

Stillwater Club History

By

Charlie Delahay

The following is an attempt to document the origins and history of the Stillwater Club whose origins date back to the year 1983. All that is reported here is based on information handed down to me via documents, word of mouth and experience due to my involvement as Attendance Chairman, President, and Board member beginning in January 2008. The events leading to the actual formation of the Stillwater Club reflect my direct involvement and memories of these events.

The Stillwater Club began as Pebble Beach Branch #115 Sons-in-Retirement (SIR). SIR is a California non-profit corporation established to promote the enjoyment and dignity of retired senior men. Branch #115 was formed in 1983 under the sponsorship of Monterey Peninsula Branch #28 by 30 founding members led by founding Big Sir Ed Jacobsen. The reason given by the founding members to spin-off from Branch #28 is as follows: To meet in a more formal upscale venue choosing the Lodge at Pebble Beach as the site for monthly lunch meetings and requiring Coat and Tie as proper attire. Branch #115 and Branch #28 maintained a close relationship for many years even playing an annual golf tournament at the Del Monte golf course for the cherished "Rooster Cup Trophy" and bragging rights.

SIR was founded in 1958 in San Mateo, California by a small group of friends. It grew to a total of 179 branches and 28,000 members in Northern and Central California. The present number of branches and members is unknown. The founders chose the rooster as the official logo to represent the freedom he displayed around the barnyard. "We have paid our dues to the business world and now is the time for us to strut and crow a little."

It took a little under 2 years for #115 to reach the required 100 members and end its probationary status. In early May of 1985 #115 was presented its official SIR branch charter and on May 20 its tax exemption as a non-profit corporation was recorded.

SIR #115 went about happily for 27 years meeting monthly at the Lodge at Pebble Beach. We were the only SIR branch to require coat and tie for attendance. Membership grew to 150 when a cap on membership was initiated. The reason for the cap was the maximum seating capacity of the Pebble Beach Room at 130. As a result of the cap, we always had a waiting list of 1-5. The wait was never more than a few months due to natural attrition. After every monthly meeting, a packet of information was sent to the State Board of SIR informing them of our activities, our board meeting minutes, our monthly attendance, and our financial status. Some of the information sent was redundant, reported in more than one statement. We also paid quarterly dues to the State Board. I'm not certain what the amount paid was but I believe it might have been \$1.00 per member.

In the early 2000s, SIR began experiencing a small decline in State wide membership. By early 2010 membership decline became worrisome. Meanwhile membership at branch #115 held steady at 150 with the usual wait list. The State Board wanted to visit us to find out why we had a steady membership while other branches were floundering. State board members wanted to

attend one of our lunches. They came for our September 2010 meeting. Their attendance was cordial and they appeared to have enjoyed the visit. To our surprise, after their visit we were ostracized. They criticized many aspects of our operation starting with our membership cap. We were told we could not have a wait list. Every applicant was to be accepted immediately. They criticized our monthly attendance which ran between 60 and 65 percent. They told me I had to achieve 75% attendance and if it was not achieved, I was to submit a written report explaining why the goal was not achieved. We initially agreed to drop our wait list because our monthly attendance was between 90 and 110 leaving room for more attendees resulting from higher membership. We reached a total of 163 members by year's end. The SIR By-laws requires all members to attend 6 meetings per calendar year, that's 50% attendance, making the 75% attendance requirement ridiculous and the written explanation why it wasn't achieved ludicrous.

We were instructed by the State Board we had to have one of our members on the State Board the following year. This was something no one wanted to do, mainly due to travel and overnight expenses involved. A couple of our directors had attended a state branch meeting. Their comment on their return was, "We found we have nothing in common with these people". We began to ignore the State Board and I refused to submit a written report as to why we didn't achieve 75% attendance. As a result, we were placed on probation. As our Board discussed our situation at the October board meeting, I casually mentioned, "We don't have to be called SIRs".

At our November 2010 board meeting Gary Hornbuckle announced that he had researched the name Stillwater Club to ensure it was not in conflict with any other organization and filed to register the name with the State. The flame to separate from SIRs was lit. Gary prepared and sent out a mailer with a self addressed and stamped return envelope to all of our members, asking them to vote should we remain a SIR branch or become a new entity.

In January of 2011 our Board of directors consisted of:

Dan Matuszewski – Big SIR
Walt Conley – Little SIR
Colin Short – Secretary
Gary Hornbuckle – Treasurer
Charlie Delahay – Director
Mike Early – Director
Sam Griffith – Director
Bob Hutchison – Director
Tom Linden – Director

This is our founding board. Only Colin Short, Mike Early and I are still living. All the others have passed.

At the February 2011 board meeting the results of the mail-in voting was reported by me. 100% of the mailers had been returned. The vote was 162 voting to form a new entity and 1 vote to remain SIR branch #115. Dan Matuszewski asked for a motion to part with SIR and form a new club. Tom Linden made the motion with our new club to be named The Stillwater Club. The motion was seconded and the board unanimously voted to reform as the Stillwater Club. Dan

Matuszewski's and Walt Conley's titles were changed to President and Vice-President and we officially became known as the Stillwater Club. In the following weeks, we returned our Charter to the State SIR Board with a check close to \$1000 which was the money left in the #115 treasury, and the official resignation of all SIR Branch #115 members.

