



SUMMERHAYS wins  
Sahalee Players p.3

INVENTOR on the golf  
channel p.8

WHITE HORSE worth  
the journey p.6



AUGUST 2007

# Golf

## NORTHWEST Magazine



# Taking Center Stage

White Horse enters the scene

# White Horse an overnight Northwest classic – 13 years in the making

## Personal journey leads to satisfying end

by Blaine Newnham

White Horse is a golf course that seems well worth the trip, especially when the trip is a crisp, 20-minute ferry ride from Edmonds across Puget Sound to the hills south of Kingston.

Worth it when the little bus comes to the ferry dock to meet you for the final five-minute trip to the course, even though you won't often find the owner, Bob Screen, posing as the van driver as he did on the course's opening day in June.

"I wanted to find out what people thought of the course," said Screen, who for his troubles got lots of compliments, insights, and a couple of \$2 tips.

White Horse is one of the more exciting - and different - golf course developments to hit Puget Sound in some time, representing not only one man's 13-year battle to get the course built, but the architectural debut of Cynthia Dye McGarey.

While the centerpiece of a housing development, the course is open to the public, with green fees set at \$45 during the week and \$60 on the weekends. In addition there is a five-play twilight card for \$125 that also allows play to begin an hour before the prevailing twilight time.

"It is great golf at a great price and in a great location," said Screen, who lives on Bainbridge Island and made his money as a media and fund-raising consultant to non-profit organizations.

"I had a couple here looking to re-locate.

They told me the course was challenging but beautiful, tough but fair. I think that kind of boils it down," he said.

Looking for pasture land for his daughter's horse, Screen bought the 400 acres on a ridge between Kingston and Indianola in the 1980s. It had been cleared of prime trees in the lumber industry's rush to send logs to Japan.

Screen wouldn't say what the land cost, but by today's standards it couldn't have been much. Looking for the property's best-use scenario, Screen read a comment

fought for his golf course and the 240 lots that would go with it. He often jokes about the delay as being the best thing that ever happened to him, the lapse turning \$40,000 lots into \$200,000 properties, and every legal hassle - and there were many - front-page publicity for the course.

He's proud of the fact that the entire project cost less than \$4 million, that he hasn't gone into debt in the process and that green fees during the week start at \$45. In fact, he said the sale of the first 60 lots paid for the building of the course.



*The par-4 9th hole at White Horse.*

by Karsten Solheim, the inventor of the Ping clubs, that there was need for more good golf in the stretches of north Kitsap County.

Screen actually sought Solheim out in a restaurant in nearby Suquamish run by Solheim's sister. Together, they walked the property. Solheim saw the gracefully undulating landscape and its makeup - sand - and gave a quick thumbs up.

"Perfect," he said.

More than a decade elapsed as Screen

"I tried to learn from what was happening in the industry," he said. "Golf courses were being sold over and over again, and always for less. That indicated they cost too much in the first place."

Screen is hardly orthodox. He was his own contractor in the building of the course. He hired a woman to design it. He didn't get his makeshift clubhouse into position until the week the course opened. When he sought an architect, he said he

had design-construction bids ranging from \$3 million to \$11 million.

"Same course, same land," he said. "It showed you some people didn't know what they were doing."

McGarey, the niece of Pete Dye, was ready to break out on her own. In going after the job - which she said has become her pride and joy - she gave Screen more innovative

routing for the course than he'd seen from others. For her part, she said, the housing demands by Screen never compromised the course.

"I got what I wanted and Bob got what he wanted," said the 51-year-old McGarey.

Screen admits he is frugal, and yet McGarey got the go-ahead to build 137 sand traps. The cart paths are wide and concrete. No scrimping there.

"My philosophy," said Screen, "is to spend only what is necessary to achieve your objective, but be sure to spend what is necessary."

Screen said from the beginning that he wanted his course to be challenging - and never boring - while also being playable. He said McGarey offered that. She also moved as little land as possible, finding - not creating - corridors of play among the rolling, sandy soils.

"Her concept of tee placements, especially for women and seniors, was so much better than those of anyone else's," he said. "She was light years ahead and we've got a course that can be played by anyone. The women just love it."

With the backdrop of tall trees on every hole and at this point very few houses, the course is distinctly Northwest. In fact, Joe



*The par-5 16th hole at White Horse.*

All photos by Rob Perry

Lanza, a member of the Canadian Tour who grew up on Bainbridge Island, called it "an instant Northwest Classic."

This isn't a links course, although it is built almost entirely on sand and was eerily dry last winter for those who got a chance to test it. No, the course looks more like Gold Mountain and McCormick Woods and Port Ludlow - with stands of trees - and while more open than the others probably

*"My philosophy," said Screen, "is to spend only what is necessary to achieve your objective, but be sure to spend what is necessary."*

demands a more skillful shot into the green.

It is, in fact, a second-shot course. Screen and Dye wanted the driver to come out on the tee box. The fairways are much wider than they appear.

The front nine has three rigorous par-4s, two of which measure well over 400 yards. The championship tees can go over 7,000 yards. The five sets of tees produce

dramatically different challenges.

Although there are more than 100 bunkers, they do not detract from the beauty of the environment or the design. Rather than be bright white sand, the color was picked to match the surrounding tree trunks.

After playing the course, officials from the Washington State Golf Association said they could envision playing the state amateur championship there.

Even before it opened, White Horse was tagged with a slope of 144 from the back tees, putting it among the five most difficult courses in the state. The 18th hole, which curves around a pond to a green with water left, sand right and a creek to the back, might be the best finishing hole in the state.

"I'm a little surprised how much people love the challenge of playing White Horse," said Screen. "I think the difficulty intrigues them and draws them back for another round."

The lack of forced carries and the firmness of the fairways seems behind the appeal of the course to women.

"Every day I see something Cynthia did that makes the course enjoyable," he said.

"I'm pleased."