

Don and Pete's Grand Adventure

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You pretty much have to go out of your way to play the Kinzua Hills Golf Club. Wa-a-ay out of your way.

Two ardent Newberg golfers, Don Loving and Pete Siderius, didn't think twice about teeing the ball on in the Eastern Oregon course.

You've got to get to Fossil, where the club is located, first of all. It's in Wheeler County. Depending which way you go, it's between 200 and 250 miles from where these two longtime friends live in Yamhill County.

When you're trying to play every private and public golf course in Oregon, you go where you've got to go in order to complete a journey of this magnitude.

"The GPS took us down a skinny two-lane road that turned into a dirt road that turned into a goat trail and wanted us to drive off a cliff (I'm not exaggerating here)," they wrote on their website, Don and Pete Golf Oregon, in describing the setting.

They added, "Eventually we found the course, which sits as part of a remote, mostly undeveloped camp area. There were a handful of RVs there and a few tents. Bottom line: play this course only if, like us, you're trying to play every course."

By Loving and Siderius' count, there are 215 courses in Oregon, 42 of which are private, including McMinnville's Michelbook Country Club, which the pair played recently. They gave Michelbook a thumbs-up on the website, noting:

"Michelbook is not extremely difficult, though like any course, tough to play the first time. It does have plenty of well-placed trees guarding its generally on-the-short-side holes. The greens were in great shape and well kept."

Loving and Siderius have played 127 courses and have 90 to go in order to complete their golfing journey. Those numbers do add up to 217, but the figure includes Battle Creek in Salem and Colonial Valley in Southern Oregon, both of which are now closed. Battle Creek, which was situated off South Commercial Street in Salem, became a housing development. Colonial Valley shut down with the passing of its owner.

In addition, three other courses closed since the pair set out on their journey, Loving explained. They never got an opportunity to play Kentuck in North Bend, the Veteran's Administration Course in Roseburg and the nine-hole pitch-and-putt course that for years existed within the Portland Meadows race track off Interstate 5 in North Portland.

Coos County took over Kentuck for a water project a couple of years ago, according to Loving. The VA Hospital course was reduced to seven holes due to a water main

construction project, and the VA eventually needed the property, so the course closed. Its nickname, by the way, was "Aspirin Acres." When Portland Meadows went to a summer racing schedule, that begins soon, the pitch-and-putt course inside the track went away.

"It is always disappointing to hear that a course has closed before we get there," Loving said.

In their quest to play every Oregon course, Loving and Siderius devote one week each summer — and a second week in August — to absolutely nothing but golf. "Golf Week" has become a summer ritual; an addiction. They eat, sleep and breathe the game they both love so much.

"Golf Week" started in 2007 with the pair playing on the Central Oregon coast. It was on to the Grants Pass/Medford area in Southern Oregon in 2008, Eastern Oregon in 2009, Central Oregon in 2010, Greater Eugene/Springfield area in 2011 and the South Oregon Coast last year. They will return to Central Oregon this summer.

"We play two courses a day ... 13, 14, 15 courses total," Loving said. "Twenty-seven holes a day, that's a perfect day."

"We'll play nine in the morning, have lunch and finish with 18 in the afternoon. It's a grind."

The pair will road trip it to Eastern Oregon in the future, and the week will include stops in Baker City, Burns, John Day, Ontario and Vale. It will be the first time Loving and Siderius plan to bed down for the night in a different town following a day on the links.

"Golf Week" definitely has provided the pair with some memorable adventures over the years.

They won't soon forget the Kinzua Hills Golf Course.

It was established as a golf course in the 1930s by the owner and workers of the Kinzua Corporation. Areas of the course were once used as a millpond and log sorting yard.

After the course was originally laid out, golf interest in the area began to wane, and the property was converted to a baseball field for a semi-pro team in the area. The land was redeveloped as a golf course in 1951.

This course is everything your local public or private course is not, in every sense of the word. Starting with the fact that it's a six-hole course, the only one of its kind in Oregon.

Payment is on the honor system. Fees are \$5 for six holes, \$10 for 12 and \$15 for 18. The club asks players to place fees in the lock box on the clubhouse porch.

The men's course measures 1,463 yards with a par of 22, and the women's course 1,388 yards with a par 24.

If you ever play the course, pay close attention to some local rules. You're asked to replace divots and rake sand traps. Keep power and hand carts at least 30 feet from the greens and tees. And, finally, "Wheeler County is designated open range. Cows and rattlesnakes always have the right-of-way."

