

OAKWOODS HISTORY...1962-1992

The second phase of Oakwood's long history began on May 1st, 1962 when Bill Greene, age 29, arrived in Wilkesboro to begin his long tenure as OCC's Head PGA Professional. Bill was an outstanding player already well known around the state for his soft hands, laser-like wedge shots, and lethal putting stroke.

Bill came to OCC from Grassy Creek Golf Club in Spruce Pine, NC. where he held his first head pro's position. Bill began his career in the golf business in Boone NC under the tutelage of Boone Golf Club's long-time PGA Professional, Joe Maples. Boone was familiar territory for Bill, having been born and raised in Blowing Rock and having been the first member of the inaugural golf team at Appalachian State University in 1953.

OCC's first PGA professional, Newell Baker, had taken a new position in Benson, NC leaving Oakwoods with a nine hole golf course, a gravel parking lot, and a small swimming pool. By all accounts Baker had done a fine job, but Oakwoods members were eager to expand and Bill Greene proved to be the perfect catalyst for that growth. An outstanding player, Bill also had a course designer's imagination and a landscape architect's penchant for hard work. So, when then OCC Board President W.K. Newton approached Bill with the idea of supervising the construction of an additional nine holes, he was "preaching to the choir" so to speak. Just prior to Greene's arrival in Wilkesboro, noted course designer Ellis Maples had been retained to stake out a potential new nine holes of golf on property adjacent to the club. Additional land below the lake at the present hole #3 was donated by Pat Williams, Sr. Note that as Pat Williams, Sr. died in 1962, this donated land was possibly given by his children Mary Gwyn Williams Hubbard, Pat Williams, Jr., and Mike Williams. At this same time, some additional property was purchased from the J.V. Reins family.

Greene was eager to assume responsibility for this project, so in June of 1962, only one short month into his tenure, he, Ed Edsel, and George Absher began the laborious land-clearing, grading, cultivation, and planting needed to bring the new nine to fruition for OCC's avid golfers. These guys did outstanding work using nothing more than strong backs, two 1950's model Ford tractors, and a tractor-pulled five reel fairway mower. Mother Nature was kind and the new nine featuring bermuda grass fairways and greens was completed and opened for play in May of 1963.

Given the added nine holes, Bill decided to reroute the entire course. Holes numbers 1 and 2 of the existing nine became holes 10 and 11 of what is now the back nine and the just completed nine holes

became the front nine. This is the routing that still exists today at OCC. Oakwood's new nine was financed by building new roads and developing a part of the property acquired from the Williams into the residential lots and homes now existing on Sandwedge Dr. and Forest Rd. These lots were sold initially for \$2,000 each with the first home built in this new section of the Oakwoods development belonging to the previous golf professional, Newell Baker. Many Oakwoods members know this home to be the one current long-time member Dr. Keith Bentley lives in now. Other early home owners included Charlie Reece, Bill Benson, Carl Swofford, Clint Bentley, and Ron Knauss. When Bill Greene arrived at OCC in 1962, the club had 126 members. During Greene's long tenure the club attracted many new members, having over 500 at one point, and made many significant facility improvements. For the first two years he was at Oakwoods and unmarried at the time other than to the club, Bill lived in a small two room efficiency apartment in what is now the ladies lounge area of the clubhouse. In the early days, members could never accuse the Pro of not being "close to his work." As many productive years past, Bill and his long-time assistant Billy Hayes supervised not only the construction of the new nine, but also the club's tennis courts and driving range in 1966, the installation of a sprinkler system in 1969, the paving of the parking lot in 1972, the building of a much bigger swimming complex in 1977, the employment of the club's first Green's Superintendent Henry Harrold in 1980, and the building of a cart shed in 1992.

As was mentioned earlier, Bill was an outstanding golfer. His achievements on the links while representing Oakwoods Country Club include holding the course record at OCC of 62, winning many Pro-Am tournaments around the state through the 60's, 70's and 80's, and finishing second to Charlie Smith of Gastonia, NC in the 1962 North and South Carolina Open. Bill Greene served OCC faithfully and well for 32 years until retiring in 1994. He was so instrumental in the club's growth, made so many friends, and was so well thought of in the Wilkesboro communities, he was honored with the title of Oakwoods Head PGA Professional Emeritus. Bill Greene remained an honored and influential presence in the clubhouse until his death in the fall of 2009.