

# Happy Birthday, Sharp Park Golf Course

Today, April 16, is a birthday of sorts. Sharp Park golf course is a senior citizen today. The course opened for business 65 years ago, on April 16, 1932.

That first day 400 golfers made the rounds of the course. It was a different course than it is today. The highway ran on the west side of the clubhouse. There were holes near the ocean that are no longer usable. The changes made when the freeway was put through were far in the future.

Alistair Mackenzie, the same man who designed some of the famous Monterey Peninsula courses and the Augusta National course, also put his stamp on the local course.

The golf course rapidly became the most important and best known part of the northern Coastside, eclipsing in fame the speakeasies, the artichoke farms, and the notorious "houses" that served the needs of farm laborers and the few tourists who made their way to the remote coastal subdivisions. A few depression years later, the few residents of Salada Beach and Brighton Beach having discovered that San Franciscans were more familiar with the new golf course than with their quarter century old subdivisions decided to rename their community Sharp Park.

In those days before zip codes the change also saved a lot of confusion and aggravation, especially with the small

town of Salida, California, near Turlock

In the years since, the legend has grown up that Honora Sharp gave the golf course to the city of San Francisco in the thirties. It is much more accurate to say that without Honora Sharp there would have been no Sharp Park golf course.

She died in Feb. 1905, before the Ocean Shore Railway, before the 1906 earthquake, in the days when San Francisco housed a quarter of all California residents. If her goals had been achieved, the Sharp ranch on the coastside would have been sold for five or six thousand dollars.

The cash would have been added to the funds for a magnificent George F. Sharp memorial gate welcoming visitors to Golden Gate Park.

That didn't work out, for a multitude of reasons I've written about previously. By 1912 the decision was made. There would be no park gate. Instead the ranch would be deeded to San Francisco for park and recreation

purposes. Slowly the wheels ground on. Trees were planted starting in 1916, by the famed gardener, John McLaren. Transfer of title wasn't completed until 1917. In 1929 it was decided to build a golf course.

Storms, freeways, wars and time have taken their toll, but Sharp Park Golf Course rolls on stroke by stroke. There isn't much talk these days comparing the course to St. Andrew's. There was such in 1932, but the old course has changed and the comparison doesn't hold as it did in the days of the first pro, Willie Goggin, who came within a breath of winning the U.S. Open. We take it today for what it is, a beautiful seaside links that adds to our quality of life. Some older San Franciscans still call it Sharp's Park, but I like to think of it as an oasis bifurcating our city.

**Editor's Note:** Paul Azevedo has been writing *The Reactor* for more than two decades. He is a local history buff.

## The Reactor

Paul Azevedo



caused by burning... acts in the field," said Laura Stec, National Forests are protected like "Phone Book Forest" project, Bay Area Action's special projects