

# Reflections on Golf, Life

*After playing golf for more than six decades, Laura Ellingson learned a little about the game, and a lot about herself*

**By Rick Stedman**

Longtime Parkland resident Laura Ellingson took up the game of golf when she was 24 years old, and played regularly until her mid-80s.

Five years before she was born, Laura's future father-in-law, E.B. Ellingson, became Parkland Light & Water Co.'s first general manager. He served in that role from 1914 to 1933.

Laura's family moved from Tacoma to Parkland when she was 4 years old. She later attended

Parkland Grade School and Stewart Junior High and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1937.

Shortly thereafter, she attended Tacoma Secretarial School. Though she lived less than a mile from Oswald "Ozzie" Ellingson, the man who would become her husband, they did not meet until after high school. He attended a parochial school in the area, and the two began dating just after high school. Ozzie, who served as a Parkland Light & Water Co. board member from 1968 to 1989, was also a member of the Brookdale Golf Club.

Laura recalls vividly when she was bit by the "golf bug." It was in the summer of 1943, four years into their marriage. The couple spent a week with friends at Gaffney's Grove Resort on Lake Wilderness.

"Every morning, we played golf on the nine-hole Lake Wilderness Golf Course," Laura recalls. "That week was such fun that I decided I would become a golfer."

During the peak of her golfing years, Laura estimates she played about 80 rounds of golf a year, sometimes playing in three different leagues a week. A charter member of the Lake Spanaway Golf Course, Laura saw the immediate health benefits of walking the course, eschewing golf carts like the plague.

"I estimate that I probably walked across the United States and back home after all the walking on golf courses I've done over the years," she says.

## **Health Challenges**

Having been stricken with polio in 1950 and a hip replaced 32 years ago, Laura knows the benefits of keeping the body moving. Walking regularly on a golf course was a key to improving her health after each of these challenges.

"When I came down with polio, it left me with mild weakness in my upper leg muscles," Laura says. "But soon, I was back on the course, and I knew that all the walking was the best cure."

In addition to the health benefits of regularly walking golf courses during the past six decades,



Laura and Ozzie Ellingson, pictured here in 1977, were avid golfers for many years.



Left, Laura spent much of her time throughout the 1970s playing golf and socializing in the club house.

Laura remembers a few nuggets of wisdom acquired.

“Ozzie and I never really golfed together much since he had his regular foursome, and I was involved with various womens’ golf leagues,” she says. “But we did talk about golf all the time, and watched it on TV together. In a way, it brought us closer together because we had a common ground to walk.”

“Back then, men did ‘men things’ and women did ‘women things.’ But we always had golf, and that was a lifelong bond.”

Laura found plenty to enjoy when playing golf. It not only provided exercise and a place to socialize—golf was her escape.

“Another thing about being on the golf course was that it allowed you to get away from your troubles, to forget about all the responsibilities you had, and just be in the moment, to appreciate the fresh air and the beautiful surroundings,” Laura says.

Laura continued her joint love of golf with Ozzie until his death in 2003.

Throughout the years, Laura discovered the many challenges of the sport. Once, while in league play, she got out to the first green and reached for her putter, which was not in the bag. Having served as

golf rules chair for two leagues, Laura knew a thing or two about the United States Golf Association’s Rules and Decisions of Golf. She could not replace the club, but only use what was in her bag at the start of the round.

She used a four iron instead and putt only 12 times for nine holes. The average golfer putts between 18 to 22 times for nine holes. Her best rounds ever: She shot a 42 on a nine-hole course and recorded an 88 on an 18-hole track.

### **Last Round**

Laura’s love of the game never wavered throughout the years. It was only when Mother Nature intervened that she chose to hang up her golf spikes for good.

Laura vividly recalls the last round of golf she played. It was at Pacific Lutheran University in the summer of 2004.

“My legs just hurt so much and I said, ‘This isn’t fun anymore,’ and I never played again,” she says.

Though she turns 96 this month, and has not swung a golf club in a decade, the game is still a fond memory, and something that will always be near and dear to her. ■