



*Dr Joe Lepak's late wife, Betty Lepak, developed the following article covering Edgewood's history. She enthusiastically researched this project by conducting interviews with several people, former owners, longtime members and former 40 year Club Manager and Golf Professional the late Paul VanLoozen. She did a terrific job... Read and enjoy!*

### **EDGEWOOD IN ITS INFANCY**

Ernest W. Way designed Edgewood Country Club in 1928; the initial layout remains today. (The numbering of the holes has changed over the years.) Mr. Way hailed from Westward Ho, Devonshire, England. He designed five other courses in Michigan including Belle Isle, Birch Hill, and Pontiac Country Club. In the depression years, and just prior, the Decker and Huff Association developed the adjacent residential property and Edgewood became a private club. The original clubhouse, which is a beautiful home, still stands at the southwest corner of the course at 2550 Edgewood Park Drive. Our #4 was then #1, and a starter's shack stood in the vicinity of #4's water fountain. This was not a financial success and the entire golf property was purchased by Len Kolb who operated the course as semi-private. Mr. Kolb spent considerable time developing the Washington Bent greens and fairways. The gross receipts the first year were \$1800. Charles Ross purchased the course 1946 and continued to improve the greens and fairways; many people considered Edgewood the finest public course in Michigan.

### **THE FULLER'S AT THE HELM**

On a Friday in November of 1951, Ernie Fuller drove past Edgewood, by the following Monday, the Fuller brothers had bought the course for \$160,000 with \$60,000 down. Ernie remembers that Ross stated that he would have the course back in six months.

They opened in March of 1952 as a public course. The clubhouse stood on the first lot of Edgewood Drive as you enter from Commerce Road. It was a frame building; the first hole was across the road at what is now #7. Only pull carts were available at that time. Ernie described the clubhouse as having a pro shop at the entrance with a hallway leading back to the bar and grill room. Beer, wine, soft drinks, and sandwiches were available. Adjacent to the bar and grill was a men's locker room. The ladies had a restroom provided for their needs, it offered only a wash basin and 'john'.... this could be referred to as "the good old days".

In 1955 the Fullers purchased 20 acres adjacent to #9 to accommodate a new clubhouse, driveway, and driving range. Ernie reminisced that all of the Maples that line the sides of the drive leading to the clubhouse were grown from seedlings found in the eaves troughs of the green's keeper's house! He proudly stated that they never lost a tree. I asked Ernie why they built the wide stairway going to the basement of the clubhouse. He stated that the initial plans included an addition of six bowling lanes (to accommodate the bowling league in the winter months), and above them a plan for a formal dining room (where our new dining room now stands). Though never completed, Ernie commented that the downstairs was not a loss; the men used it for their high stakes games!

The new clubhouse was opened during the 1956 golf season; beer and wine were available, however, the members provided their own liquor and got set-ups from Jessie - the first locker room attendant. Fred Coxen shined shoes for Jessie and also worked in the pro shop for Jack Hoffman, who was the first pro. Jack stayed through '56 and '57, and then left to be the pro at Hillcrest Country Club. Doug Coxen fondly recounted that his locker row was called "the snake pit" because the men raised so much 'hell' after their rounds of golf. Ernie's memory is that Ed Lauer was nicknamed 'Snake' for his ability to snake his putts in. When the new clubhouse opened in 1956, there were approximately 50 members. A few are still around today - namely, Bill Benjamin (who was the 1956 Club Champ), Duane Black, Doug Coxen, Larry Markey, Dale Monson, Mitch Ramsey, Ernie Rose, and Al Yezbick. Pull carts were still available, and Cushman gasoline powered carts were added. Doug Coxen recalled that Stag Day was born that first year and that the members set up their bar in the corner where the large round table now stands.

In 1957, Edgewood proudly hosted the 1957 Michigan Open Golf Tournament. The Fuller brothers owned a Plymouth dealership in Royal Oak and gave two cars away at the Open. Larry Markey played in the Open; Fred Coxen caddied for Ed Lauer, who also played. Another well known face that competed in the Open was Paul VanLoozen. He was, at the time, the assistant pro at Pine Lake Country Club. Markey recollected that there were

out-of-bounds stakes posted along the left of #15 fairway, which had to come down for the tournament because out-of-bounds designations were not allowed on course interiors - the stakes were never replaced.

