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California Classic

**Peninsula G&CC
Turns 100 in Style**

Snack Bar Design Twists

Menu-Planning Magic

California

A well-preserved clubhouse and distinction as Donald Ross' only West Coast course have served **Peninsula G&CC** well through its first century—and now it's poised for a new era of great performances.

Director of Golf Operations Tom Toschi, PGA, has been at Peninsula Golf & Country Club in San Mateo, Calif. for 30 years and is only the fourth head pro in the club's 100-year history. At least once a year, Toschi and his



PHOTOS BY MARTIN MILLER, MILLER BROWN

Musical shows with all-member casts were first held at the club in 1963 and resumed in 1995 as every-other-year extravaganzas.

Classic

By Joe Barks, Editor

staff organize and host trips of a week or longer, on which they take as many as 80 members to play courses in Scotland, Hawaii, Mexico and other destinations. "People ask me about my 'golf vacations,'" Toschi laughs. "I tell them you don't really take a vacation with 80 other

people."

Peninsula G&CC also has a colorful Golf Course Superintendent, Frank Zamazal, who invokes Pavarotti singing the part of Pagliacci, the Sad Clown, as he writes to the club's golfers about aeration and lets them know he respects their

"feelings of anguish" about the process.

And Executive Chef Phil Benedetti is known as the "James Brown" of his kitchen, because he's the "hardest-working man" there, as well as in the dining rooms and on other culinary stages.

This same level of enthusiasm and



Peninsula G&CC AT A GLANCE

- Location: **San Mateo, Calif.**
- Founded: **1911** (as Beresford CC; renamed 1946)
- Membership: **350 proprietary; 800 total**
- Annual Golf Rounds: **30,000**
- General Manager: **David Nightingale**
- Director of Golf: **Tom Toschi, PGA**
- Golf Course Superintendent: **Frank Zamazal**
- Executive Chef: **Phil Benedetti**
- Clubhouse Manager: **Brian Wong**
- Director of Tennis: **Rod Saludo**
- Director of Fitness/Aquatics: **Jacque Garrish**
- Controller: **Jerry Fantuzzi**
- Director of Catering & Special Events: **Susie Bertolozzi**
- Support Services Supervisor: **Daniel Valverde**



Peninsula G&CC's management team usually doesn't stand on formality as it finds creative ways to communicate with, and provide programs and services for, the club's membership. Seated, left to right: Jacquie Garrish, Director of Fitness/Aquatics; Brian Wong, Clubhouse Manager; Susie Bertolozzi, Director of Catering & Special Events. Standing: Daniel Valverde, Support Services Supervisor; David Nightingale, General Manager; Frank Zamazal, Golf Course Superintendent; Phil Benedetti, Executive Chef; Tom Toschi, Director of Golf; Jerry Fantuzzi, Controller; and Rod Saludo, Director of Tennis.

readiness to go the extra mile is also easy to find from others on Peninsula's management team. And with lieutenants like these in charge of his departments, the club's General Manager, David Nightingale, laughingly sums up his own daily duties as "putting on a suit and tie, shaking hands and kissing babies."

Nightingale, a University of Nevada-Las Vegas hospitality grad who began his career with major hotel chains and then returned to his native Bay Area to work at The Olympic Club, Sharon Heights G&CC and the St. Francis Yacht Club before becoming Peninsula's GM in 2005, has learned through his career that general managers are "paid for leadership." And in situations where a GM has the good fortune to work with a staff that shows no shortage of initiative and self-motivation, he says, the task of leadership becomes one of "talking, listening, avoiding micromanagement, and letting everyone use their strengths to do what they do best."

Nightingale also finds the other side of his job at Peninsula—working with the membership—to be refreshingly well-defined, too. "It's the right mix of members being very involved with shap-

ing and supporting our programs and events, but then letting management run with the details," he reports.

Rocked to Its Core

All of this serendipity among staff, and between staff and members, has contributed to smooth planning of the events surrounding Peninsula G&CC's 100th anniversary celebration for this year. But the club wouldn't have made it to the century mark without proving to be very adaptable and resourceful in the face of the many challenges it has faced since its founding as Beresford Country Club in 1911 (it took its current name in 1946).

The most unsettling of these challenges—literally as well as strategically—occurred for the club after its property was shaken by 1989's magnitude 7.1 earthquake, the worst to hit the San Francisco area since 1906.

