

Article commemorating Glen Eden's 60th birthday

Member owned; volunteer driven – for 60 years! *By Jan D.*

A visitor coming to Glen Eden for the first time is greeted by a member of our volunteer hospitality team who gives them a tour and introduction to our club. During the introduction they might hear, "Glen Eden is a member-owned club." OK, sounds good - but what does that really mean? It means a LOT! Today, as a thriving club with over 1,300 members, all proceeds go back into the club for the benefit of its members. We see the results of this in the form of continual, major improvements to our facilities as well as the expansion of our staff to include maintenance, construction and housekeeping crews, management, office staff and the recreation team.

Glen Eden was founded in 1963 and has been member-owned since its incorporation in 1966. However back in the '60s "member-owned" had a somewhat different connotation. The fledgling club had few members and hence very little in the way of income to fund its development. Visionary founder Ray Connett obtained funding to purchase the land we still occupy today. The club relied on him and an enthusiastic group of pioneer members to turn this former olive grove and sage brush chaparral into a facility the members could enjoy. So back then "member-owned" also meant member- BUILT. Anyone who knew anything about construction pitched in to build the first structures – the Hut was the first building. It has served many purposes over the years, including Teen Hut, and is now the home of the Western Nudist Research Library (WNRL). Pitching in almost went beyond "volunteering". Bill Leutbecher recalls, "back in the '60s single men were told they HAD to work two hours before being allowed to participate in nudist activities, and I did because I loved being here." Joanne Brown, in her interview with Dave Jones, remembered it too: "we worked two hours every time we came to GE. Men and women. I've painted more bathrooms around here than you could shake a stick at! Everybody wanted to do it. They wanted to give back because, to them, this was their other home, a special place." Richard Frank recalled how he did his part when he was in his early 20s: "I was young so I was the gofer. They were building the Eden West restrooms and had me go-fer this and go-fer that."

In 1966 the Connetts applied to the State of California for incorporation and the Glen Eden Corporation was born. In doing so the Connetts gifted the club to its members for posterity, in exchange for the right to live out their days at Glen Eden.

Ray Connett, upon incorporation of Glen Eden in early 1966:

“What this means, briefly, is that we have finally kept our word, achieved our goal, of establishing a corporation which can own Glen Eden for all time so that no private owner, or even a clique of the members, can ever profit from its sale. Glen Eden will go on forever, or at least as long as there are members with sufficient interest and initiative to keep the club active and solvent.”

Fundraisers

One of the earliest fundraisers was for the first two tennis courts. The tennis players had to raise \$1,000 to start construction. Those who loaned \$100 got free membership in lieu of interest as long as they left their money in the tennis fund.

Another early fundraiser was the brick wall in the café. A donation got your name on a brick. Al Sandoval, who was a sign painter, painted the central graphic and some of the bricks. He also painted a large sign that Ray Connett wheeled out to De Palma Road.



First Glen Eden sign, painted by Al Sandoval



Bricks from this '60's fundraiser and Elin's recent addition for Richard and Ann Frank

Walls and Trails

Some of the most lasting reminders of volunteerism in those early days are the incredible dry stone rock walls built by “Rock John” Petrosky, assisted by Vernon Jordan. Art Bell recalls: “Rock John assembled the rocks like a giant jigsaw puzzle, matching shapes and spending hours seeking out just the right rock for a particular spot.” You can see examples of his walls at the north end of the volleyball court, around the upper lawn and outdoor pools, and also the waterfall behind the café. The extensive network of hiking trails is another volunteer-led project from the early years that survives today. Virgil Hemphill carved the trail to the Chapel, Rock John, Verne and others built the trails over the hill on the west side of Glen Eden and Byron “Scotty” Scott and Bill Husson expanded and maintained them. Their work was continued by Scotty’s son, Pete Scott, and in recent years has been continued by an enthusiastic team led by John Nelson.



