

April Sound

A Gated Country Club Community



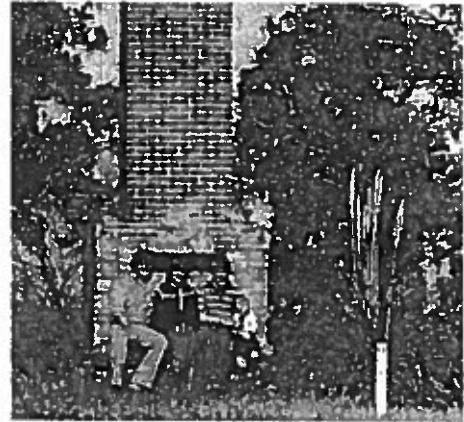
April Sound was once a part of the community of Ryals, Texas; originally, the locals called this the Weisinger Community. The Weisinger brothers owned and operated a plantation containing several thousand acres. They farmed approximately 1,000 acres, and the property consisted of a gristmill, cotton gin, general store, syrup mill, carriage house, blacksmith shop, several barns, a Delco electric plant, and a private water system.



In 1892, John, the oldest brother, purchased a one-story house with two existing fireplaces that was built in 1870 by Mr. and Mrs. Price. John married Etta Ryals that same year. After the wedding, they moved into their house located on the hill just north of the present-day security gate where their ten children were born.

In 1914, about 100 yards to the west, a small country store with a postal station was built and designated Ryals, Texas.

Etta died in 1942, and only two weeks later, on December 6, 1942, John and Etta's large home burned. It was assumed that a faulty electrical wire caused the fire that left only the parlor chimney standing.



On a Sunday evening in 1979 the chimney was mysteriously demolished to a pile of rubble. Whether the work of unknown perpetrators or a force of nature, the small portion remaining of Ryals, Texas was lost and gone forever.

In the early seventies, Belin and Associates purchased approximately 930 acres from County Judge W. S. Weisinger and immediately began to develop a community with 24-hour manned security, a golf course, tennis courts, and other avenues for enjoying life and feeling secure. Bruce Belin named the property April Sound because April is his favorite month of the year, and "sound" is a nautical term.

At the time April Sound officially opened in October, 1973 (only six months after ground breaking), Lake Conroe did not exist. The lake facilities, complete with water, did not open until the fall of 1974.

Lake Conroe's inception began with the San Jacinto River Authority's board of directors making long-range plans for future water supply needs. Ike Barrett began working for the San Jacinto River Authority in 1958, the same year the first tract of land was purchased for the lake. Construction on Lake Conroe started in 1970, and it cost thirty million dollars to complete. Barrett said he never imagined the impact the lake would have on recreational facilities and residential developments in the community.

The developers decided rather than focusing on the lake, the major amenity should be tennis. To be a first class tennis facility, Belin approached Rod Laver and Roy Emerson to head up the tennis program. As a result, the Laver/Emerson tennis clinics were the opening promotions for the community and were advertised in national publications.



Tennis buffs from both coasts flocked to April Sound for the Laver-Emerson Tennis Holidays. Tennis superstar Roy Emerson (left) instructed Mrs. Dan Rather, wife of CBS

Washington newsman, and Hollywood "Medical Center" star Chad Everett on the April Sound courts.

In the early spring of 1974, less than six months after opening, April Sound was host to the Glen Campbell Leukemia Celebrity Tennis tournament. More than 4,000 people turned out on March 9th and March 10th to watch. Among the celebrities at April Sound for the tournament were Campbell, Ross Martin, Micky Dolenz, Lloyd and Dorothy Bridges, Doug McClure, Peter Brown, Chad Everett, Andy Williams, Wayne Rogers, Bernie Kopell, and JoAnn Pflug. This helped to further establish the credibility of April Sound as a first class tennis community.

Other stars to hold tournaments at April Sound were Lloyd Bridges and Phyllis Diller.



From the Houston Chronicle dated May 24, 1975, "Lloyd Bridges squares off for play in the Pro-Celebrity Invitational Tennis Tournament that bears his name. Play will be today and Sunday at April Sound."



April Sound Director of Tennis Rod Laver and Phyllis Diller ham it up during Miss Diller's recent visit to announce the "Phyllis Diller Comedy Classic" Tennis Tournament at April Sound Sept. 17 & 18, 1977.