Siderius said he enjoyed playing the course. The layout made it interesting.

"All the fairways cross. It's kind of in a big bowl. You hit back and forth across the bowl. The greens are tiny. Nothing's in real great shape, but it's playable, and it's a pretty difficult course."

Centennial Golf Club in Medford is a former "Golf Week" stop for Loving and Siderius. The day was a physical test for the pair as the temperature climbed well over the 100-degree mark

"The humidity was high in the afternoon, but when you start "Golf Week," you do it all," Siderius said.

David Cadd and Mitch Nosack, two of Loving's classmates from the Forest Grove High School class of 1976, frequently join the pair for a golf outing.

They have played with Loving and Siderius during "Golf Week" in the past, and Siderius said he enjoys the friendship they bring to the group. The camaraderie among the four is special.

"With Dave, we always wonder if he'll be able to find his way back to the house we've rented," Siderius said. "It's always a comedy of errors with Dave driving. But it's nice that he drives.

"Mitch loses things all the time," Siderius said. "We have a pool every morning. What's he going to leave and where is he going to leave it? He's left iPhones, and he's always leaving clubs somewhere."

The quest to golf Oregon, so to speak, was Loving's idea. Once he found someone amenable to the idea, it was time for him and Siderius to hit the links.

"Most golfers enjoy playing different courses and seeing different courses," Loving said.

He describes himself as having a collector's mentality. He possesses a full set of Hardy Boys books. He collects sports memorabilia.

"I decided to start collecting Oregon golf courses," Loving joked. "They're all out there. I thought it would be fun to have someone play with me. I wouldn't do this by myself."

Along came Siderius, whom Loving said started playing golf again when the pair's home course, Newberg's Chehalem Glenn Golf Course opened — the front nine in 2005 and the back nine in 2007.

“I told him, ‘I have this goofy idea, to play every course in Oregon,’” Loving said. “He was dumb enough to say, ‘We can do that.’”

Loving has served on the Chehalem Parks and Recreation District Board for 22 years. Siderius is a board member, too. The district owns the golf course.

“Building Chehalem Glenn was a 13-year project,” said Loving, who along with Parks and Recreation District Superintendent Don Clements were instrumental in moving the idea of developing a golf course in Newberg forward.

Loving added, “Learning the golf business and walking the property with the architect before the first shovel of dirt was ever turned over, I have a greater appreciation of different courses. That made this all the more interesting to me.”

He is the communications director for Oregon AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) and works in Salem. Siderius teaches biology, ecology and horticulture at Newberg High School. They can always find time to play golf, particularly during the summer months.

“I’ve been here (at his workplace) for 26 years,” Loving said. “I have more vacation time than I could afford to take as a family. Pete is a teacher. That piece works out well.”

Siderius admits he was “dumb enough” to take Loving up on his offer to golf Oregon. In all seriousness, he said his children were getting older and he was looking for something fun to do. He had only been golfing for about a year when Loving proposed the idea.

“I just thought it would be fun,” Siderius said. “Don and I are good friends. I like natural history. I thought it would be a great way to see the state. I’m not a native Oregonian. I’m from Montana. That was a big thing for me, to see different parts of the state. And I love being outdoors. It was a good fit.”

Initially, Loving said they were only going to play public courses. They later threw private courses into the mix. Getting on some of them hasn’t proven to be too difficult. Pendleton Country Club, he said, is a private club. However, a sign reads, “Public Welcome.” Basically, if the two know of a course, they’ll make every effort to schedule a tee time.

In order to scratch a course off their list, they have to play it together. Had only Siderius played Michelbook, for instance, that round would not have counted toward completing their quest. They also pick up a logo ball at each course they play. Loving has a huge display of golf balls.

There’s no question he loves a challenge on the golf course as evidenced by his participation in early June in the in Compassion First’s 100-hole golf marathon. It was held at the Reserve Vineyards and Golf Course in Aloha.

Compassion First is a Beaverton-based organization that rescues young girls forced into the sex slave trade in southeast Asia, according to Loving. Its focus is mostly on Indonesia, and is aligned with Luis Palau International Ministries. The Portland Police Bureau served as a title co-sponsor this year.

Loving was a participant last year. "It was fun, but trust me, it's a long, long day," he said.

He raised \$2,300 for this year's event.

To follow Loving and Siderius' golf adventure, check out their website, www.donandpetegolforegon.com, or their Facebook.