

THINGS by Lee

Our July meeting was at Joe Andrade's Green Valley Golf & Country Club. As usual, Joe was the finest of hosts. But he seems to be lacking with pull upstairs. The weather was murderously hot. It was the beginning of a record setting heat wave, with temperatures hitting the 120° mark in some areas. Of course, this brought grief to some courses. But Joe had his courses looking like a million dollars before inflation. Good work, Joe, and invite us again soon, will you? _ _ _ _ _

The levee break which inundated Andrus and Brannan Island, and put Isletown under water, had severe repercussions for the courses which take water out of the Contra Costa canal. Salt (Chloride) levels reached over 400 ppm. There were some readings in the 750 ppm range near the break area near Antioch, but the Contra Costa Water Co. tried everything in their power to dilute the salt content of the water. Any time that the chlorides exceed 150 ppm one can expect salt damage in some ornamentals. Grass has a slightly higher tolerance, but not that much unless you have Bermudas on your course. Those closest to the break had the greatest influence of the salt water intrusion. Those further down the line had the benefit of the dilution process which was initiated by Contra Costa Water with the help of the East Bay Municipal Utility District. To complicate matters, this was the time of the extreme heat. Courses had to make a choice of using water which they knew was too salty for the best irrigation water, or run their reserves down in their lakes. Those who chose the latter route all of a sudden found themselves without any water in the canal, when the main canal pump failed due to the hot weather. All in all, it certainly was a rather frightening situation, and some courses do show some damage. However, it could have been far worse.

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IN AUGUST we have a very rare treat. We hardly ever get to play on a military course, even though there are several around. But thanks to our good friend MERLE RUSSILL, we will be playing and gathering at the Fort Ord Base.

In order to know our host a little more, let's first talk about Merle. A lot of you know him, since he has been around golf courses for some time. This cagey old timer would not tell me how old he was. All he told me is that he was born originally in Oregon, but received most of his education here in California, almost all of it around the Watsonville area. World War II called him up, and he spent 3 glorious years in the South Pacific theater. At the end of the war, Merle found himself around the L.A. area. Having played golf since they still played on sand greens with gutta percha balls, Merle decided to enter the field, I believe as an assistant professional in Montibello in 1946. In 1950 Merle went to Ashland, Oregon with a friend, and built a 9-hole

course. He stayed on as the superintendent for 5 years. In 1955 he returned to California as the assistant professional in Fort Ord. After only 4 months, he took over as the superintendent, the position he presently still holds. Merle's family consists of his wife Trudi, and daughters, Susan, Jennifer, and Juliana, one horse and two dogs. All these can be found around their residence in Del Rey Oaks.

The course itself at Fort Ord is unique in the sense that it is built entirely on sand as most courses are on the Monterey Peninsula. It is not as old a course as some, having been started in 1953, and finished by 1954. The course was designed and built by General Robert B. McClure (retired) with the assist of Boots Widener. It is a regulation 18, which plays around 6300 yards but this can be stretched to 7200 yards. A second course was built in 1964, with the front nine going in in 1964 and the back nine in 1970. This portion was designed and built by Merle. The funds generated for the building of this course comes from the recreational facilities of the soldiers stationed there. Even though it is a military base, the entire crew is civilian with an equivalent status as that of Civil Service. The present crew size is 14 men. Merle has one assistant superintendent and 2 full-time mechanics. In order to break the wind which can be rather persistent in that area, Merle engaged in an extensive tree planting program using over 5000 Monterey Pines and Cypresses.

The courses on Fort Ord, having been built during various periods, do not have the same sprinkler systems on all. Merle has tried to standardize them, and at present two heads predominate--the Valve-in-head Toros, and the Thompson 220 Challenger. By now Merle should have gained enough experience with these two heads so that anyone interested in knowing more about these two types under actual field conditions can ask Merle for his advice.

President Roger Larson has a request for all our members. In future meetings, please send in your reservation card promptly. If you are too late for some reason, pick up the phone and call the host super to let him know if you are coming or not. Also, if you have made a reservation, but find yourself unable to make it, notify. Many of the hosts have a problem in getting an idea of how many people will attend their meeting. They in turn have to communicate with the club manager to arrange for the food. When the menu they select calls for place settings, rather than a buffet luncheon, the superintendent has to guarantee a certain number. If there are more people than he had counted on, even with the 10% margin usually allowed, it can become very embarrassing to many people if there is not enough food. Conversely if far fewer people show up than were guaranteed, there will be a