

THE SAGA OF TURNBERRY
A Summary of the First 20 Years by Bill Moll
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“You can’t know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been.” This old adage is very true for Turnberry, which has many gnarly issues today that have origins in its unsettled past. I have lived in Turnberry since 1985 and love the place and want it to thrive. This account of its past may help provide a framework of reference for resolving some of these issues. I assembled it from various written sources, information relayed to me, and actual eye-witness events, of which there have been many, and my own not-infallible memory. It is a broad-brush summary, and such a summary is by its very nature an incomplete telling of a truly fascinating tale. This telling ends in the very early 1990s. The area has had promising ups and unnerving downs since then, but those tales are for another day.

Arthur T. McIntosh & Company and the Origin of Turnberry

Arthur T. McIntosh founded the company in 1907, and after building many developments in Chicago, he turned to suburbia. In 1926, he built a summer home in distant Palatine, and began to conceive an entirely different type of suburb: an exclusive one in a rural-type setting. It would have winding lanes that followed the contours of the land through the trees, with fine homes on acre lots. No curbs, nor sidewalks nor streetlights would spoil the feeling of the country. Later, McIntosh added the idea of a golf course to tie everything together. Over the years he built out his dream, Inverness. An architectural committee and deed restrictions ensured preserving the ambience.

Thomas died in 1955, and his two sons, Arthur Junior, and Gilbert (“Gib”) took over the businesses. Over the years the McIntoshes created some of the most prestigious developments in Chicagoland, including Farmington (near Barrington) and Prestwick (in Frankfort). Tom and Gib attended Yale, as did a member of the Bard family, who owned a farm in distant McHenry County, so the story goes. With its lakes and rolling hills, it would be perfect for a McIntosh development. So perfect that the McIntoshes bought the farm in a deal involving over 750 acres of land and developed Turnberry.

Beginning Turnberry

Work started about 1970, and included building roads and grading the homesites, and constructing the country club and golf course. Larry Packard, a noted designer, designed the golf course. Interestingly, he emphasized the ease of maintenance in the design. The French-Norman style club house included a pro shop, restaurant and bar, and banquet hall. The site also included a swimming pool and tennis courts. The country club offered several levels of annual memberships. By not requiring an equity investment, the fees were substantial, but not too high for some expense accounts. The facility opened in 1972.

Sales of real estate also began in 1972. The plan was to build out Turnberry over many years, perhaps 30, and thus a permanent sales office was in order. The sales office building featured a

scale model of Turnberry as it would be when finished. The sales office building still exists. It is the small building near the water tower.

The ambience of a village would arise from having houses of different sizes, all different, and limited to two stories. The deed restrictions, anti-monotony codes and an architectural committee would avoid a place of look-alike “McMansions,” so typical of other upscale developments. Equally important was the landscaping including rules against walls and fences. The nice, open feel was paramount.

The development opened in sections. The first two were Fairway Drive-Partridge Lane-Braemar Circle, and Inverway, with a few scattered houses in other places. Gib himself build a large house at 9200 Partridge Lane, at the end of the street. This is the house later owned by the Einsteins and later the Del Ghingeros. The very first house occupied was 7213 Braemar Circle, owned by Dwane and Dorothy Seggerman (owned by Nick Bavaro today). Gib moved into his house a few days later.

The Water and Sewer System

A major amenity was a central water and sewer system, rather than the well-and-septic arrangement in most of the county large-scale developments. Turnberry is built on glacial till, containing layers of clay and stringers of sand and gravel. According to some, the irregular permeability of the area caused some otherwise desirable lots from perking, and a central system was the only solution. My understanding is that McIntosh installed the system, built the water tower and treatment plant and later sold it to Turnberry Utilities, a unit of Utilities Inc., a privately held firm of national scope.

The water originally was so soft that washing off the soap when bathing was an issue. With every bill came a notice that the fluoride levels were slightly elevated. A later well drilled in another aquifer to supplement the water supply had much harder water, and everyone had to buy a water softener.