Lloyd Bridges hosted the Pro-Celebrity Tournament in 1975 and 1976. Phyllis Diller lent her name and support in 1977.



April Sound began with four covered courts, which in spite of the temperate weather were decided upon to afford flexibility in planning various programs, and eight outdoor courts. In the first year of operation an additional five courts were added, bringing the total to seventeen courts in almost continuous operation.

January 15, 1976, Rod Laver was signed by April Sound as on-site Director of Tennis assisted by Bruce Truille already on staff.

April Sound also offered a professional golfing program. Don Massengale was the first golf pro at April Sound, and Dave Marr was the touring pro. On August 7, 1974, with the completion of the White course, the back nine then, Arnold Palmer teamed up with Don Massengale to play an 18-hole exhibition match and mark the opening of the 18-hole golf course, even though the first nine (the Red course) had been open since the middle of November.



All-time golf great Arnold Palmer and April Sound's own fantastic golf pro Don Massengale will be playing together again August 17 to officially open the second nine golf course.

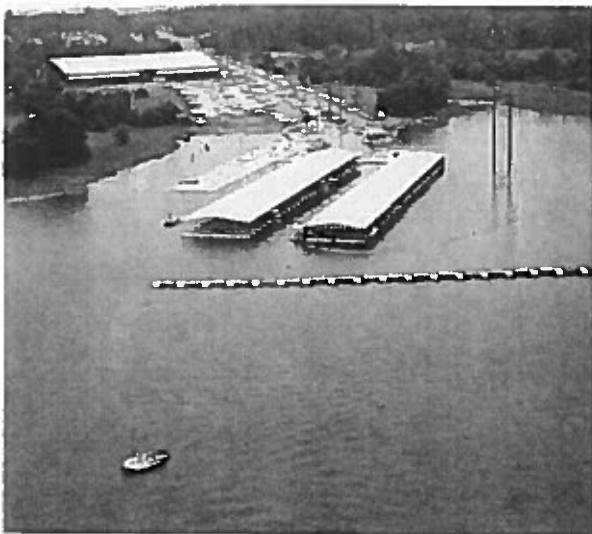


Arnold Palmer returned in 1975 to host the March of Dimes tournament.

Palmer won four Masters, two British Opens, and one U. S. Open, combined with other championships, totaled more than sixty tournament wins, and was often referred to as the "King of Golf."

Even before the eighteen holes of golf were opened, a third nine was in progress as the developers still had lots around the lake to sell, but golf course lots were needed. The Blue nine, as it was, and is still called, opened December 1, 1975, and on December 5th, 6th, and 7th, all 6,200 yards of the championship 27 holes were used by more than 200 members and visitors. One of the outstanding festivities was the Dave Marr-Dutch Hood challenge cup match.

As the lake was an important part of the development, and water was the recreation of choice by many, April Sound provided a full-service Marina, complete with a bait shop, a fueling station, and a full-time attendant. Sailing classes were taught to those interested. The April Sound Home and Water Spectacular was held August 19th and 20th, 1978, and the Doc Rail Water Show held performances each day in the cove behind the Lodge.



The Marina is located just north of the tennis courts.



The Doc Rail Water Show performed in the cove behind the Helmsman's Lodge.

The marina was given to the April Sound Property Owners' Association in 2002 as the Club had no desire to make the necessary repairs to it. However, the Club did retain the boat launch for members' and guests' use.

In May, 1975, the finishing touches were put on the equestrian center, complete with spacious stalls, large paddocks, hay racks, feed troughs, and an automatic watering system. An open area for riding was located in the area that is now the church parking lot. Even with this state of the art facility, the equestrian center operated only a short time before it was closed due to lack of interest.

The hub of the complex was a three-building clubhouse with grills and gourmet dining rooms, Olympic size pool, and meeting and banquet facilities.

Merve Siegel, President of Limelite Internationale, tournament producers, located in Hollywood, had been instrumental in bringing celebrities to April Sound, and he became the Club Manager shortly after the club opened. Through the publicity gained by holding celebrity tournaments, advertisements in national publications, and Siegel's contacts, April Sound became the playground for the rich, the famous, and even the "not so rich and famous".

The Clubhouse was originally built with three separate buildings.



The offices were housed in one of the buildings with a walkway to a second building that housed a very small area called the Driftwood Bar; however, this area did not have a bar in it as Mr. Belin did not drink. All drinks came out of the upstairs kitchen that was also housed in the second building along with a small dining area called the Fernery, as it was decorated in bright green fern wallpaper.