The membership at Edgewood grew rapidly during those early years. Ernie Fuller remembers a number of 334. However, a glitch arose in 1959 when a few new rules were set and the dues were raised to \$600 annually; a mass exodus to Meadowbrook followed. The next change in dues took place in 1970 when the members bought the clubhouse and equipment from the Fullers. At that time the dues were set at \$50 per month and a membership cost \$1,000. The Fullers retained ownership of the land until 1983. Today the initiation fee is \$7,500 and dues are \$490 a month and we have over 200 Class A (Golf) members and over 420 total members.

### **CHANGES TO THE COURSE**

In 1958 Paul VanLoozen came to Edgewood as the second pro. He remembers the many minor changes to the course through the 50's and 60's; which were made easily at the time, all he had to do was go to a Fuller and with an idea for a particular improvement to a hole.

Changes he cited were:

#3 The fairway grass bunker on the right was changed to sand; a sand bunker was added In front of the green.

#8 The fairway sand bunker on the left was closed and changed to rough (it had been particularly difficult for women).

#11 A fairway grass bunker was changed to sand.

#14 A fairway sand bunker created.

#15 The fairway grass bunker on the left of the dogleg was changed to a sand bunker.

#17 The sand bunker on the left of the green was closed and changed to grass.

#18 A sand bunker was created in front of the green.

Until 1975 the men's' tees and the ladies' tees were all in the same spot. At this time the red tees on #1, #7, #9, and #11 were moved forward. Larry Markey commented that this caused a little rift because some of the women liked teeing off of the 'big' hill on #11. Paul added that it didn't last too long because the new location afforded a 100 yard advantage!

The initial length of the course for men was 6402 yards and 6091 for the women. In 1975 the length of the course for men was established as 6365 yards from the blue tees, 6228 from the white, and 5688 from the red. Bob Carey, serving the green's committee, was the big push behind this change.

The biggest one-shot change to the course took place in 1988 when Arthur Hills was commissioned to update the entire course. The length became 6394 yards from the blue tees, 6210 from the white, and 5499 from the red (many of these were moved forward). The sand bunker was added on #15 on the right side of the fairway at the dogleg. The men's tee box on #16 was built up, and the sand trap in front of the green was enlarged and deepened. The fairway and sand bunker in front of #18 were completely altered. The most significant change took place on #14 where the water was added. The halfway house was razed and a larger, more attractive one was constructed.

In 1994, the Edgewood Enhancement Committee, aided by the generosity of Leo Volpe, created the marvelous berm along Commerce Road, a truly stunning addition to the look of Edgewood!

In 2005 the club redesigned the 18<sup>th</sup> hole with help from Bruce Matthews, a prominent Michigan Golf Course Architect. Three imposing new bunkers were carved into the hillside on the right hand side of the hole. Transforming a rather simple finishing hole into a dogleg right with more of a risk-reward element. It was a major improvement to the finishing hole.

### **CHANGES TO THE CLUBHOUSE**

The clubhouse remained primarily the same until the early 60's when the Fullers expanded the mens' locker room for additional lockers and showers. A sauna, bar, and card room were added. In addition, the stone facing was added to the exterior.

Around 1966 the initial grill room bar was taken out. The bar was raised about 18 inches and booths were placed behind the bar. This didn't work out well and was changed again in 1978, the basic layout has remained.

During the 50's, 60's, and 70's only minor decorating changes took place in the clubhouse.

1985 was the year of the clubhouse fire. Paul discovered it when he came by to pick up his clubs early one morning for a golf outing at another club. (I never did find out if he played golf that day.) It had started by a short in a blender on the kitchen counter, just inside the swinging doors. There was extensive smoke damage. Ralph Mohr heard about it, and by noon he was there with crews that worked around the clock. The course remained open and the clubhouse was reopened by Wednesday the same week.

In July 1990, our elegant banquet room was added to the clubhouse and a complete interior and exterior renovation took place. The old dining room was converted to 'The Fireside Room' and facilitated the expansion of the business /operating offices. The entrance to the clubhouse was completely altered and 'The Meeting Room' was added. At this time the ladies locker room was renovated and expanded; additional lockers lengthened the dressing area, and a custom bar embellished the larger card room. The men's locker room, grill, and shower area were also expanded and renovated. The previously crowded Pro Shop was extended, allowing additional space for golf attire and equipment. The transformation was remarkable...

