

# *Juanita Golf Course*

*The story of Kirkland's little known public  
golf course*



Photo Credit: Kirkland Heritage Society

Ask anyone who lives in Kirkland about Juanita Bay Park and most people would picture a popular lakeside park with an old bridge commonly used for bike riding, jogging, and walking. Others would mention the wildlife that lives in and among the marsh land. Almost anyone would call it one of Kirkland's most beautiful parks but very few would mention it being on the land of an old golf course. On any given day, numerous people visit the park and don't realize they are walking on what used to be one of Kirkland's most popular hangout places for young people. The story of Juanita Golf course is certainly not a commonly told one.

## *A Brief History*

Juanita Golf Course, which was Kirkland's only public course, opened in 1932 and quickly became a popular spot for Kirklanders. The land was purchased and developed by a well-known Kirkland developer by the name of Guy Farrar. Since the land was within close proximity to the lake and sat near wetlands, Farrar had to bring in fill to build up the low lying areas. Water became a constant battle for the course and a pump was installed on holes number four and five that operated constantly to keep the course from getting too soggy. The ground remained so wet that at times the fairways and greens were literally floating on lake water. In an attempt to hold back the lake in the late 1960s, a big barge was brought in to dredge out part of the lagoon surrounding the cattails. They did this to build up the land to keep the water out. They again attempted to raise some of the low lying areas but all these efforts proved unsuccessful. Water remained a prominent issue until the course's closure. When irrigation was needed for the course, lake water was used and was pumped out of the lake near the south end of Rose Point Lane for free.

The course's longest manager was Con Farrar who was helped by his wife. In the late sixties, Volotin Investment company purchased the course from the Farrars and Sam Gleckman was named the new manager. Gleckman only remained manager for a few years. At that time, the pro managers were Floyd Irish and Al Williams who also taught golf at the course.

Throughout Juanita Golf Course's run, the course maintained an active men's and ladies club. In addition to that, many juniors also enjoyed gathering at the course. Since it was Kirkland's only public course, it was a perfect congregating place for the city's golfers.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, the course began to be threatened by residential development. With the fast changing times, the course became more difficult to run and closed in 1975. A handful of other courses in the area, similar to Juanita, existed. Meadowbrook in Seattle and Redmond Golf Course and Brookside Golf Course in Redmond all met similar fates to Juanita. All fell victim to the progress of the 1960s and 1970s but one quality was unique to Juanita. Juanita golf course was extremely inviting and encouraging to young golfers. It was an affordable opportunity for young people who were interested in learning a lifelong game. Not many people are aware of the rich history that surrounds Juanita Bay park and the old golf course but it was certainly a favorite place of many Kirklanders that remains a fond memory to this day.

After the course's closure, a series of bonds approved by the voters of Kirkland in the seventies and eighties allowed the city to purchase the land. The city chose to turn it into a beautiful park that continues to host a wide range of wildlife such as blue heron, eagles, and beaver. It remains as one of Kirkland's most beloved and cherished parks.

## *Memories*

Jim Jessen, a Kirklander since childhood, grew up a few blocks from the golf course. An avid golfer since he first picked up the sport around the age of 10, Jessen became hooked on the game as he learned the fundamentals at Juanita Golf Course in the 1960s. He, like many other neighborhood kids, used the course to learn the game and to play with his friends. In order to earn free golf, he would rake the sand traps on the course one day a week, using this as an opportunity to learn the game. It was common for the management to offer other young people jobs in exchange for free golf. These jobs included setting sprinklers on the greens in the summer and mowing the rough which was a job generally given to older kids. Jim recalls his very first job on the course, even before raking traps, as picking up litter. All of the kids were extremely proud of their jobs and the opportunity to play for free during the summer that came with it. When Jessen was in ninth grade, he held a job at Juanita for \$1.65 an hour digging in drainage on the course.

A common theme with the old course was its love for junior golfers. The course hosted a strong junior program, complete with club championships and various golf events such as horse races. Juniors could enter these events for a 50 cent fee. This allowed the course to foster a strong community of young players and produced many successful Seattle area golfers. Joanne Gunderson Carner, who grew up in Kirkland and played at Juanita Golf course in the 1950s, graduated from Lake Washington High School. She went on to a successful career and was later inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. She later came back to Juanita to give a clinic to the golfers. Jessen recalls a story about how people would talk about "The Great Gundy" driving her tee shot over the willow trees on the fourth hole which seemed amazing to all the kids.

The course was frequented by kids from Kirkland Junior High and Lake Washington High school which created many lasting friendships. One of the popular activities for the kids was golf ball hunting. Since golf balls weren't durable at that time and were easily susceptible to damage, golf balls were a hot commodity. Kids would do just about anything to find these prized possessions. Jessen, a golf ball hunter himself, would spend hours walking the perimeter of the golf course looking to fill his pockets with as many balls possible. He remembers some brave teenagers wading into the murky pond on number five to retrieve balls off the bottom. Other brave souls would take small rafts out onto the bay and swim for golf balls that had flown out of bounds. Serious hunters, looking to capitalize, would sit on the edge of the course and sell the balls they had found out of egg cartons to the patrons playing the hole.