Eventually, the walkway between the offices and the small dining area was enclosed, and the enlarged area became the Driftwood Room. It was used for meetings and small member functions. The Fernery was enlarged and redecorated, and a bar was built in that room. The new room was called the Ascot (an acronym for April Sound, Conroe, Texas).

The original third building, the Helmsman's Lodge, housed a "lookout tower" where members and visitors could climb to the top and enjoy the beautiful panoramic view of April Sound and Lake Conroe. The Lodge had dual stair cases that led down to a dining room which was the main member dining area, and was also the venue for many weddings and receptions. For safety reasons, the tower was removed, and in the late 1980's the Lodge was closed to create a conference center for corporate training. In 2005, a few years after all the corporate business shut down, the Fitness Center was moved into that room.

The Clubhouse was opened and fully operational along with a championship swimming pool in 1973. In 1979, swim teams were formed, and diving exhibitions and water galas were held at the April Sound pool.



The swim team (The Marlins) continued to compete until 2003. Swim team competition began again in 2006 when the "kids' camp" was initiated.

Originally, the downstairs snack bar was totally open; the downstairs kitchen became the main kitchen, and the upstairs kitchen was closed. This area became the Grill, which was enclosed in two stages. In 1995 the bar was built, and in 1996 additional seating was added.

The Lakeside Room was officially opened in June, 1993. The original plan was for this to be an open-air pavilion to be used for golf functions. The decision was made to go ahead and enclose the building. It was, and is still today, used for large member functions and is leased out for weddings, anniversary parties, etc.



The gazebo was erected in March, 2004; it has been, and continues to be, an attraction for brides shopping for the perfect place to hold their weddings.

On September 21, 2007, the main club house was destroyed by an early morning fire. The fire began in the attic, presumably due to faulty electrical wiring, and quickly consumed the second floor of the building.

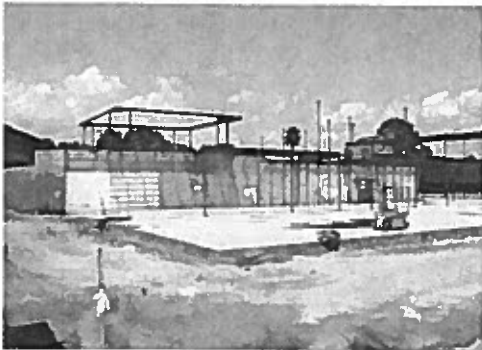


Living in April Sound is truly living in small town USA. The people in the community care about each other and are there to help one another. The camaraderie of April Sound was never more evident than when members showed up in golf carts and on foot as news of the fire spread. After it was deemed safe to enter the building, many pitched in to remove merchandise from the pro shop so insurance claims could be filed and helped in any way they could to support each other and management.

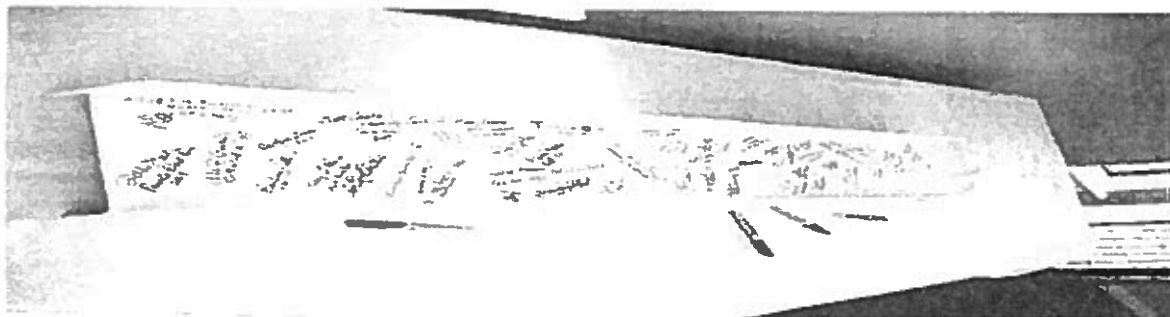
The Civic Association had scheduled an annual barbeque dinner/dance fund raiser for September 22nd, the day after the fire. Many questioned what they should do, but Scott Southern, club manager, met with the Board of Governors and officers of the Civic Association, and the decision was made to go ahead with it. After a few phone calls, Civic Association members showed up to decorate, and a brigade of men fired up barbeque grills near the Lakeside Room. Between 120-130 members attended the party, and what a morale booster it was. April Sound was down, but it was not out!