Why Turnberry Is Not in Crystal Lake

The McIntoshes wanted to incorporate Turnberry into a municipality most likely to ensure adequate police and fire protection. Crystal Lake was the obvious choice, but Crystal Lake insisted on curbs, sidewalks, and street lights, anathemas to the McIntosh vision. The solution was ingenious; incorporate a strip in the unincorporated area along Chicago Avenue to connect Turnberry to the tiny village of Lakewood. Crystal Lake soon realized its foolish position. Here potential abundant high tax ratables but few students to fill up the schools had slipped through their fingers! Crystal Lake has never forgiven Lakewood. Lakewood had its own police force, and for a fee Crystal Lake has provided fire protection.

The Turnberry Lakes

The lakes were and are a wonderful centerpiece for Turnberry, but bear in mind these are artificial lakes. Early maps of the county show the large one, Lake One, as a marsh, and Lake

Two did not exist. Either the Bards or the McIntoshes were able to revise the marsh somehow into a real but shallow lake. Originally, Lake One relied on the normal water table for water, any additional water came from runoff for few if any springs are present. In a fit of climate optimism, the McIntoshes installed a pipe from Lake One to the retention ponds along Fairway Drive in case a wet season overflowed it. I doubt if the valve was ever opened. The Bards built a dam in the early 1940s to create Lake Two. This lake may have springs in its bottom. Presumably Lakes Three and Four are children of Lake Two. Being artificial, all these lakes need care to keep them nice.

Remoteness

Those who have moved to the area in the last twenty or so years would be surprised at the openness back then. McHenry County was rather remote from Chicagoland when Turnberry started in the 1970s. It was still quite remote even in 1985 when I moved here. In 1985, the land south of Ackman Road down to Algonquin Road and beyond was mostly open fields with a scattering of houses. Prominent was the big farm on Miller Road with its many silos. A field with interesting glacial features occupied the future site of Boulder Ridge. The land south of Algonquin Road had sparse development. Square Barn Road ran by a large farm that actually had a square barn.

Huntley did not extend north of Reed Road and Sun City did not exist. The city of Crystal Lake, then an exurb and not a suburb of Chicago, had a population of only 14,500. Lake-in-the-Hills had a population of less than 6,000 as late as 1990. In 1970 the entire McHenry County had a population of 111,555.

Randall Road was a two-lane affair, lonely and little traveled at night. The intersection of Randall Road and Algonquin Road, also two lanes, was a four-way stop, as was the intersection of Randall and Route 72. Some called Randall Road the "Corn Curtain," dividing Chicagoland from rural Illinois. Looking back, an elaborate development so far away could be considered quite courageous.

Ennui

By the mid-1980s, the McIntoshes had built 80 homes in Turnberry in its 10-plus years of existence. The Family now had third- and fourth-generation members spread over the country. They had tired of it and had virtually stopped marketing it. One can speculate on the reasons for the slow-down of development. The stagflation of the 1970s may be one. Metra doubling the commuter fares for the long ride into Chicago may be another. The very remoteness on the area on the very edge of Chicagoland may be still another.

Sale of Turnberry to McIntosh Ltd.

McIntosh Ltd.-Holdings, including its subsidiary McIntosh Ltd., a syndicate put together by Woodstock attorney and real estate investor Jim Green and others, believed Turnberry could be viable. The group purchased the Turnberry assets, including the Country Club, the golf course, and unsold property from Arthur T. McIntosh Company in 1986.

McIntosh Ltd. not only intended to follow the vision of the former owners but also to greatly expand it. They announced plans to purchase new land to expand the development to 1200 acres. An equestrian section would provide facilities to keep horses and to establish a riding club. Upscale condos would front a lake. An expanded lake system would provide more lakefront opportunities. Even an additional 9-hole golf course was in the offing. It developed a well-thought-out marketing program to call attention to Turnberry, using the phrase "The Land They Call Turnberry." This program included a very professional VCR tape extolling the beauty of the area and ideas for expansion. First, it contracted with Pulte Homes, a nation-wide developer, to build a number of houses to interest buyers. The Clubhouse saw renovation and additional dining facilities. McIntosh Ltd. kept the original membership structure. Plans for a new golf course became more elaborate than originally proposed. McIntosh Ltd. also assumed upkeep of the lakes and maintenance of the entrances.

The most grandiose proposal of McIntosh Ltd. was connecting all the Turnberry lakes together to form a single grand lake. The key would be a dam along Priegnitz Road (now Lakewood Road) in the low area adjacent to Kishwaukee Fen. To determine the feasibility, McIntosh Ltd. hired Ken Fiske, a gifted local ecologist who had helped organize the county Conservation District. The Village also expressed concerns about indemnification in case of a dam failure. The latter issue became moot when Fiske found that not enough water was available to fill and maintain such a lake. Thus, the proposal was dropped.

