

1974

The year starts off with a very familiar refrain: Water, water everywhere (and not a drop to drink)!

JANUARY: 4" of rain on Dec 17 has flooded the path between 16 & 17 to a depth of 30" as the wetland drainage is blocked by 2 new streets of housing to the south.(1974-1). Despite that, the Committee sets their sights on a May 15 Opening. (1974-2) There is a Laundry List of items slated for completion before May, and over 100 Golf Pros have expressed interest in the Job. (1974-3) A request is made to increase the Bonding for the Course from \$650,000 to \$700,000 - the extra \$50,000 designated for a Clubhouse, Entry Road, and Electric Service to the site. (1974-4) That number quickly comes under pressure when D.R.Carroll informs the Town it will cost \$40,000 to pave the road and the parking lot, citing "the current petroleum crisis" for the high price. (1974-5)

MARCH: Brooks addresses the "enormous workload ahead", including: the need to fill the vacant Superintendent position; the absence of a Septic system for the future clubhouse; Gravel for the parking lot; and more culvert piping on 14 to solve water problems. (1974-10) \$3,900 has been spent to improve 14 (with \$2,000 more still needed) and \$3,200 to repair the causeway between 16 & 17. Despite all this, 5 different Corporate Leagues are pressing to secure afternoon Tee times (1974-14) Meanwhile, Brooks begs D'Agostino to finish construction by May 5 (1974-15)

APRIL: The Road and Parking Lot become *urgent* matters. There are 34 Traps that need filling, costing \$3,432. But the end is in sight: Andy Pataky is hired as the first Head Pro. (1974-17)

MAY & JUNE: As the Course opens, a series of depressing turns occur: Don Brooks resigns from the Committee (1974-19); problems continue on 15 with no clear solution (1974-24); complaints arise on the lack of drinking water on the Course and the height of the grass (causing lost balls); and serious concerns emerge about the Golf Pro's performance. But pressure to cross the finish line mounts: Bob Sonnati, President of the Ridgefield Men's Golf Club, requests preferential Tee times for his 61 members on Saturday mornings (1974-20) and pushes for a Tournament to be slated in July (despite volunteers still needed to put sand in Traps). (1974-26)

JULY & AUGUST: New Superintendent Jim Kaczenski is complimented on the improved condition of the Course experienced by the July 4th golfers, but Head Pro Andy Pataky is dismissed after only 3 months on the job. (1974-28)

It was a wild first 2 months of Operation: No Head Pro, No Drinking Water; No Bathrooms, No Clubhouse; No sand in the Traps; an unplayable 15th hole; the 14th hole needed additional blasting to remove Ledge; and the entry road was poorly constructed. (It seems like the famous quote might apply here: "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the Play?") Despite these obstacles, on July 27, the inaugural Ridgefield Open was played by 146 entrants, generating \$584 in Greens Fees for the Course. (1974-30) The demand was clearly there all along.

One financial note - as the Course got up and running, it ran a small operating deficit of -\$870.48. (1974-32) But things soon start moving on a more positive trajectory.

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER: The Clubhouse started taking shape; the temporary Trailer will be gone by Sept 15, but the septic system is still unresolved. The budget for 1975 gets based on 20,000 paid rounds, a number easily exceeded in years to come. It's a solid vote of confidence by the public in this new Golf Gem - to this day, a fair test of golf with a reasonable price for the public.

The original team and the dedicated Committee members, working tirelessly under adverse conditions, are to be highly commended for their work to make this Course a reality. It has matured beautifully and withstands an enormous amount of play. The golfing populace of Connecticut and New York owes these determined and enterprising visionaries a great debt of gratitude.