

# May The Course Be With You

By Rick Sandbo



Meet Rick Sandbo, a 2005 Intel Folsom Retiree whose career in Facilities planning led him to a challenging and successful new career as the owner and operator of Camino Heights Golf Course.



Rick Sandbo

I began my career at Intel in 1979, when the company was building its first permanent facility in AZ. MCD was moving from the Bay Area into leased facilities in Phoenix and construction was underway at the Deer Valley campus. As a Facilities Draftsman there was plenty to do and over the next 10 years I was able to expand my experience by accepting multiple job assignments including tech supervisor for fab equipment installations, building supervisor, contract management, project manager, instructor, and facilitator. I clearly remember those mornings when I would have to face the FAB OPS committee to explain why we had shut down a bay in the fab due to contamination during construction. Back then, “Hollerin” Harry Hollick was the FAB 6 manager and I learned personally how he got his nick name...

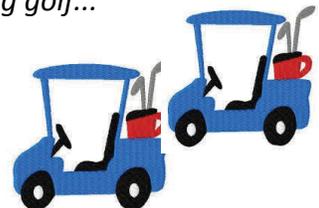
In 1990 the Folsom campus was growing and I had the opportunity to relocate and work on the FM3 building project. Facilities planning had always been my passion as I had loved drawing since I was a kid. Over the next 15 years I worked as a building planner and my last big project was the construction and move-in of FM7. There were a lot of challenges building a 4-story building in the middle of a fully occupied campus but those challenges were what made it so fun! In December of 2005 I took the Rule of 75 and decided to work on my golf game.

I didn't start playing golf until my early 40s. A couple of friends introduced me to the game at Sierra, a 9-hole course in Placerville, CA. I quickly learned what a challenging game golf is! I had been playing baseball and softball my entire life and had no idea what I was missing not playing golf.

Camino Heights is a small 9-hole course about 10 minutes from my home in Pollock Pines. I bought a membership there in 2003 and played as often as I could. There are so many things that make golf unique. Golf doesn't have any umpires or referees - the golfer is responsible for knowing and following the rules. There is a code of conduct while playing golf including life



The road to mastering golf...





*Putting green with clubhouse in the background*

lessons of integrity, honesty, patience, good sportsmanship, courtesy and camaraderie. You replace your divots on the fairways and you fix ball marks on the greens.

There are golf courses all over the world and every course is unique. Some are short 9-hole courses and others are long 18-hole layouts. Some have water hazards and others have sand bunkers - most have homes surrounding them. I have yet to find a course that is easy. Golf is a tough sport to get good at. A golf teaching professional once told me only about 1% of the world's population is good at golf. Arnold Palmer described the game well when he said:

*“Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated; it satisfies the mind and frustrates the intellect. It is at the same time rewarding and maddening and it is without a doubt the greatest game mankind has ever invented.”*

Based on my own experiences, I agree with him.

Golf played a big part in my decision to take an early retirement from Intel. My membership at Camino Heights allowed for unlimited play so I was getting out about 4 times a week, walking the course, and my game got better. In late 2009 I heard that Camino Heights Golf Course was going to close. The community had already lost Sierra, the 9-hole course where I had learned to play, and the El Dorado Hills course had also shut down a couple of years earlier. Camino Heights was the last 9-hole course in the area and closed on January 1, 2010.

Mark Zygalski and his wife, Jan, had moved to Pollock Pines from Chicago in 1989. Mark and I had known each other through playing golf together. I had been considering going back to work when Mark approached me about buying the golf course. We were able to negotiate a very reasonable deal and reopened Camino Heights Golf Course on April 15, 2010. I basically bought myself a new job.

I always felt Camino Heights Golf Course had great potential. It was originally designed as an 18-hole course back in 1963 but by 1990 it had been converted into its current 9-hole layout. Rumor is that students from Sacramento State University had come out and planted a wide array of trees in the early years resulting now in a variety of interesting and fully mature trees.



*Trees believed to be planted by Sacramento State University Students.*



Camino Heights is spread over about 30 acres and the course plays just under 2,000 yards. The par 31 layout is full of challenges due to the terrain of the Sierra foothills. There are not many level lies (the level on which the golfer's feet stand in relation to the level of the ball). Gorgeous views are available year round and at 3,000 feet, Camino Heights is typically above the fog and below the snow.



*Don't overshoot the hole!*



*Stunning views throughout the course*

Owning and operating a golf course has been both challenging and rewarding. My job responsibilities are all inclusive from cutting grass to managing the business. Operating a course in California during drought conditions is a very tricky business. Our water bill had reached \$125 a day by the summer of 2013 so we planted 54 fruit trees on the property and got the water rate changed from Recreational Turf to Small Farm Irrigation. Our daily water rates have dropped to about \$25 a day and by next season our trees will start to bear fruit. My youngest daughter, Cassandra, earned her degree from La Cordon Blue as a pastry chef last year and made a batch of apple pies that quickly sold out at the club house. This should be a real draw for us during the harvest season as Cassandra continues to receive orders from repeat customers. I have also been working on the perfect tri-tip sandwich and must be doing something right as I can't keep any in inventory they sell out so fast!



*One of Rick's many jobs*

I met Lisa in February of 2011 at the golf course after having been a single parent for 16 years. I decided to ask Lisa if she would marry me on Valentine's Day 2012. We were wed on July 20, 2012 in the garden next to the club house and waited until a slower time at the course to take our honeymoon in Kauai later that year. Lisa helps out at the course by covering the club house a few



*Rick and Lisa in the clubhouse*

days a week and we are remodeling our house in Pollock Pines along with Lisa's 17 year old son, Paul, our two cats, three dogs, five chickens, three goats, and two horses. Our lives are very fulfilling and rewarding.

It has taken five years but we finally figured out how to make a profit in the golf business! Our customers are telling us they have never seen the course look so good and the mild weather this winter has really increased the amount of play.

I thoroughly enjoyed my career at Intel. I liked the challenges we faced and the ability to get things done. Those years of experience help me daily with owning and running a golf course in my retirement. I would suggest that other Intel retirees find something they really enjoy and go for it. I work hard, enjoy my weekends off, and I am as happy as I have ever been.

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