To the joy of existing property owners, the McIntosh Ltd. ownership was an initial great success. New houses were springing up everywhere, and members began enjoying all the new amenities of the Country Club. The Club remained the center of community social life. Optimism ruled the day.

A Digression: Names of Roads

Bard Road once ran continuously from Huntley Road to Haligus Road. The creation of Turnberry broke the road in two. Nevertheless, both segments continued to carry the name "Bard Road." The west segment connected Turnberry to Haligus Road and continued to Priegnitz (now Lakewood) Road. A rarely used remnant continued along the south side of Lake One to a vacant house. Bittersweet grew here, a source of holiday decorations.

What we now know as "Lakewood Road" once had several names. The segment from Algonquin Road to Ackman Road was "Crystal Lake Road." The segment from Ackman Road to the entrance of Turnberry was Priegnitz Road," and the segment west of Priegnits Road retained the name "Bard Road." Complicated? What's not complicated in the history of Turnberry? And, in only 50 years!

Muirfield

McIntosh Ltd. removed the remnant of Bard Road along the south side of Lake One to make more lakefront lots available. (No more bittersweet!) It also demolished the old house at the end. The new Muirfield Drive gave access to a new section, Muirfield. Although never a designated neighborhood conveyed to McIntosh Ltd., Muirfield in later years would be considered part of "original Turnberry."

The New Golf Course

McIntosh Ltd. bought the Priegnitz Farm, an operating farm along Priegnitz Road, just north of Ackman Road, and hired Roger Packard, son of the Turnberry course designer, to design the new course. This version would be 18 holes, not the nine originally envisioned. Heavy equipment soon began grading the land. All the Priegnitz farm buildings were demolished except the barn silo. The barn would serve as storage for the maintenance equipment. The silo would remain as "local color."

Apparently, McIntosh Ltd. did not intend to build any additional facility to serve as a second Clubhouse, but to use the existing one for both courses. The feasibility remains questionable.

Turnberry Utilities and the Origin of the Turnberry Propertyowners Association

Amid all this activity was a quite unexpected one in 1987, doubling the water rates by Turnberry Utilities. Changes in IRS regulations increased Turnberry Utilities' taxes significantly. To compensate, it announced water rates, already high, would double. Because of a quirk in the Public Utilities law, the increase was perfectly legal. The residents flew into a fury.

Roy Flynn (father of Tom and Tim), an influential member of the community, called a meeting of the residents at his house on Lake One at the corner of Turnberry Trail and Fairway Drive. He suggested that we form a property owners association. Even though it would have no legal power, it would allow the residents to speak as a large and important group. Almost everyone signed on. The Turnberry Propertyowners Association was born. The TPA immediately went to work by pressuring the Village Board to "do something" about the water rates. The solution was expensive, of course, but successful. The Village bought Turnberry Utilities. It passed a bond issue to pay for it, and used tap-on fees to cover the payments. Building in Lakewood was brisk, and the plan worked, unlike to golf course venture.

Disaster #1. Cash Flow and Failure

McIntosh Ltd. proceeded with a number of other projects along with Turnberry, all with attention to detail. One detail they forgot was cash flow. Its ideas were good but it had become overextended financially. One day in 1988 we noticed the heavy equipment grading the new golf course sat unused. The financial issues facing McIntosh Ltd. became evident. At a Village Board meeting, Jim Green announced that he had arranged new financing. Despite his assertion, the next day McIntosh Ltd. went broke.

The members bought the Country Club and Turnberry golf course, and the operation became an equity club, with an initiation fee of \$15,000 plus annual dues of \$3,000. Some long-term members dropped out. Remember, all these happenings were just after the financial crash of 1987.

The unfinished golf course was the most pressing problem, and the unfortunate possibilities of a moribund golf course and unsalable lots dismayed the Turnberry residents. The proposal arose for the Village to buy it, which the residents applauded despite warnings to the contrary. Harold

McKenney, a local attorney on the Village Board, spoke out strongly against it by emphasizing the danger in the financial obligations. Despite the warnings, the Village bought the course, the revenues it generated could not cover its expenses and bond service, and the residents paid an additional tax for years.