Chapel monument with Rock John’s dry-stone wall visible in the upper right corner)

Volunteers Roll Up Their Sleeves

One tradition that has remained through the years is the annual spring clean-up day. Although it’s no longer a mandatory work requirement, many members pitch in to pull weeds or trim bushes around the main recreation area, the Chapel, Labyrinth, Oak Grove meditation area, their sites and beyond. There was certainly no shortage of volunteers when the Holy fire threatened GE in 2019 and shortly afterwards the club was slammed by the fire-caused debris flows of the 2019-2020 rainy season. Just about everyone who could wield a shovel or drive a tractor showed up, clearing away thick mud that came up to their knees. Disastrous though it was, it really brought the club together. This was swiftly followed by the Covid epidemic and it is surely a testament to the strength of GE that the club not only survived those tests but has thrived ever since.

Today’s Volunteers

This spirit of volunteerism is woven into the fabric of Glen Eden. Certainly, it’s changed over the years. Today the club is fortunate to have some very qualified members from all walks of life volunteering to serve on the Board of Directors, and no-one works harder than them! Volunteers today also run many

aspects of the recreation program, while a professional construction crew, ably supervised by longtime Board Member Dale Hook, tackles projects such as the new pools and shower building, the creek flood prevention project, repairing the street and sewer line infrastructure in Eden West, and, most recently, replacing the concrete deck around the main pool and hot tub. Tennis, pickleball, volleyball, water volleyball, yoga & wellness, Zumba®, the Artists Studio, Naked Needle Gang, the WNRL, the Love Me Two Times thrift store, the RC racetrack, the hiking trails – all are run by volunteers and most are self-funding or generate funds for the club.

Fundraising For Major Improvements

The Board encourages members to develop new activities and will usually support a well-thought-out proposal. Volunteer-led fundraisers for major projects are strongly encouraged and have been matched from club funds. In the early '80s tennis players raised more than \$25,000 towards the construction of tennis courts 3 & 4. A member, Alan Ells, was a concrete contractor and donated his services to build them. Jim Ling did the electrical work for the lights. Then in the early 2000s a new generation of tennis players raised funds towards courts 5 & 6, also matched by the club. In 2005 Richard Moore donated \$10,000 worth of sports equipment for the gym. Most recently the water volleyball group raised funds towards the lights and BBQ area for the new pools and the pickleball group is in the process of collecting donations for the two additional courts scheduled for construction this year. The Love Me Two Times thrift store has helped fund countless projects through donations generated from store sales.



Tennis courts 5 & 6



The new pool area includes a conversation pool.



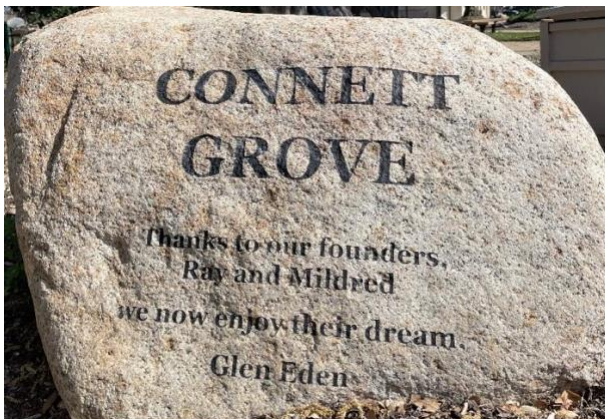
Pickleball courts

This spirit of member involvement took on another facet when members made sizable donations from their estates. Bequests from Dean Hendrickson, Mickie Coale and Al Sandoval have helped fund projects large and small, including the children's playground, tennis court and landscape renovations and the new pools.



Children's Playground

Glen Eden officially celebrates its 60th birthday on July 8th and it's bound to be a fun weekend! In doing so, we reflect on all that volunteers past and present have achieved and thank them for creating the thriving club we enjoy today. Ray and Mildred Connett would indeed be proud to see how far their legacy has come.



Connett Grove rock

To Members past and present thank you for your contribution, dedication, and friendship.

Quotes from pioneer members were taken from a series of interviews conducted by Dave Jones and preserved by the WNRL.

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