

Love the Kananaskis Country Golf Courses?

... Thank Alberta Golf



ack in the 1970's when the Alberta government was awash in oil money, Keith Alexander had an idea about spending some of it – on a new golf course for the province.

Already well-known as a leading amateur, Keith became the Alberta Golf Association president in 1977, the year after the province created Kananaskis Provincial Park and Kananaskis Country.

Knowing his way around politics as well as he knew his way around a green, Keith went directly to Premier Peter Lougheed and his cabinet with the suggestion that a golf course be built in Kananaskis. The Premier and his cabinet initially balked at the idea. Traditionally, municipalities were responsible for building public courses – not the provincial government.

Keith countered saying that Kananaskis was a provincial jurisdiction and besides ... the area needed a world-class golf course to go along with Calgary's proposed bid for the 1988 Olympics, and the province needed another venue for Alberta Golf tournaments.

Many of the cabinet members were golfers and it didn't take long for Keith's determined arguments to be approved.

Working with Alberta Golf directors Ken Sharratt and Tom Wood, Keith began interviewing course architects and chose Robert Trent Jones Sr. who first toured the forested landscape by helicopter.

"Jones took one look at the property and said 'This is from heaven,' Keith recalls. As well, Jones was the first to suggest that two courses be built instead of the one originally proposed.

Jones, the first architect inducted into the Golf World Hall of Fame, had a reputation for designing competitive courses with holes where, he said, "Par was tough but a bogey was easy."

The two, 18-hole courses, Mount Kidd and Mount Lorette, opened in 1983 with green fees of \$20 and have lived up to Jones' reputation.

Although getting the two courses built was a major coup for Alberta Golf, Keith had one more idea that he believed would turn the association into a major participant in golf: He proposed that Alberta Golf be the management team for the courses, just as the RCGA managed (and later owned) Abbey Glen.

Alberta Golf, however, turned down Keith's proposal because it seemed too big a step outside its traditional role.