadow, after yielding its championship course, one



Eighteenth fairway of the Fresh Meadow Course showing larger fairway traps and reconstructed brook (in front of bunkers) with player trying to reach green in rear of clubhouse.

of the finest tests in the country, moved into Lakeville, which carried a reasonable price tag of \$650,000. Today, the land alone would bring more than twice that amount in the real estate mart.

#### Over \$3,000,000 Invested

The differential between the amount received from New York Life and the price paid Prudence, plus many more thousands, have been invested in the beautifying and improving of the former Lakeville layout. In round figures, Al Ciuci, the home pro who is beginning his 25th year with Fresh

major facelifting job, supervised by Ciuci and his boss of a quarter-century, Al Arenson, current president, has been reluctant to sponsor any major tournaments. A few sectional affairs, such as the Rehabilitation Fund matches, promoted jointly by the LPGA, the LPGA and WLPGA which raised \$3,500 last autumn, were held.

Arenson and Ciuci have been closely associated through the years, the former, a printing house owner, having been chairing for 23 seasons before ascending to the presidential chair. He yielded the green job to Phil Leff after being named head of the club, but Al continues to work with Al and Phil. "How can he get along with the guy with so much experience," Leff said shrugging his shoulders the other day.

Fresh Meadow, today's product, that is, is the complete realization of Arenson's dream of a beautiful country club. In addition to a rolling paradise of 18 golf holes, Fresh Meadow has one of the largest clubhouses in the country, completely renovated and refurbished at great expense; an outdoor natatorium with cabanas and other trimmings; tennis courts, bridle paths and other features not usually incorporated in clubs. The kitchen was outmoded, so Fresh Meadow decided to completely make over the facilities in stainless steel at a cost in six figures.

#### 600 Active Members

Fresh Meadow has a waiting list and has an active roster of 600 members, including women and juniors. Lakeville was designed for a membership of 300, which meant that additional lockers had to be provided in both men's and women's quarters.

"One of our major changes here is in the greens," said Ciuci. "Lakeville was always known for the different type of its greens. The top players were unable to solve them, at all. They were of the Washington stolon type and in cutting them the course crew used to mow the same way for years.

"I got an idea while down at Normandy Isle in Florida, where the greenkeeper used to work against the grain of the greens in cutting them. Why not try it on the Fresh Meadow greens, I thought. Well, it was a risky experiment, but it worked out well and now we have greens, after two years of trying to emulate the Normandy Isle expert, that won't prove enigmas to the experts. They are smooth as a Chinese rug. Gene Carazen, who used to be pro

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Portion of Al Ciuci's modernized pro shop at Fresh Meadow, one of the largest in the country. Left to right are Al, Floyd, Henry and Lester Rice, golf oracle and golfer.

Meadow, estimates that the Great Neck course and appurtenances represent investments of between \$3,000,000 and \$5,000,000.

"Our aim, since moving up from Flushing, has been to transform Lakeville into something better than our old Fresh Meadow course, if such a thing is possible," Ciuci said the other day in revealing the club's intention of becoming a mecca of championships. "We'll have a stiff 7,000 yd. course of championship specifications before we're through here and we hope to have big tournaments every season."

"At Flushing, as you know," continued Al, "Fresh Meadow became known throughout the world for the big tournaments. We'll probably be host again to the Goodall, which Elmer Ward used to run at Flushing every spring. Then, we hope to bring in an annual invitation with the 50 outstanding pros and amateurs of the country. Of course, the national open and amateur will be received, in the event the USGA wants us to be host to them. We, too, would like to put on some of the major women's tournaments."

Fresh Meadow, principally because of its

## Organize Pam Barton Days

Women golfers of the US headed by Miss Margaret Curtis, 28 Mt. Vernon St., Boston, Mass., are organizing Pam Barton days at clubs all over the country to raise money to help Ladies' Golf Union of Great Britain send its women's team to the US in 1950 for the international competition begun in 1932. A lot of men golfers are sharing in the enterprise. Miss Barton won the US and British women's titles in 1936 and the British women's again in 1939. She got into the war right at the start, became a pilot in the WAAF and was killed in 1943. She was a sweet kid and a great golfer. A memorial to her ought to have every woman and man golfer in the US who prizes sportsmanship, participating. The Left-handers' national association already has chipped in. Pros should write Miss Curtis for information on Pam Barton days and pass this information along to heads of their women's golf committees.