The dangers of the purchase may seem obvious today, but no one today should discount the anxiety of the residents at the time.

The next problem was all of the unsold property lots. Sundance Homes proposed changing the zoning to allow tract houses which they assured could sell quickly. They even would build a clubhouse for the new golf course gratis! Their suggestion would vastly change the nature of the area, and alarmed the residents. The Village held a meeting in the West School gymnasium, wisely anticipating the large crowd that attended. The Village did not approve the zoning change and Sundance went away.

Plote Construction and subsidiary Plote Homes, a local outfit developing Boulder Ridge, became interested in building out Turnberry. Plote announced it would not build unique houses but repeat only a few models. Such a plan also would change the nature of Turnberry. The explosive Village Board meetings at the Village Hall where Plote described their ideas drew standing-room-only crowds and tested Village President Scott Breeden's ability to keep order. The Village insisted on the anti-monotony code, so this proposal went nowhere too. Over time various builders came in to develop small areas rather than one builder developing everything, and thus provided a workable solution.

Turnberry had survived the wreckage of the McIntosh Ltd. collapse. Giving credit where credit is due, the McIntosh Ltd. venture was not an abject failure. It did succeed in reviving Turnberry. The Country Club members saved the golf course. The Village ensured completion of the second golf course. Some goals such as the equestrian section, or the large lake remained a dream, but were not essential. Not too bad for the residents. The crisis had seemingly passed. Mother Nature, however, had different ideas.

Disaster #2. The Summer of 1988

The summer of 1988, better "the Drought of 1988," was the hottest and driest in the Midwest in 50 years. The rains stopped before Memorial Day and did not return until mid-August. (Milwaukee, not that far away, did not have a single drop of rain for 55 unbroken days.) One sunny torrid beautiful day followed another sunny torrid beautiful day. This climate disaster made the chaos following the McIntosh Ltd. failure even worse. The Turnberry Lakes began drying up. With no group to control the algae, Lake One appeared to be a broad green lawn. The water level dropped dangerously, and enough to water the parched golf course became a danger. In desperation, Turnberry took water from the water tower well to stabilize the level.

If Mother Nature almost dried up the Turnberry lakes, she also brought relief, thanks to the local beavers. What seems to be a farm ditch crossing Haligus Road near the Sanitation Plant is actually the North Branch of the Kishwaukee River. In fact, the state considers the part of the Kishwaukee flowing through Woodstock and Lakewood to be the longest stretch of Class A stream in Illinois. Beavers had built a dam just east of Haligus Road, and a small pool had

formed behind it. To tap this water, and from a Class A stream at that, the Village laid a pipe between this pool and the ponds along Fairway Drive. The Village and the Country Club installed a pump to lift the water into the ponds. Then another pipeline was laid between the ponds and Lake One, together with a pump paid for again by the Village and the Country Club. As long as the Kishwaukee flowed, Lake One would never be in danger of running dry again.

Jerry Cook and the Village Codes

Jerry Cook, a very perceptive individual who lived on Bonnie Ridge Road, realized that no authority remained to enforce the deed covenants. The McIntoshes had wanted to direct the nature of the development and strongly discouraged formation of a Home Owners Association. Jerry solved the problem by having most of these covenants written into the Village Code, a notable feat. The Village became the enforcer of the covenants, a task not always done unfortunately.

The Tall Grass

Not the Tall Grass Prairie, but the Tall Grass Turnberry. During this time following the failure of McIntosh Ltd., grass and weeds grew three feet or more tall on many of the unimproved lots. Responding to a question by resident Joan Young, the Village Board admitted it did not even know who owned them. She then spent countless hours at the Government Center in Woodstock finding the owners and their addresses of *every lot in Turnberry*. One owner had moved to Amsterdam. Armed with the codes Jerry had added, the Village sent warning letters to the owners. If no reply was forthcoming, the Village mowed the lots and put a lien on the property for the not-insignificant cost. Soon, all the owners of the delinquent unimproved lots, even the one living in Amsterdam, contracted to have them mowed.

The Special Service Area

These ad hoc solutions left many questions unanswered. Who would treat the Lakes annually to control the algae and the weeds? Who would stock the lakes? Who would care for the entrances? Would the Village enforce the codes? Who would pay for these activities? The residents decided they would, and voted enthusiastically for the formation of a Special Service Area that would assess a tax annually on the property owners that would accomplish these needs.

