

Course Review: Colonial Valley (closed 2011)

While it seems a little silly to include a review of a golf course that no longer exists, since we *did* play Colonial Valley Links near Grants Pass before it closed — and because it is included in the “Courses Played” count here on the Don and Pete website — we decided to go ahead with at least a half-hearted effort. You’ll find a similar review of the also-closed Battle Creek Golf Course in Salem.

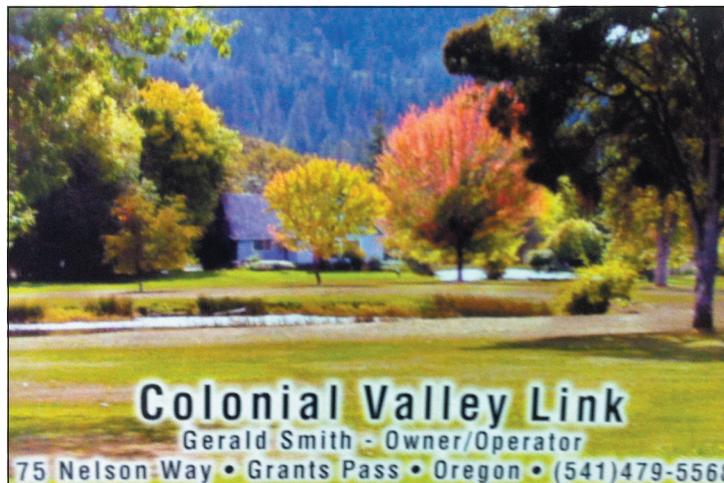
We played Colonial Valley as part of Golf Week 2008, our second annual venture to whack courses off our list. We were based in Grants Pass at Don’s cousin’s home, and played several courses in both Grants Pass and the Medford area.

Colonial Valley Links was located five miles or so north of Grants Pass, east of I-5 heading up into the hills on a country road. The choice of the word “links” was a curious one — it certainly wasn’t a links style course. The fact is, it wasn’t much of a course at all. If you never saw Colonial Valley, it’s a little hard to describe. The “clubhouse” was just a regular 1950s ranch-style house. The course topped out at 1410 yards, included seven par 3s and two par 4s and played to a par of 29. It was situated in an oversized back yard behind the so-called clubhouse.

You were waited on by owner/operator Gerald Smith, who appeared to be in his mid-70s and was obviously in very poor health, wheezing and coughing constantly. While we don’t know this for a fact, we assume the demise of Colonial Valley likely came about with Mr. Smith’s passing.

Colonial Valley was, in all bluntness, the worst course we have played. The grass was just like yard grass — some grass, some clover, some dandelions. There were no tee boxes, the tees were level with the fairways, just mowed *slightly* lower. The rough wasn’t actually all that rough, it was brown and unwatered grass.

Then there were the greens. The first green sort of summed things up, though to be fair, it was the worst of nine bad ones. No exaggeration, the No. 1 green had *no* grass — it consisted entirely of moss. Given how brown the course was, it looked really nice and green as we approached it until we saw it



wasn’t grass at all!

The other notable aspect of the first green — and again, this is unexaggerated gospel truth — was the presence of multiple molehills. Yes, right on that nice moss green! Both of us had to move our balls once we were on the green in order to putt at the hole.

Things got a little better after No. 1, but not much. That said, there were people out there — almost all very senior citizens. Humorously, they all seemed to have driven to the course from nearby homes in their golf cars. We doubt they were street legal, and Nelson Way that fronted the clubhouse was a windy country lane with lots of blind spots. The idea of old-timers puttering down the road in their golf cars is both funny and scary — but also proof that virtually any golf course will draw somebody. Oh, and there were also wild turkeys on the course. That was new — and then it happened again later that same trip (see our Red Mountain review).

Colonial Valley was also the very first course we encountered that didn’t have logo balls. They actually had hats and t-shirts with the course logo, but no balls. Don returned several times over subsequent years on Grants Pass business trips hoping perhaps they had added logo balls, but without success. Colonial Valley appeared dormant by 2010, and ironically enough, a Newberg family was at one point in time dickering to buy the place and re-open it. That deal was never consummated, and in 2011, Colonial Valley was officially roped off, completely overgrown and closed.