In 1998 Chef David Daniot joined Edgewood. He replaced Chef Chris. Chef David grew up in the Kitchen, his father Larry was the Chef at Western Golf & Country Club for 25 years. Chef David has won multiple awards for his cooking both locally and nationally and has taken tremendous strides in improving the food and beverage operation at Edgewood. Kevin Tyrrell started at Edgewood as a busser in 1993 and worked his way up the ladder. Kevin took over as clubhouse manager in 2008.

In 2000 the main Bar and Entrance was redone in a rich Cherry color. The membership approved a \$150,000 project that resulted in an entirely new bar and a new main entrance to the club.

In 2005 the remaining Clubhouse interior was remodeled. The membership approved a \$300,000 remodeling project, which remodeled the Grille Room, Fireside Room and moved the business office to the location of the "Meeting Room". A new "Board Room" was constructed where the business office had been located and the new Board room features a panoramic view of the range and entrance to the club and was sought after for private parties and business meetings. The Grille and Fireside rooms were redone in a rich cherry color, the ceiling was redone and the main window in the Grille Room Expanded. The Kitchen entrance was also remodeled to improve the appearance and usefulness of the area. New furniture and carpet accent the newly remodeled rooms. Leonard Else, Interior designer and social member at Edgewood was instrumental in developing the remodeling plans. The project was completed on Budget and on time due to the close monitoring of the clubhouse committee. Within 6 months after completing the renovation Edgewood's social membership reached a record level of 119 Social members, a 50 member increase from before the remodeling.

### **THE GREENSKEEPER'S HOUSE**

From what I have learned, the greenskeeper's house was standing when the course was designed. Len Klob, the first course owner, took up residence there, as did Charlie Ross when he purchased the course. When *the* Fullers bought the property, Fred Fuller lived in the house until they hired their first greenskeeper, who was Johnnie Stipcak. Johnnie lived in the house as greenskeeper until 1963. He was followed by John Decoda, a former mechanic. Decoda lasted until 1964 when the greens under his care were badly burned. Kenny McRae was hired in 1965; his previous employer had been Franklin Hills. 1965 was also the year that Ed Fuller came to the helm at Edgewood. He was nicknamed 'The White Knight' by the members' because he had a full mane of white hair.

In 1997 Kenny McRae retired and was replaced by Tom Ashfield, Tom only remained two seasons and was replaced by Mike Mulkey, who worked previously at Cog Hill. Mike remained until 2008 when he left Edgewood to work at Lochmoor Country Club. The assistant superintendent Jud Hudnut took over as superintendent.

### **THE HALFWAY HOUSE**

The Halfway House was initially known as 'The Pop Stand'. The Pop Stand was constructed by the Fullers when hole #7 was #1; standing at the same location where our current Halfway House stands. The role of the Pop Stand was to provide snacks on the course so people wouldn't have to cross the road. It's dimensions were

approximately five feet by ten feet. Ernie Fuller's son, Teddy (who was about ten years old) operated the Pop Stand. Mary Jane Stipcak, the greenskeeper's daughter, made sandwiches and sold them to Teddy for thirty-five cents. Teddy sold them for whatever he could get from fifty cents up to sixty cents! Ernie said that Mary Jane earned her college education selling sandwiches to Teddy and working at Edgewood. Bill Wier, a member, rebuilt the Halfway House around 1967 and added the mens and ladies restrooms. At the same time, he constructed the rain shelter on fairway #11 with the same materials he used for the Halfway House.

The Halfway House remained the same until 1988, when Mitch Ramsey razed the old one. New footings and a new septic system were constructed for the larger version we enjoy today.

## **TOURNAMENTS**

In the 1950's and early 1960's, the club hosted what was called the Calcutta Tournament. It was a true Calcutta; the teams were auctioned off to the highest bidder. The 'owners' and players shared the winnings. The Calcutta was replaced by the Member / Member Tournament in 1966 and became the Men's Invitational in 1967. In 2003 Dean Angott, golf chairman, created The Presidents Cup and a Calcutta returned to Edgewood.

The first Derby Day Tournament was held in 1961. That year the teams consisted of three people, two men and one woman. The field was comprised of 120 men / 40 women. In 1962 they changed to four person teams, three men and one woman. In 1963 they returned to the three person teams, the ratio 2 - 1, men - women. From 1965 to the present, the teams have remained at four person teams, two men and two women, or three men and one woman. For the first seven years the tournament was played in one day; in 1968 the tournament name was changed to Derby Days and was extended to two days.

In 2004 Edgewood added the Tuesday Night Men's League. This 9-hole two-man team event was 10 weeks, 5 in the spring and 5 in the fall and proved quite popular.

