

History Lake Arlington Golf Course

Ralph Plummer, a Fort Worth native, designed, built or remodeled some 100 courses, most of them in Texas and three that hosted the U.S. Open, over his lifetime. Like local architects who contribute to a city's feel with their buildings, golf course architects design to reveal the beauty of the landscape. The Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex has Ralph Plummer to thank for the classic design of many private and public courses that North Texans still enjoy today. Among the courses in the Dallas/Fort Worth area that Plummer designed are Preston Trail Golf Club (1965) in Dallas, Shady Oaks Country Club (1959) in Fort Worth, and Lake Arlington Golf Course (1963). In any profession, people bring with them their personalities, which affect how they approach their craft. Golf course designers are no different. While many choose projects that bolster their legend and increase their marketability, Plummer chose a more subdued path over his 40-year career. This conscious decision to conduct himself in a subtle manner was reflected in each course he designed.

Lake Arlington Golf Course (LAGC), which opened in 1963, is a perfect example of Plummer's personality and architectural philosophy. He thought a golf course should flow with the surrounding land, utilizing the existing landscape, elevation changes, streams, prevailing winds, and other natural conditions to create unique holes and challenging approach shots. Even back in the 1960's, Plummer was concerned about the effects of technology and other improvements on player performance and the playability of his courses. He tried to stretch out most of his courses to around 7,000 yards - an enormous distance at the time. Course layout was also considered, and Plummer would run consecutive holes in different directions in order to vary the wind. He also routed fairways to minimize the rising and setting sun, and would begin his courses with consecutive par 4s or par 5s based on the belief that it maximized the flow of play.

While Plummer's design remains the heart of LAGC, the course has undergone two renovations since its birth. A massive flood in 1989 overwhelmed the emergency spillway west of Hole 12, flooding much of the course and dumping eight feet of silt on the fairway of Hole 8. The renovation that ensued included a complete overhaul of the Hole 2 green, and the re-engineering of ponds and drainage across the golf course. The second renovation, completed in 2008, included reconstruction of all greens. These changes included the addition of berms and swales around the greens along with elevation changes and improvements to the putting surfaces. The fairways were also renovated and converted to an improved Bermudagrass.

Though the course has seen many changes, it remains a piece of land rich in history. Artifacts unearthed during archeological excavations have been dated back almost 9,000 years, providing evidence of a culture of hunters and food-gatherers. In the 1830s, a series of Indian communities comprised of Caddos, Cherokees, and Tonkawas were situated along Village Creek, which runs through the heart of the course.

While ancient civilizations and Indian tribes used this land to provide for their daily sustenance, Ralph Plummer realized that it could also nurture modern-day residents as a natural oasis enjoyed by everyone. He sculpted a wild flood plain into one of his signature courses that has the unique ability to challenge players at all levels. While at first glance it may seem unassuming, like its designer, there is much more to it than meets the eye. Perhaps Peggy Gunter, Plummer's daughter, stated it best when she wrote after his death: "He would wish that everyone could be as lucky as he was to work to the end, making the course a test for the good golfer and a pleasure for the duffer."



Ralph Plummer, Golf Course Architect



Hole #14



Hole #17