Neighborhood kids would frequently be seen walking through the surrounding streets with golf bags on their back heading to the course. Once there, they would meet up with friends and play games with special rules including three club only rounds, best ball, and closest to the pin contests. Jessen has fond memories of sitting on the white fence bordering the seventh green and watching the oncoming golfers with his friends. They would joke around and make bets on the players as they watched. Jessen also recalls witnessing two holes in one, one on the third hole and another on the eighth. Jim had a usual group of friends who he played with on a regular basis. One of the boys was Bob Miller who grew up to be a successful amateur in the Seattle area and went on to become a teaching pro. Stuart McLeod, also part of the group, remains in Kirkland as the owner of Hector's. He is also currently promoting the development of Lake Street Place in downtown Kirkland. Ron Hass also developed a passion for golf at Juanita and grew up to become a teaching pro. He eventually founded Avalon Golf Links near Burlington where he continues his passion for the game. Jim Jessen still lives in Kirkland and runs a third

generation business in Kirkland. His family is also extremely passionate about golf and his two kids are carrying on the tradition. Jessen still sees his old golf buddies around town.

Jim also remembers the course to be very crowded because it was Kirkland's only public golf course. People could play nine holes for \$1.75. The clubhouse, which was located near the current parking lot, was very old and well-worn, complete with a restaurant. The course was played so many times and was so old that once when the birch tree on hole number seven was being pruned, an old wooden shaft club was found in a tree limb. The tree had grown around the old club and when it was discovered, it went on display in the club house. The course was also maintained with two old vehicles, a tractor and a WWII Jeep, that were frequently breaking down. The old bridge that remains at the park now was completely operational back in the sixties. The first hole ran parallel to the bridge and errant tee shots were a hazard to oncoming cars. Jessen recalls hitting his share accidentally into the traffic.

The memoirs from Juanita Golf Course remain very fresh in Jessen's mind. The old course holds very fond memories not only for him but for many who lived in Kirkland during the course's life. Even though the course may be gone, many people continue to enjoy the natural beauty of Juanita Bay Park.



Looking over the ninth green to the first fairway  
Photo Credit: Kirkland Heritage Society

# Layout of the Old Juanita Golf Course

- Hole 1:** A 400 yard straight par four with the tee by the current parking lot. Ran parallel to the bridge (the land is mostly covered with water now) with sand traps to the left and right of the green
- Hole 2:** A short 273 yard par four with willow trees to the right, coming straight back to the base of the hill
- Hole 3:** A 144 yard par three heading north back towards the lake surrounded by willow trees
- Hole 4:** A 250 yard par four with a severe dogleg right with the elevated green located toward the center of the course
- Hole 5:** A rickety bridge went through the cattails to the isthmus where the fifth tee was located  
A 402 yard par four with out of bounds right and the green near the beginning of Rose Point Lane
- Hole 6:** A 188 yard par three with sand on the right that went back toward the center of the course
- Hole 7:** A 180 yard par three that went up to the SE corner near 20th Ave West (now a popular sledding hill)
- Hole 8:** A 140 yard par three that went downhill going northwest through a narrow shoot. Traps on the left and right
- Hole 9:** A 225 yard drivable par four headed toward the parking lot/clubhouse. Side hill fairway with a trap on the left

Total yards: 2203  
Par: 32

A scorecard from Juanita used by Jim Jessen

PLAY U.S.G.A. RULES

- Each player must have clubs and bag.
- Golf shoes or flat sole and heel shoes only.
- Upon reaching par 3 greens allow following players to shoot up before putting out.
- Rake and smooth sand in trap after you shoot out.
- Repair ball marks in greens.
- Replace all divots.
- Be courteous and observe golf etiquette and everyone will enjoy themselves.
- Have fun and please come again.



PHONE FOR YOUR RESERVATIONS  
VA 2-2591

**3001 Market Street**  
**Kirkland, Wash. 98033**  
Between Juanita Jct. and Kirkland

VOLOFIN INVESTMENT CO., Owners

Floyd Irish - Pro Manager

**JUANITA GOLF CLUB**  
PUBLIC GOLF COURSE

3001 Market St.  
Kirkland, Wash. 98033  
VA. 2-2591

Replace Divots

Rake Sand Traps

Hole	Yds.	Par	Lds.	Hcp.		Hole	Yds.	Par	Lds.	Hcp.	
1	400	4	5	3	4	10	400	4	5	4	
2	273	4	4	9	4	11	273	4	4	10	
3	144	3	3	15	4	12	135	3	3	16	
4	250	4	4	7	4	13	250	4	4	8	
5	402	4	5	1	6	14	418	4	5	2	
6	188	3	3	5	2	16	200	3	3	6	
7	180	3	3	11	2	18	155	3	3	12	
8	140	3	3	17	3	17	129	3	3	18	
9	225	4	4	13	3	18	257	4	4	14	
Out	2203	32	34		32	In	2217	32	34		34
						Out	2203	32	34		32
						Total	4420	64	68		66

Scorer: Jim Jessen  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Handicap \_\_\_\_\_  
Net Score \_\_\_\_\_

## *Photos*

All of the following photos were taken by Jim Jessen in 1976 (one year after the closure of the course.) Photos used with his permission.



Third fairway looking south



The white sign points to the fifth tee  
across the rickety bridge



Looking over the fourth green to the  
ninth tee. The seventh tee is behind  
the fence



Looking towards the fourth green

## *Bibliography*

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