## **THE WOMEN'S GOLF ASSOCIATION**

The Women's Golf Association was initially known as the Edgewood Country Club Ladies Activities Group. It was organized in 1957. It was reorganized in 1958, and by-laws were adopted. Amendments were made in 1961. In 1964 the by-laws were again revised and additions were made. The Board Members' slogan was: "*To work together for the greatest possible pleasure for the whole club*". The first Doe Day tournament took place on June 19th, 1958. The first Women's Invitational occurred in 1972.

## **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

Ernie Fuller fondly recalled that during the early years Edgewood hosted parties on Thursday nights that featured the big bands - Pee Wee Hunt, Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller, The Ink Spots, and The Mills Brothers were among the bands that entertained the members and their guests. Ernie stated that they were able to obtain the big bands on Thursdays for \$1250.00 or \$1500.00 when the bands were commissioned by dance halls in the area for Friday and Saturday nights. The bands were scheduled every other week.

The alternating weeks featured an All-You-Can-Eat Fish Fry on Friday night. The Friday Fish Fry rapidly became a large and varied buffet, with sing-a-longs or dances following the dinner hour. The Thursday Night Big Band evenings and the Friday Night Fish Fry were extremely well attended. Today we have the fish fry on Friday nights in the spring and fall. Tony Hannaford developed the popular Soup-er Sunday Buffets, which we have today as well as the Tuesday Night Prime Rib Buffets that are very popular.

Ernie reported that there were always many, many parties of a large variety. Ernie described memorable parties beyond the traditional Halloween, New Year's Eve, and Spring Dance - Shipwreck Parties, and Amateur Nights to name just two. On Amateur Night they were able to hire Rubenhough, a top violin player in the country, to participate in the evening's events. Today we have Family Nights, Jazz nights, Casual music evenings as well as entertainment on the patio during the summer.

Another well attended social gathering were the bus trips to the University of Michigan football games. Entertainment and box lunches were provided, along with a dinner at the Clubhouse following the game, entertainment continued on through the evening.

In 2003 Edgewood debuted its first ever Fireworks display and it turned in to one of our biggest social events ever with over 700 members and guests attending. In 2008 almost 900 people attended the fireworks display.

To this day members and guests comment that, *“If you are invited to an Edgewood Country Club function, you are really invited SOME PLACE!”*

**Since Betty’s article was written there have been several nice additions to the club.**

### **THE FAMILY FITNESS FACILITY**

September 14, 2005 marked an important date in the history of Edgewood Country Club. The membership approved the construction of a \$1.75 million dollar fitness facility and pool complex designed to transform Edgewood Country Club from a private golf club primarily for adults to an affordable family oriented full service country club.

The Pool & Fitness Center was fully operational in May of 2007.

### **The ECC Pool & Fitness Center**

This 6,000 square foot facility is located just East of our main clubhouse. It includes 1,900 square feet devoted to a state of the art fitness facility. This year round center is staffed by trainers to suit individual member’s needs. The fitness facility boasts men’s and ladies lockers, family changing rooms and showers. The exercise equipment is from Lifefitness and is state of the art.

The pool area features a 25 meter six lane pool and a children’s pool with a water feature. The pool deck area is large enough to accommodate bleachers for future district swim meets. There is a swim office that houses our seasonal swim coach who is available for swim lessons. Additionally, when not hosting our sunbathing members, the “deck” may be used for an occasional weekend party with entertainment to suit the event.

This sports complex also includes an indoor dining room and an outdoor eating area for those using the pool. A small kitchen adequate for casual food service will accommodate the dining and outdoor eating areas.

An added amenity is childcare while Edgewood moms and grandparents are working out and in the future there is room for the development of a tennis facility or other outdoor activities.

Edgewood Country Club is now the premier full service county club in the lakes area. There is no better way to enjoy family time than at a private country club. Edgewood members have always enjoyed privileged access to our private golf course, pristine course conditions, a fun and competitive tournament program, rounds of golf in under 4 hours and fine dining in our newly renovated clubhouse with our award winning chef. Now members will also enjoy the fitness facility and pool complex, which will enable you to spend quality time with your family by the pool or to enjoy exercising in our private fitness center.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The Board of Directors and Membership of Edgewood are constantly seeking new ways of improving the club. The Banquet facilities, driving range and parking area will all be upgraded in the near future. Tennis courts are also on the horizon and will finish off the Facility Enhancement Program begun in 2005 Edgewood is constantly improving on what we have to offer the membership.