In order to continue providing service to April Sound members and guests, the Lakeside Room was remodeled. A bar was installed, a new kitchen was built, as the original kitchen contained only warming stations, and a large deck was added for members' enjoyment. For two and a half years, the clubs within the Club continued to function while eagerly awaiting the construction and opening of the new clubhouse.

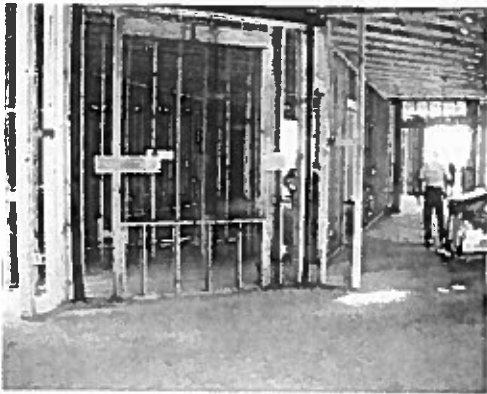
After a long wait, on March 27, 2009, the groundbreaking ceremony was held, and construction was soon underway. The new club house began to take shape.



The "Topping Off" celebration was held on October 8, 2009. Invited guests, members of the Board of Governors, POA Board, and Club Corp personnel placed their signatures on a beam and toured the building even though the walls were not yet installed.



The staff made signs to designate the various rooms in the club house.



Finally, in February, 2010, the construction of the new clubhouse at April Sound was almost complete; only the finishing touches were yet to be made. On February 8, 2010, the staff began moving into their offices, and the pro shop was being stocked. Members were allowed to tour the beautiful new building, and on March 7th, members of the Board of Governors conducted official group tours. The new clubhouse was open to members for full service on March 9, 2010. The grand opening was held on March 23, 2010.



Even though the new clubhouse is slightly smaller than the original; the 20,000 square-foot facility is designed so that the space is well utilized. Located on the second floor is the main entrance to the Club, administrative offices, board room, and a bridal suite. The Phoenix grill and the Waterside Dining Room are also located on the second floor, and they have a beautiful view of the lake. The elevator is located at the back of the building which affords easy access between floors.

The fitness center, a card room with access to the snack bar, men's and ladies' locker rooms, and the golf pro-shop are all located on the ground floor. There is also a bar and several tables located outside on the patio overlooking the new fire pit and the lake; sandwiches and drinks are available on the patio from the snack bar.

Thousands of people drive down Hwy. 105 every day, and many of them wonder as they pass the entrance to our community, "just what's going on in there."

That depends on the season, the day, and the time, but it's for sure something is happening in April Sound. The clubs within the Club provide outlets for every talent and interest. Golf and tennis associations are available for men and women, and instruction in both is available for all ages. Kids' Camp is open during the summer, and kids get the opportunity to enjoy golf, tennis, swimming (including the swim team if so desired), and arts and crafts. Separate junior golf and tennis clinics are also available. The Ladies' Association began in 1976, with only sixteen women, and now has over three hundred members, with nineteen satellite groups: bridge, book clubs, bunko, dining groups, gardening, home decorating, quilting, and many others. The Ladies' Association luncheon is held the fourth Wednesday of every month, and the programs, whether it's a preview from the Creighton Theater or a seasonal fashion show, are always a treat. The Men's Club was established in 2003 and has grown to over one hundred members, with satellite groups such as genealogy, photography, investments, and others. Their luncheon is held the third Thursday of the month and always includes a guest speaker, informative or entertaining, most often both.

The Property Owners' Association is responsible for maintaining the community and providing security. The POA also sponsors community-interest projects, including a safety day for the past two years, concerts in April Park, and even a Pet Fair.

The Civic Association concentrates on beautification, and often times teams up with both the Club and the POA to provide such. The Civic Association also gathers information and prints the community directory, organizes the Fourth of July golf cart parade, and the Easter egg hunt.

April Sound is a gated community with a twenty-four hour, seven days a week private security force, twenty-seven holes of golf, a remodeled tennis center, a boat launch, great neighbors, and a brand new clubhouse. The best of everything!