



## Michaywe Pines

# Gaylord Grows ‘Bigger’ – Now, it is *America’s* Summer Golf Mecca

By Susan Bairley

I remember Gaylord, Michigan, when it was Gaylord, Michigan. When I was a kid, it meant ‘the hills of Gaylord’ and Call of the Wild Museum, which my Dad would never stop at, despite our backseat pleas, as we ventured to our usual summer Douglas Lake destination. Gaylord golf was there, and beautiful. It just wasn’t on my family’s radar when swimming, sailing and bass fishing awaited.

Then 20 years ago, Gaylord took on a new persona – as a Golf Mecca destination and division of the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau. ‘Dem dere hills’ became “challenging golf holes with spectacular vistas and dramatic elevations” and a showcase for some of the world’s premier golf architects and designers. The result was an awesome setting for some of the best golf – if not THE best golf –

in the Midwest.

But that was 20 years ago, and this year, Gaylord's Midwest golf horizon has gotten considerably broader. Still beautiful, still challenging, now with 21 golf courses working together, the Gaylord Golf Mecca is branding itself as America's Summer Golf Mecca. And why not?

Recently, my husband Paul and I participated in Gaylord's annual FAM (familiarization) trip for media. We spent four days golfing nearly 80 holes, interspersed with three six-

hour sleeping nights, three abundant dinners and cocktail hours, three scrumptious breakfasts and two delicious lunches – and we barely scratched the surface of this worthy American golf destination.

We started our adventure at Treetops Resort, home to the Robert Trent Jones Sr. Masterpiece, Tom Fazio Premier and Rick Smith Tradition, Signature and Threetops courses. While arranging for at-home childcare caused us to miss the FAM prequel round at the Masterpiece, we enjoyed a great round on the

truly amazing nine-hole Threetops course. Every hole is unique, beautiful and dramatic – and none are as easy as they look. Paul and I were beside ourselves to have birdied and parred, respectively, the No. 3 Devil's Drop! If you haven't played this course yet, you need to put it on your "must-see" list and do it. It's that simple, America.

Day Two also took us to the classic Gaylord Country Club. Established in 1924, it moved to its current location, just west of Gaylord, in 1975. A rainy morning



Photo by Art McCafferty

### Treetops Ladies Golf School

slowed our start and we didn't quite complete 18 before we had to move on, but our time at Gaylord CC was wonderful. A traditional course in all ways, it was pretty, the greens were fast and the hole placements tough. Lunch at the clubhouse was well worth the stop. The grille serves generous portions and fresh fare, with Northern touches like Whitefish sandwiches – yum! Our Gaylord trip host, Kevin Frisch, had just won the Club Championship there the day before, so the performance bar was set pretty high for us visitors.

Day Three was a Michaywe Day. The Pines Course, which opened in 1973, offers spacious tree-lined fairways and the natural beauty of a mature course. It's friendly for higher handicap golfers, yet measures more than 7,000 yards from the championship tees to make it a challenging long course for the low handicapper.

**M**ichaywe's Mountain Lake is a Jerry Matthews design that recently was

remodeled by owner, Michael Tellshow, to make it more friendly. And to be quite honest, I can't imagine what less friendly would have felt like as the Mountain Lake plays with a fair amount of difficulty still. Not an easy one for mid-level golfers, it offers the low handicap player a test of accuracy, carry and steady putting.

Nonetheless, Mountain Lake has nine holes up the ski slopes, with fabulous Otsego County views, and nine holes around Lake Michaywe and along the Au Sable River. Now,



Photo by Art McCafferty

**Treetops Tom Fazio Premiere, Hole No. 9**

really, you can't get much more Northern Michigan than that!

One night and the morning of Day Four was not enough to spend at Otsego Club. Newly acquired by Osprey, the club is unique unto itself. And Osprey's Mike Biber and crew are just starting to transform this tradition-steeped, classic resort club into the legend Keith Gornick intended it to be. Multimillion dollar facility and room renovations are capturing the log-cabin ski and golf resort trappings with a contemporary blend of style and comfort. And long-time landmarks like the cozy Logmark Bar and geometric Pontresina Restaurant are being carefully preserved.

**T**he Tribute was especially enchanting on the morning we played. Shrouded in morning fog, Otsego's flagship course, designed by Rick Robbins and Gary Koch, provided an almost Disney-like golf experience; I almost wanted to pinch myself just to make sure it was real. Carved through 1,100 acres of hardwood forest, a long cart ride takes you along a winding woods path to the first tee and fairway, which beckon you to join the land of golf – deeper and deeper into the rolling landscape. With more than six miles of cart paths, and championship yardage that exceeds 7,000 yards, The Tribute is a tribute to Michigan golf at its best. As a matter of fact, from the third tee, the 20-mile view of the Sturgeon River Valley is a tribute to Michigan itself.

Photo by Paul Bairley



**Paul Beachneau**

Photo courtesy of Paul Bairley



**Susan and Paul Bairley**

Photo by Resort and Golf Marketing



**Gaylord Country Club**

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Photo by Art McCafferty

**Treetops Robert Trent Jones Masterpiece, Hole No. 18**

One of the best things about Gaylord's Golf Mecca is that its 21 courses can come up with nearly an unlimited array of golf packages and sometimes even free golf. This year, on the weekend of Oct. 19-21, for example, visitors who book an overnight stay at participating hotels will be able to play a free round of golf on one of the participating Gaylord Golf Mecca courses.

For more information on America's Summer (fall and spring!) Golf Mecca, visit [www.gaylordgolfmecca.com](http://www.gaylordgolfmecca.com). **MG**

Photo by the Umflex Group



Otsego Club, The Tribute, Hole No. 4

Photo by the Umflex Group



Otsego Club, The Tribute, Hole No. 10