That quake, seen on live TV by millions as the broadcast began of Game Three of the "Bay Bridge" World Series between the San Francisco Giants and Oakland A's, ushered in a new era of seismic scrutiny for all structures in the region—and Peninsula's then-77-year-old clubhouse stood out as a prime example of the need



The outlook for Peninsula's second century is brightened by many up-and-coming members who are happy to carry the PGCC brand.



PHOTOS BY MARTIN MULLER/MILLER BROWN

to revisit basic building standards in the Bay Area (engineers hired by the club reported that the building even pre-dated the operative construction code, which had been established in 1929).

Actually, closer inspection showed that the old English Tudor-style building, said to have cost \$150,000 when built in 1913-14 and thought to have included architectural input from G. Albert Lansberg, best known for his work on San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House, put up a pretty good fight against the '89 quake, showing only minor foundation distress. But the trauma triggered a highly charged debate among the membership over whether the historic building should be scrapped for a new, more sound structure.

The question was eventually brought to an extremely close vote that originally carried in favor of new construction. But then sentimentality—and new figures that showed a renovation would save several million dollars, compared to a raze-and-rebuild—won out. A full restoration was performed from 1994 to 1996—and in the process, a “new” feature of the clubhouse was literally uncovered, when a false ceiling was taken out to reveal the two-story ballroom's original wooden-beamed ceiling. After this discovery, new chandeliers were added to enhance the room's distinction and appeal (see photo, top left of pg. 22).

Reviving an Outdoor Gem

The decision to restore the original clubhouse, and at the same time retrofit

its seismic protection, has certainly not fully eliminated the challenges involved with its operation—this past winter, some 800 of the original slate roof tiles that were cracked and broken, despite their

“lifetime warranties,” had to be replaced. But after the mid-'90s restoration of its clubhouse, Peninsula was able to turn its attention to an even more distinctive part of its property, and history—the golf



After deciding to restore rather than rebuild its 100-year-old clubhouse, the club removed a false ceiling and uncovered the full extent of its ballroom (left), which now serves as a unique setting for a full slate of regular and special events.

course that Donald Ross redesigned for the club in 1922, and that remains the only Ross layout on the West Coast, or even west of the Rockies, with The Broadmoor in Colorado being the next “closest.” (After putting his stamp on the previously undistinguished Beresford course with a complete re-routing that added 300 yards and included his distinctive bunkering and greens, Ross tried to land other work in the West, but didn’t get any nibbles and went back east, confining any further additions to his design legacy to the Midwest, South and East for the final two decades of his legendary career.)

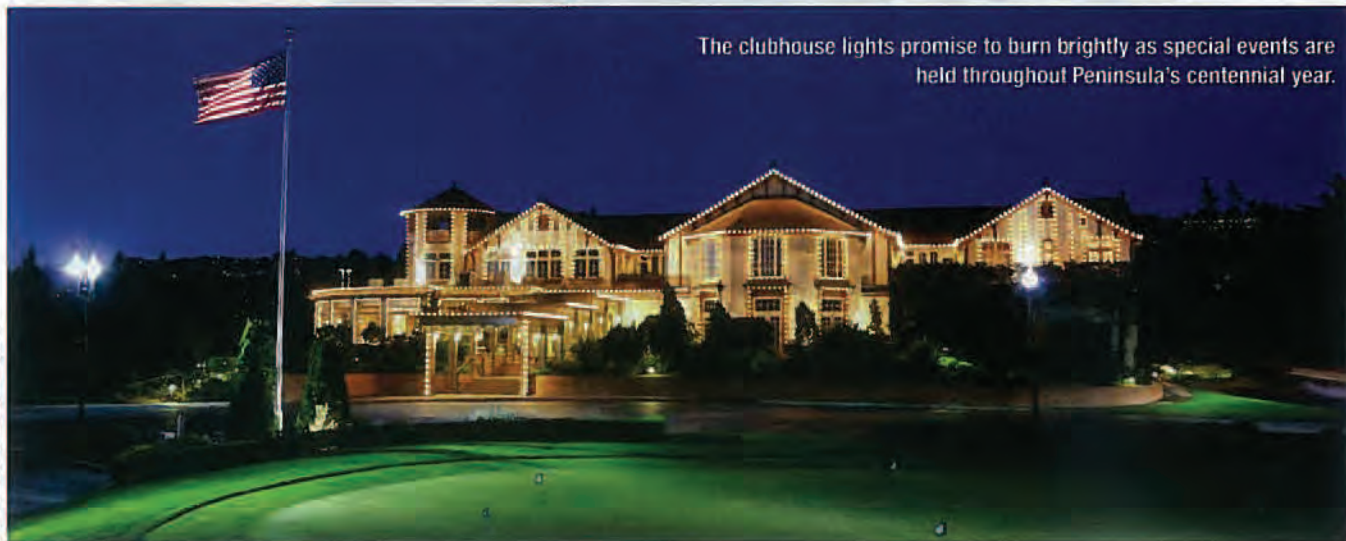
As the new millennium approached, however, those distinctive Ross bunkers—over 80 in total—and the rest of what he created were notable only for their ability to hold water. A major course renovation was undertaken in the early 2000s, followed by more bunker and drainage work two years ago. A course that used to get, and stay, so wet that Zamazal describes its typical pre-renovation consistency as “chocolate pudding” is now once again offering Peninsula golfers year-round opportunities for a unique, and true, restored Ross experience.