## Indiana Pros Meet April 4

Indiana PGA will have its annual business conference and meeting at Indianapolis, April 4. Pros from southern Ohio and Kentucky also are being invited to sit in on the educational sessions.

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here, tried them recently and couldn't get over the transition."

Lakeville, an off-shoot of the historic Sound View GC in Great Neck, a rendezvous for Broadway's stage folk, had limited facilities for parking. That, of course, posed a problem for Fresh Meadow with its intent of bringing in major championships. To solve that one, Fresh Meadow had to bring in bulldozers and other equipment to dig into the hill alongside the seventh hole. The result is that a streamlined parking space for several hundred cars lies within easy walking distance of

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the rambling Colonial clubhouse. The original parking area, back of the practice putting green in front of the clubhouse, has been enlarged to accommodate several hundred more cars. There are other areas where cars may be parked these big tournaments.

The major changes in the course include new rear tees, additional fairway bunkers to accent the gorgeous greens — and, of course, to penalize weak approach shots — remodeling of all traps and bunkers to better define them and to fashion a number of bottleneck greens.

### Three Sets of Tees

"Although we have been striving to produce a real championship test, we, paradoxically, are designing a layout that will be suitable to the average club member," declared Ciuci. "We have three sets of tees at most of the holes. We can give them a course of 6,500 yards, one of 6,800 or one of better than 7,000.

"When we came here, the course wasn't in tip-top shape, but the fine foundation of the layout, provided by the original owners, helped us immensely. Lakeville had the best that money could buy and money was no object in those days. Mr. Jonas and his associates dumped more than \$2,000,000 into creating Lakeville. It was natural, I suppose, that while the club was under the management of Prudence that budgets were held down and the course was slightly starved. But, as I said, the original materials were of the best. That was a factor in our favor when we attempted to restore the course to its pristine beauty."

One of the improvements most appreciated by the Fresh Meadow members on a hot, humid day is eight drinking fountains, strategically distributed over the big course.

Some of the holes have been lengthened

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as much as 75 yards. The fourth, for example, has been toughened with a new rear tee that pushes the players back exactly 65 yards. Trees have been planted all over the tree-laden landscape. The fifth has been given a new tee 75 yards back.

The third and sixth fairways were a bit too close for safety, so Ciuci eliminated the danger of a player being hit by an errant ball by making a slight elbow in the sixth. At the seventh, Al constructed another rear tee, changed the traps to better define the handsome, generous green.

An exception was made at the 11th, where a tee was built in front of the old one. Ciuci felt it was a bit too severe for the run-of-the-mill player. At the 12th, two new traps were constructed to the right of the green. The 13th, where the green used to be guarded by a couple of traps in front, now offers a bottleneck hole, with the traps eliminated in front of the green. The hole also has a new tee.

At the 14th, a gully has been eliminated, but traps have been installed both to the left and right of the green. The 15th has been shortened from 239 yards to an even 200, with a triple terraced green. The 17th green is now a bottleneck.

The brook bisecting the 18th fairway has been widened and rebuilt and the fairway bunkers in front of the green made bigger, principally to beautify the hole.

"By the time the robins begin to appear again, we'll have Fresh Meadow in a class with the better courses of the world," predicted Ciuci. "We might possibly have something that eclipses any of them."

Ciuci, who broke Sarazen into golf as his assistant at old Weatogue CC in Stratford, Conn., started his career in 1913. He served in the army during World War I, then returned to Weatogue, which changed its moniker to Mill River.

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He went with Sarazen to Briarcliff in 1922 and both quit to take over the pro shop at Fresh Meadow in 1925 when Benjamin J. Ribman and a group of Brooklynites founded the club in the wilds of Flushing.

Associated with Al in the pro shop at Fresh Meadow are his brothers, Henry and Floyd, both of whom incidentally, succeeded him at Mill River.

Before the Ciuci regime at old Lakeville, prominent pros have been in attendance. MacDonald Smith was the first pro at Lakeville, then came Sarazen, Charlie Lacey, Jimmy Hines and Spencer Murphy, the latter during the Glen Oaks stay at Lakeville.

In addition to Arenson, the officers of Fresh Meadow are: Samuel R. Parnes, VP; Alvin S. Rosenson, sec.; Samuel S. Strisik, treas. and Emil N. Baar, chairman of the board. Ribman, first president, is a member of the board along with Harry Zaitz and Sol Sussman. John Frumes is responsible in a large measure for the improvements in the vicinity of the pool.

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