

## Desert Island History

In **1969**, a Mr. L.L. “Red” Oakes acquired the final parcel of land to complete a square 160-acre parcel of flat desert land.

In **1970**, Oakes entered into a land lease agreement with Winmar (a subsidiary of Safeco Corporation based out of Seattle, Washington).

Winmar contracted with world-renowned Golf Course Architect Desmond Muirhead for a concept design. Muirhead designed over 100 courses around the world and was named by Golf World as “the most innovative golf course architect of the last 100 years”. It has been said that he was the “greatest golf architect of our time”.

The Club was initially named Desert National – it was envisioned as the western version of Augusta National but, in **1971**, the name was changed to Desert Island.

Construction on the property started in October **1970**, with the grading of a 25-acre elongated island surrounded by a 25-acre lake. The lake was lined with heavy 10mm plastic. The water for the lake was pumped from a well drilled several years earlier. The well, which ended up being located on the 6<sup>th</sup> hole, was drilled to a depth of 175 feet and had a capacity of 1,600,000 gallons per day. Water is piped into the lake through two artificial rock waterfalls located on either side of Island Drive. The lake varies from 4 feet to 2 feet deep and when full the lake contains approximately 40 million gallons of water. Water is pumped from the lake for irrigation at the opposite end of the island by the washrooms at the 5<sup>th</sup> tee.

Three buildings were built on the island with completion dates as follows:

Building 899 – 1973  
Building 900 – 1975  
Building 910 – 1979

Plans for a fourth building existed but never came to fruition.

The grading of the 6500-yard golf course was completed in early **1971** with the planting of over 1600 trees and construction of 74 sand bunkers. The grass is Bermuda, which is over-seeded with Rye for winter play. The course was officially opened September **1971**. There have been many changes to the trees, bunkers, tee boxes and some fairways over the years but the integrity of the original design has been preserved. The golf course measured 6686 yard in 2000.

Construction of the clubhouse commenced in November **1971** and was officially dedicated October **1972**. In **1977**, a refurbishment and expansion of the clubhouse was completed.

From **1971** to **1981**, the golf course was owned and operated by Winmar. During most of this period our member, Bill Zaro, managed the Club for Winmar.

- The initiation fee in **1972** was \$3000 and annual dues were \$480. By **1979**, the amounts were \$10,000 and \$1260 respectively. In 1984, initiation peaked at \$35,000.
- The first organized golf event at Desert Island was a weekly Men's Choose-Up every Wednesday with an entry fee of \$5. In 1974, a Choose-Up on Saturday morning was added.
- The golf membership grew from 90 members in **1973** to 330 in **1978** (25 of these membership were owned by Winmar and never used – they were returned to the Club in 1999 since the fourth building was never built). One of the first 25 members of the Club, Bob Leberman, is still with us today.

In **1981**, Desert Island Golf and Country Club became a private equity golf and country club. Two hundred and twenty (220) "Charter" members purchased the clubhouse and the golf course from the developer for \$2,500,000 and entered into a lease for the rental of the land with an option to purchase. In **1984** the option was exercised and the land was purchased for \$1,200,000. The Club does not own the lake, but the Club is responsible for its maintenance.

In **1993**, the clubhouse was remodeled and expanded to 38,000 sq. feet. This major expansion created the clubhouse we have today.

In **1997**, a new well was drilled (back of the 7<sup>th</sup> tee) to provide backup to the 29-year-old well, which is still in service.

In **1998**, the Club commenced removing the diseased oleanders from the perimeter of the golf course and commenced construction of the block walls, which were completed in **1999**. Trees were planted along the walls as construction was completed.

In **2004**, the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole received a "face lift" and in **2006** an elegant renovation was completed in the upstairs dining areas.

In **2006** a fifth tee box was added and the course was lengthened to 6,715 yards.

In **2008** a long-term project to restore the course to its original design and playing condition began. This plan includes the pruning and replacement of trees/shrubs around the course with arborist guidance. It also involves the enlargement of the greens to their original sizes, shapes and contours. And the restoration of the sand bunkers to their original shapes.

In **2008** a cement bulkhead was added to half of the lake shoreline. This is a joint project between the Club and the Community Association. The project (second half) was completed in **2009**.

In **2010** the Golf Pro Shop, Apparel Boutique and Locker Rooms were remodeled.