



# *Did You Know?*



## **Rocks and Rock Parties**

Both the Arlington and Fairfax were built on sites that have some very rocky areas. The resulting challenges in the construction and maintenance of the golf courses lead to some innovative approaches.

## **Rocks and Rock Parties**

The original 18-hole golf course at Arlington was designed and constructed by Major Richard D. Newman. Built “on a shoestring” by a Club that was struggling financially, the course was somewhat less than pristine. As described in the minutes of the Annual Membership meeting of February 20, 1928, “The fairways will still be a little rough--have picked up about 150 loads of rock and still have that much to pick up, but I want to say here that rocks have a tendency to work down and not up; they will all be picked up eventually.” The rock problem persisted through the opening of the first nine in September 1928 and the second nine in June 1929. This undoubtedly was one of the factors in the Chairman of the Board of Governors stating that it was “not very good golf but the course will be playable September 1<sup>st</sup>.”<sup>1</sup>

After the course opening, the rock problem was addressed by the admonitor “Heave All Rocks” by which “Golfers encountering rocks on the fairway regarded it as a sacred obligation to dispatch them to the adjacent rough.”<sup>2</sup> One can only imagine the resulting course conditions off the fairways.

The Fairfax course got into the act with the construction of two new holes (today’s Red #5 and #6) which replaced the original #1 and #2 holes (removed to provide space for the swimming pool, driving range and additional parking). Significant rock was encountered when the hill on the left side of today’s Red #6 was cut away to provide for a flatter fairway. As is evident to anyone who has played from the top of the hill to the left of this fairway starting 160 yards from the green, this is a very rocky area. To assist in clearing the rocks, the Club held a “rock-picking party” on the two new holes on October 26, 1969 at 2:30 PM. “Free beer (was) available on the work party and a B.Y.O.L. cocktail party (was) held in the Clubhouse at the termination of rock picking.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1984 the Arlington course got back into the rock removal game with the lowering of the first fairway (Red #1) by cutting away the hill that sloped from right to left across the fairway. Again, the Club turned to a “Rock Picking Party” which was held at 1:00 PM on April 7, 1984<sup>4</sup>. The approach was highly regimented with “(t)he fairway...divided into 20-yard lanes and each lane

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<sup>1</sup> “Chairman’s Remarks,” Board of Governors’ meeting minutes of August 6, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> “Army Navy Country Club Historical Review, 1924-1989”, page 28

<sup>3</sup> Golf Committee meeting minutes of October 14, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Golf and Green Committee meeting minutes of March 14, 1984

assigned to a specific group of the membership, i.e. Juniors, WGO-9, WGO-18 and by initial of last name.”<sup>5</sup>

Again, the Club provided refreshments, but this time only after the completion of the rock-picking. It just might have been that the Club leadership decided that mixing beer and rocks was not a particularly good idea. Given that two months later the maintenance crew spent eight hours per day for a week removing rocks from this fairway,<sup>6</sup> the “rock-picking party was of a limited success (possibly due to the lack of beer at the work site).

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<sup>5</sup> Golf and Green Committee meeting minutes of February 1, 1984

<sup>6</sup> Golf and Green Committee meeting minutes of June 24, 1984