

GEOFFREY CORNISH

(1914 -)

BACKGROUND

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Attended the University of British Columbia, earned a Masters in Agronomy from the University of Massachusetts. After graduation in 1935, was hired to evaluate soils for Capilano Golf Club in Vancouver, then under construction by architect Stanley Thompson. Joined Thompson and trained under him for four years before becoming greenskeeper at St. Charles Country Club in Winnipeg.

Served with the Canadian Army overseas during World War II, then returned to become an associate of Thompson. After a five-year association with turfgrass specialist Lawrence Dickinson in Massachusetts, he formed his own design firm in 1952.

His early practice involved mainly par-3 courses and small remodeling jobs. But contracts for regulation courses soon followed, and over next 40 years he planned more courses in the New England area than any other architect in history. Was more interested in spreading the game than in making a fortune, and often did complete jobs for a fraction of what other architects charged. Took Penn State graduate William G. Robinson as a partner in 1964. Robinson moved to the Pacific Northwest in 1977. In 1983, Brian Silva, a graduate landscape architect and agronomist, became his partner.

Authored numerous articles on course design and turfgrass as well as three books. The first, GOLF COURSE DESIGN - AN INTRODUCTION was prepared with Bill Robinson in 1971 and was widely distributed by the National Golf Foundation. The second, THE GOLF COURSE, co-authored with golf writer Ron Whitten, was a history of golf course architecture. First published in 1981, it became one of the widest-selling golf books of the decade. The third, THE ARCHITECTS OF GOLF, also with Whitten, was an updated version of the previous volume.

Conducted scores of design seminars across the country with fellow golf architect Robert Muir Graves over a period of more than 15 years. Served as President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects in 1975. Received numerous awards, including the Donald Ross Award from the ASGCA in 1982 and an Outstanding Service Award by the National Golf Foundation in 1984.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Geoff Cornish lectured repeatedly about three major considerations of golf design: maintenance, eye appeal and the game itself. His early works established that all three could be accommodated,

even when working with modest budgets. He was among the first designers to apply principles of art, including harmony, balance and proportion, to the science of course architecture. He felt each hole should work in harmony with terrain and backdrops, so his ponds often served as reflecting pools and his greensites often imitated distant mountain horizons. His bunkers were also site specific, soft ones when the surrounding ground was dominant, more elaborate ones when he felt he needed to give the course an individual personality.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Double greens serving two holes. (He was the first American architect to use them regularly.) An abundance of dogleg holes. Fairway edges mown in wavy contours rather than in straight lines.