

# Course Review: Sunset Grove Golf Course

Sunset Grove Golf Course is located about 3 miles north of Forest Grove, about halfway between Forest Grove and Banks on Highway 47. As a Forest Grove native, it's the course Don learned to play the game on for the most part, so when Don and Pete (along with frequent partners Dave Cadd and Mitch Nosack, friends of Don's since grade school) trekked to Sunset Grove in the summer of 2011 to officially mark it off the list, it was sort of like old home week.

Built in 1961, Sunset Grove is a flat, 9-hole course in the middle of farm country. It was designed by Ellis Vandehey, and anyone from the Forest Grove area can tell you that local residents whose names begin with V-a-n by-and-large 1) are related, no matter what letters come after v-a-n, 2) are Catholic, 3) have a lot of siblings, and 4) are farmers. That's a bit of stereotyping, to be sure, but mostly true nonetheless. Sunset Grove has changed ownership a few times in Don's lifetime, and is currently operated by Dave Horesky, a FGHS Class of 1976 classmate of Don, Dave and Mitch.

The first thing that struck Don as they approached the clubhouse was really how little anything had changed in the 20-25 years since he'd been to "Sunset" — locals generally leave off the "Grove" part. The second thing, obviously enough, was that the one thing that had changed is that what trees there are at Sunset had certainly grown over time.

Well-maintained, this is not the world's most challenging course. There are two sets of tees, men's and ladies, with the course measuring 3001 yards from the men's. No. 1 is a straight, 349-yard par 4. Whack it way left and you're into the driving range area, which is unfenced/un-netted and runs parallel to the first fairway. Whack it way right and you're into some minor trees; otherwise, you're off and running. No. 2 is a 449-yard par 5 that's pretty easy unless you hook it into the neighbor's fenced off field. Incidentally, said neighbor has a little hand-painted sign on his driveway that says "Golf balls, 50 cents per dozen."

Holes 4 and 5 are back-to-back par 3s, one of the drawbacks of the course design, but ol' Ellis did what



he could. No. 4 goes over a pond that really isn't in play (above), though it certainly was back when Don was first learning the game in the mid-1970s. The pond is more of a factor if you hit your No. 3 tee shot too long. Nos. 6 and 7 are short (318 and 316) par 4s. But after these seven fairly pedestrian holes, your round at Sunset Grove picks up at the finish.

No. 8 is a 479-yard par 5 that features a severe dog-leg left. When Don was growing up, it was wide open and the only thing that kept you from cutting the corner were the white OB stakes. Accurate shooters could launch tee shots directly at the green and end up with approach shots of 150 yards or less. (Don would typically banana slice it into the seventh fairway, though even he miraculously eagled the hole once.) Today there are a few trees and bushes out there, but it's still a very doable shortcut.

No. 9 is indisputably Sunset's best hole. It's a 403-yard par 4 that also doglegs left. Even a good drive will leave you a tough second shot onto a small green. The green is also extremely steep — not tiered, just steep, so depending on the pin placement, you can have a very tough putt if you're going downhill. Many a golfer has seen a very good score turn south on No. 9.

The Sunset Grove clubhouse features a nice snack bar with good food at a decent price. There are logo balls. It won't win any awards, but it's found its niche with the local community even as Quail Valley and the Pumpkin Ridge courses have come into being less than 10 miles away.