

REX AND JILL GREENLAND

When Rex and Jill Greenland join an organisation they don't seem to ask what it can do for them so much as what they can do for it. This was certainly true of the Golf Club when they joined in 1974. Both became Presidents (Jill of the Ladies), served on Committees many times and worked tirelessly to promote the interests of the Club. In 1996 Rex became a Life Member. This is their story.

“In 1973 Jill and I sold our clothing manufacturing business in Dandenong and shifted to our property in Tynong North.

At that time we were both members of the Cranbourne Golf Club and Jill, who was always a better player than me, was playing Pennant while I only played on a few occasions because of business commitments.

On looking at Golf Clubs close to the farm, we decided to look at Garfield first, then Drouin and lastly Warragul. We were welcomed at Drouin by Life Member Gerry Butler and his wife, Mon who made us feel welcome as soon as we walked into the Club House. At that time the Drouin course was well below the quality we had been used to at Cranbourne, but the atmosphere within the Club influenced both of us to join in 1974. Since joining the Club, we have made many lifelong friends even to the extent of having the privilege of presenting the eulogy at Gerry's funeral in September, 2002.

Jill was elected to the position of Vice President of the Ladies committee in 1980 and followed on as President for two years.

I was appointed to the General Committee in 1975 and was given the job of Social Committee Chairman in 1977. At that time the Club was short of money and struggling to make ends meet with the demands of members wanting a better course to play on.

We ran lots of dinner dances and raffles to raise money and relied on lots of voluntary help both inside the Club House and outside on the course.

In 1982 I was elected to the position of Vice President for three years and later in 1985 to the position of President for two years. At this time we also looked at having poker machines in the Club House but we knocked them back because of the small number of residents in Drouin and also that we were a long way out of town.

In 1986 the Club was offered the opportunity to purchase land adjoining the then Princes Highway. At the time we were having security problems with regular burglaries to the Club House so we decided to purchase the land and sub divide it into the five lots and keep one for a manager's residence. John Sadington won the contract to build at a cost of \$63,289. At this stage there was a misunderstanding between the builder and the Club. When I had a look at the boxing out of the concrete slab I noticed that it was almost right under the power lines. This was most embarrassing for both parties but the only answer was to shift the site a couple of metres.

In 1987 I took on the job of Vice Captain for two years and later advanced to the position of Captain for another two years. The role of Captain in those days was a lot more involved as we did not have a Manager or Golf Pro. So as well as all the normal duties, the Captain would organise starters and at the end of the competition each day conduct the presentation session. This also involved the purchasing of the trophies.

The Club's financial position was improving with membership increasing and an increase in voluntary help.

It was at this time that we decided to look at the possibility of purchasing the 187 acre property (with house) adjoining our southern boundary which would allow the Club to expand to a 36 hole course in the future.

We invited the Buln Buln Shire Councillors to a dinner and tour of our facilities and told them of our plans for the future and asked for their support.

I was asked by the Committee to come up with a plan of action to see if it was possible to have the property re-zoned so that we could sub divide part of the land and could use the balance for the expansion of our golf course.

We negotiated with the vendor and came to an agreement that if we were able to raise the \$678,000 and obtain a re-zoning of the property we would purchase same within twelve months.

The Shire was very cooperative, so we drew up a plan showing an area for sub division with an entrance from McGlones Road.

At the same time a property came up for sale on the Princes Highway adjoining the property that the Golf Club was looking at purchasing.

I was doing some land development in Drouin at the time so I purchased this property and designed a sub division so that Jill and I could donate a section of land for the Golf Club to use as a road into their sub division.

The Committee decided to call a meeting of all members to discuss our plans and get the go ahead to see if we could raise the purchase price, develop the property and pay back the borrowed money.

My plan was to:

- Sub divide off the existing house and land (3.5 Ha)
- Sub divide off 45 blocks of land (23 Ha)
- Use the balance for a new Club House and Course.

The plan to finance the purchase was to:

- Use the \$60,000 over from the earlier sub division
- Bank loan (mortgage over Golf Club land)
- Members' debentures

The estimated cost for the project was:

- \$1,612,300

The estimated income was:

- \$2,570,000

The profit of \$957,000 was to be spent on the golf Course.

We had quite a delay in gaining land titles which cost us more interest so our profit came in a little lower than expected (\$875,000)

After my term as President I took on the job of Course Development for two years with the plan of improving the drainage system of our fairways. The Course suffers because an underlay of mud stone leaves the surface water with nowhere to go. With the help of voluntary labour we installed

almost 900 metres of slotted P.V.C. pipe, lowered the levels of the three dams (to lower the water table) and raised the level of our retarding basin.

My last project for the Club was to organise the planning and building of the 30 mega litre dam that will provide enough water for our Club in future years. The Rural Water Commission would not allow us to build a dam on the creek line so we had to build it above the creek and pump the water to a higher level. After the dam was finished the Commission decided that the creek was not registered and that we could have built the dam on the creek line anyway.

In 1996 I was privileged to receive the award of Life membership of the Drouin Golf and Country Club.”

Rex is being too modest about his and Jill’s contribution. The history of the Club falls into four distinct phases. From its inception in 1902 until WW2 it was very much a private affair and led a nomadic existence. It was played on at least eight private properties in the district. Whenever other uses for the land were found, the Club simply moved on. After the war a determined group of individuals restarted the Club in 1955 and then battled over the next decade to ensure the Club didn’t fall back into recession. This battle can be said to have been won with the opening of the Club House in 1967. Rex and Jill were part of the next phase where these gains were consolidated particularly with property purchases that turned the Club into what it is today: a multimillion dollar enterprise confident enough of its future in 2010 to spend more than a million dollars on refurbishing the Club House.

As a businessman involved in development Rex was used to thinking big and taking risks. Not everyone had this background and many were easily intimidated by the risk of large scale change not to say anything about the sums of money involved. His account details the extent and complexities of these purchases.

It wasn’t just these major projects that took the attention of Jill and Rex. They occupied the highest positions on the General Committee and Ladies Committee. They served and often led the Social Committee that gave the Club its reputation for being a major social centre for the district. Rex knows more about drainage pipes than most having worked on course development. Jill has worked tirelessly with many other lady members to cater for Club and private functions that generated much of the income that allowed for the improvements around the Club that makes our lives so much more enjoyable. Oh, and they also played golf.

At her best, Jill reached a handicap of 11 which meant she was always a contender for Club honours the best of which was a Club Championship in 1984. Rex’s abilities were more modest with a best handicap of 18 but that is OK because it makes him what most of us are - a hacker but someone who just happens to love the game.

The contribution of the Greenlands has been immense. Simply, the Club would be unrecognisable today if they hadn’t wandered up the highway from Dandenong in 1973 and chosen us rather than Warragul as their golfing home.

Written by George Shand