



CARLSBAD'S MOST FAMOUS VALLEY

Ely Callaway changed the game of golf. His Callaway Golf changed the local business landscape.

Written by Ken Kebab



Many of us in Carlsbad like to brag about our fine city. Don't get us started about the spring beauty of The Flower Fields or the miles of beautiful beaches along our coast. And how about Carlsbad Village and the incredible restaurants and resorts that populate our downtown? And what visit isn't complete without a trip to Legoland or the Museum of Making Music?

Let's face it—we have a right to brag!

However, when was the last time you heard someone brag about Carlsbad's incredible "Titanium Valley"? Is it one of Carlsbad's secret hiking trails? Or a hidden valley full of minerals in our city? Or perhaps that's the name of the newest and hottest spot in the Village.

Actually, the Titanium Valley is an area just north of Palomar Airport Road that's also known as "The Epicenter of Golf, USA." Within a good five-iron shot lie four of golf's largest companies: Callaway, TaylorMade, Titleist and Cobra.

Named after the composite metal now used in many club heads, Titanium Valley employs more talented golf people and develops more advanced golf technology than anywhere else on earth, hands down. And with 44 golf courses within a 15-mile radius of Carlsbad, our city seemed like the perfect place to change the game of golf forever. At least that's what Ely Callaway, a lifelong golfer, believed.

A former president of the textile giant Burlington, he had just sold his successful winery, Callaway Wine, in Temecula, (he was one of the pioneer winemakers in the region), and used part of his profits to purchase half of a small golf company based in a Cathedral City garage. Hickory Sticks, USA, was known for its hickory shafts and steel cores and they were reportedly Callaway's favorite clubs at the time.

That's when Callaway discovered Carlsbad. According to a 1988 article in the Los Angeles Times, he said that he liked that there was "lots of land, lots of workers" and noted that

“The more I looked, the better I liked it.” Plus, there was the Carlsbad weather, which Callaway called “magic.”

In 1983, he moved Callaway Hickory Sticks to Carlsbad, purchased the other half of the company for \$400,000, became its president and ultimately changed the name to Callaway Golf. A year later another golf pioneer, Gary Adams, brought his TaylorMade company that specialized in “metal woods” out to Carlsbad from Illinois and the roots of the Titanium Valley were planted.

From selling his clubs out of the back of his Cadillac in Carlsbad and the surrounding area to the 1991 release of the Big Bertha driver (named after a German World War I cannon), Callaway woke up the “sleepy golf business” and revolutionized the game. “Betting the bank” on the 1991 PGA show in Orlando, Callaway ordered 60,000 club heads for the show, an unheard-of number of units, and revealed Big Bertha, with its strange sound and its oversized head, to the world of golf. The game was changed forever.

Noting Callaway’s success, rival companies beefed up their staff and upped their game, increasing budgets and designing and selling their own new clubs. It was a crazy time in the industry as Carlsbad golf companies recruited engineers from Boeing to help create better clubs and balls, and “spies” from competing companies were chased off the back hill of Callaway’s Testing Center in Carlsbad, high-powered binoculars and cameras in hand, as they tried to get a better look at Callaway’s latest club prototype.

Unlikely celebrities such as Alice Cooper, Bill Gates, Kenny G and Celine Dion advertised Callaway clubs as the company skyrocketed to \$843 million in sales in 1997. And with nearly 3,000 people spread out in 15 buildings working 24 hours a day creating golf clubs at the time, Callaway Golf was by far the industry leader.

During his last decade, Callaway spent time working on a book about his notable life and the secrets of his success. However, his untimely death in 2001 left the book unpublished until recently. Nicholas Callaway, Ely’s son, uncovered a treasure trove of handwritten notes and, working with co-editor Andrew Moorhead at Callaway Arts & Entertainment, has published “The Unconquerable Game” detailing his father’s lifetime in business and golf, and his role in creating Carlsbad’s Titanium Valley. Using AI technology, Nicholas has created an audiobook of “The Unconquerable Game” “voiced” by Callaway himself 24 years after his passing.

From textiles to wine to golf clubs, Ely Callaway always created a product that was “Demonstrably Superior and Pleasingly Different.” In fact, he was quoted as saying, “I’m not a good enough salesman

to sell a mediocre product.”

Callaway’s charisma, wisdom, marketing savvy and determination not only changed the game of golf but also gave Carlsbad locals another reason to brag. The company he created with his investment in a garage start-up in the desert continues to develop, innovate and thrive in Carlsbad’s famous Titanium Valley.



“THE MORE I LOOKED, THE BETTER I LIKED IT.” PLUS, THERE WAS THE CARLSBAD WEATHER, WHICH CALLAWAY CALLED “MAGIC.”



a) The Bertha Krupp Cannon was the inspiration for the name of the Callaway Big Bertha Driver. b) Ely Callaway with his longtime friend Arnold Palmer. c) Callaway was an accomplished golfer in his own right, as seen here at the Bing Crosby Clambake in the 1970s. d) Callaway with the Hickory Stick wedges that started it all. e) Before pioneering Titanium Valley in Carlsbad, Callaway founded one of the first vineyards in Temecula with the Callaway Vineyard and Winery. f) Callaway with an S2H2 iron, which helped spark the rapid advancement of golf club design and performance. g) Callaway with President Bill Clinton at the Del Mar Country Club (photos courtesy of Ely Callaway/Callaway Golf).