“It would get so muddy before, when we did the renovation we found plugged-in range balls that dated back to the 1980s,” Toschi reports. “But this past February [always one of

the Bay Area’s wetter months], we had 1,600 rounds played, and it rained just as much as it did for other Februaries in the past, when we would be lucky if we could get in 50 rounds.” Restoring the course for year-round play has also had the pleasant side benefit of boosting pro shop sales for cold- and foul-weather gear, he adds.

Having a true Ross profile again has also created some new possibilities for the member trips that he organizes, Toschi says, through reciprocation with Ross clubs in other parts of the country. “It’s opened up doors with people who appreciate how different it can be to play one of his courses in this environment, and with the elevation changes we have here,” he notes. “And vice versa for our members that we can take to play Ross designs elsewhere.”

The more new experiences Toschi can add and offer to Peninsula members through his ongoing golf travel program, the better, he feels. “[The trips] bring people together from within the club who maybe wouldn’t otherwise play golf together, or even meet each other through other club activities,” he says. “Beyond the courses that we play, the instruction we can provide and the special competitions and events we try to always have on the trips, there are a lot of bonding opportunities and



The clubhouse lights promise to burn brightly as special events are held throughout Peninsula’s centennial year.

PHOTOS BY MARTIN MILLER/MILLER BROWN



“US Open blue” courts are just the most visible mark of distinction for a tennis program that has grown to full capacity (210 members) and seen its USTA rating rise a full point under the guidance of Rod Saludo, Peninsula’s Director of Tennis for the past nine years.

common experiences that come from just being together in all of the locker rooms and hotels and restaurants along the way. We’ve kept [the trips] going strong for 30 years now, so there must be something about them that works.”

A Whole New Ballgame

With the challenges that come from operating older, historic facilities now much more firmly under control, all of Peninsula’s department heads are finding time to focus more freely on creating “new experiences” in each of their areas.

For example, to mark the coming of a new baseball season—and capitalize on the excitement of San Francisco finally having a World Series champion—Executive Chef Benedetti (“Comforts of Home,” *C&RB*, May 2010) has whipped up a special “Play Ball” menu, featuring “Recipes from America’s Ballparks,” that will be offered as a special dining theme throughout April. After starting with a choice of Fenway Park/Boston Red Sox New England Clam Chowder or Chase Field/Arizona Diamondbacks Italian Chopped Salad, and then having an entrée from among selections such as a Kauffman Stadium/Kansas City Royals KC Ribeye Stack sandwich or Petco Park/San Diego Padres Beer-Battered Fish Tacos, dessert is a vanilla ice cream sundae, served in a souvenir World Champion San Francisco Giants helmet, of course.

Peninsula’s members aren’t holding back their enthusiasm or imagination either, as their club begins its second century. The first major social event of the year, the annual President’s Ball in March, departed from the usual black-tie reception to include a special cabaret show and surprise performance by Marcus Lovett (the youngest actor to ever play the title role in *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway) for the 220 people who packed the ballroom. “It was an unprecedented night for the club in terms of entertainment and member camaraderie, and a great kickoff to our centennial,” Nightingale reports.

Events planned for later this year include a Family Fair day in September that will include a decorated golf car parade and is expected to draw a crowd of 1,500, and a special anniversary edition of the member-staged Club Show, a Peninsula tradition that was first held in 1963 and was revived in 1995 as an every-other-year extravaganza.

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