The Village Board should be praised. At the time of the McIntosh Ltd. debacle, the Gates area had a greater population than did Turnberry, but the Board supported the efforts to make Turnberry a successful venture.

Challenges Addressed By the TPA

The TPA organized a system of "Block Captains" who would inform residents in their area of meeting or other activities to address the needs of the moment. Pat Moll was the head Block Captain for many years.

Barbara Key and Her “Bale Fill.”

Barbara Key was village president of Lake in the Hills, a small village nestled around two artificial lakes north of Algonquin Road and east of Randal Road. Barbara was determined to outdo Crystal Lake, and began an aggressive expansion by inviting developers to build a forest of tract homes. Someone joked she threw out “house seeds” and after a spring rain, houses sprang up like dandelions. Lake in the Hills (“LITH”) rapidly expanded to the west of Randal Road.

In order to pay for the extra village services needed, Barbara and a disposal operator cooked up a plan. LITH would incorporate a corridor over to Route 47 that included a hollow along Haligus Road, just south of Bard Road. This site would contain the bale fill, i.e. dump. Hundreds of trucks would arrive daily with their loads. The tip fees would be huge and LITH had no worry about congestion and the attendant mess in LITH because the bale fill would be far away.

Turnberry residents exploded in a fury (they were good at it by now). The Block Captains mobilized the populace, and other concerned groups joined in. The owner of nearby Hamilton Farms was concerned because a dump had to be two miles from the nearest airport, and Hamilton had a landing strip on his property. He held a big bar-b-que that attracted more participants. A consortium formed and it hired some experts experienced with these things. It showed the perk test were not correctly performed, and the bale fill would pose an ecological problem over the years. Rules for dumps required that at the close of the dump, the operator would have to return the site to pristine condition. LITH realized the cost of closure would exceed the total income from tip fees. LITH abandoned the idea, and de-annexed the corridor.

The Algonquin Library

Algonquin found it could incorporate into its library district any municipality not having a public library and adjacent to Algonquin. That is, unless in a referendum, the municipality voted not to do so. Lakewood fell into this category because of a few hundred feet of common border. Joining their library district would involve raising taxes, of course, and the location of the library was very inconvenient for Lakewood residents. The Block Captains swung into action, and the proposal was rejected overwhelmingly. Lakewood students can use the Crystal Lake Library and the other residents can use the nearby McHenry County College for free.

The Fox Valley Expressway.

In the 1960s a proposal to build an expressway from the Joliet area to Richmond on the Wisconsin border gained interest. Cynics say the real purpose was to ease the “escape to Wisconsin” in the summer for residents of the wealthy western suburbs. The proposal met vociferous opposition, and various groups, including the McHenry County Defenders, organized to fight it. The proposal faded but did not go away completely. It appeared again in about 1990, with the route shifted to the west to avoid the area already building up in its path. In one plan, part would have paralleled Haligus Road. Imagine the noise and congestion such a freeway would have brought. The TPA warned the residents of this attempted revival. The opposition in general became even more intense, and led to the final abandonment of the idea.

The Cargo Airport

A proposal for large airport for cargo planes located between Lakewood and Union caused a brief flurry of concern and came to the attention of the TPA. As quickly as it came, the idea of the Cargo Airport faded away.

Epilog

Well, that's it. This piece is the Saga of Turnberry's first 20 years I could reconstruct while sitting at my computer. It may contain some errors or misinterpretations; I hope very few. Because of the several periods of intense change, the timeline might need some revision.

My wish is that it can inform some of the decisions being made today.

Further information resides in the memories of other long-time residents, Northwest Herald archives, Minutes of the Village Board meetings, and, if they still exist, TPA meeting minutes. The archives of the McHenry County Historical Society in Union may have useful information.

Turnberry has dodged many bullets over its 50 years: the failure of McIntosh Ltd., the Summer of 1988, The Turnberry Utilities rate increase, the Bale Fill, the Algonquin Library, the Fox Valley Expressway, the Cargo Airport, the financial crash of 2008 that depressed house prices and virtually ended building for 10 years, the later local political issues. A place that has had so many near misses but so many defenders must be a mighty nice place to live! It must have a lot of devoted residents.