We could no longer use the rooster as our logo. The Board decided to hold a contest to select a new logo for our club. Several great entries were submitted. The winning entry was submitted by Dick Miller. Dick's suggestion of a friendship knot was determined to best describe the main objective of our club.

There were expenses associated with the formation of our new club. For example, new name badges had to be ordered. Our new logo was subject to an initial set up charge and with a cost of \$12 per badge; our new badges would cost just under \$2000. We also ordered new lapel pins. 250 were initially ordered. With no cash in our new bank account, we asked each member for \$80, as a startup/initiation fee. This is why every new member is required to pay an \$80 initiation fee. We also initiated \$30 annual membership dues.

Our new By-Laws are only 4 pages compared to the 100+ set of SIR By-Laws. In our mission statement we clearly stated our purpose to be as follows:

“Stillwater Club is a men's club devoted to the education and enlightenment of senior men through regular meetings and activities.”

SIRs required members to attend 6 meeting per calendar year. Our new board decided we would only require attendance of 4 meetings per calendar year. SIRs had an “Inactive” status. Members could request to be placed on inactive status, thus relieving them of meeting attendance while remaining members. Some members used this status so they could play in golf activities and not attend meetings. Our board decided the “Inactive” status defeated our stated purpose. We were not a golf club, we were a social club. Thus, we eliminated the inactive status. As attendance chairman, I saw the need to accommodate members with medical conditions unable to temporarily attend meetings and established the “Medical Leave” status. While on medical leave, a member does not need to attend meetings. He remains a member but is not on the roster and does not participate in physical activities.

Monterey SIR Chapter #28 asked if they could be an affiliate of Stillwater. We told them we would help them form their own new club but we didn't want to create a new bureaucracy. They declined and have remained SIR #28.

In 2017, we received word that Gary Hornbuckle had suffered a massive heart attack in Idaho and passed away. The Board wanted to do something to honor Gary's memory because Gary was so instrumental in the formation of the Stillwater Club and major contributor since joining in 2002. Gary served as a director, secretary, Little SIR, Big SIR, and treasurer. Gary set up our accounting system, which allows us to deposit into individual accounts and thus eliminate the need to send in a check every time we plan on attending a luncheon. In Gary's memory, the Board decided to create the “Gary Hornbuckle Honor Roll”. Members, who actively make major contributions to the operation and management of the Stillwater Club over an extended period of

time, would be acknowledged by being placed on the Honor Roll. The honoree would be recognized at a luncheon and presented with a \$100 gift card to any facility owned by the Pebble Beach Company. This was not to be an annual award but to be given whenever the Board felt it was warranted. Bon Abercrombie was the first recipient of this award. To date, eight members have been so honored. They are recognizable to members by observing a “Star” on their name badge.

The Stillwater Club is now in its 13th year and is as vibrant as it was in 2011. This is due to the content of its membership. The willingness of individuals to step up and offer great leadership is the main reason for its success. The friendships developed over the years through our golf groups and social interaction has proven invaluable to me personally. I consider all members to be my friend.

In his love for the Stillwater Club, Jonathan Pellegrin established a scholarship fund naming it the Stillwater Club Scholarship Fund and administered through the Pebble Beach Foundation and the 1st Tee. Jonathan told me he wanted to do something for the club. The club, he said, was the best gathering of educated, well accomplished, and unassuming gentlemen he has ever had the privilege being associated with. Jonathan is now living in an assisted living facility in San Francisco but his annual contribution to the fund goes on and will continue after he is gone.

I must also acknowledge the close relationship we have developed with the Pebble Beach Company beginning with SIRs and now the Stillwater Club. We have been a steady and reliable client of the PBC for four decades. We participate in the annual Hickory Sticks fund raiser for the Pebble Beach Foundation. Many of our members volunteer for the annual AT&T Pro-Am golf tournament. These, along with the founding of the Jonathan Pellegrin/Stillwater Club Scholarship Fund have all helped build on our close relationship. From the PBC side, our membership needs to understand how the PBC treats us. The PBC does not charge us for the use of any of our meeting locations be it the Pebble Beach Room, the Ballroom at Spanish Bay, the Fairway One complex, or any other meeting location. The PBC only charges us for the actual meals served. They do not charge us for any un-served meals. The PBC allows us to tap into their audio system with our equipment. Try booking the Pebble Beach room for 90 people for a sit down three course lunch and you will find the cost to far exceed the \$4,860 they would charge us. The generous “Stillwater Pour” is another perk not found at any other PB location. We should never complain about the cost for lunch at Pebble Beach.

I believe the 30 founding SIR #115 members would be proud of what they initiated in 1983.

Revised: 8/31/2023