

ROBERT TRENT JONES

(1906 -)

BACKGROUND

Born in England, moved to the United States with his parents at age 5. Became a scratch golfer while a teenager in Rochester, NY, but soon determined that a professional career was not for him. Attended Cornell University, where he personally selected classes to prepare him to be a golf course architect.

In 1930, became a partner with Canadian golf architect Stanley Thompson, but achieved only mild success before World War II. On his own after the war, courted the media and industry giants to land important jobs. Ended up doing courses for CEOs of IBM and Pan-Am, but it was the remodeling of Oakland Hills Country Club for the 1951 U.S. Open that set him apart. The difficulty of the course made Trent Jones a star.

By the mid-1960s, he became the most widely recognized course architect in history. By 1990, had planned over 450 courses in 42 states and 25 countries. His staff included many architects who later achieved individual success, including his sons Trent, Jr. and Rees, Frank Duane, Ron Kirby, Jay Morrish, Cabell Robinson, and Roger Rulewich, the only associate to remain with him throughout.

Authored many essays on course architecture, including sections of Martin Sutton's *GOLF COURSES - DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND UPKEEP* (2nd ed., 1950), Herbert Warren Wind's *THE COMPLETE GOLFER* (1954) and Will Grimsley's *GOLF - ITS HISTORY, EVENTS AND PEOPLE* (1966). Also wrote an autobiography, *GOLF'S MAGNIFICENT CHALLENGE*, with Larry Dennis in 1989.

He was also the subject of countless articles, the most significant of which was Herbert Warren Wind's profile in *New Yorker* magazine of August 4, 1951. It established the profession of golf course architecture on a higher level of public awareness.

A charter member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, he served as its President in 1950. Was the first recipient of the ASGCA's Donald Ross Award for outstanding contributions to golf course architecture.

Has been engaged in golf course architecture for 65 years, a record that exceeded even that of legends like Old Tom Morris, H.S. Colt and Donald Ross. His longevity, notoriety and reputation led him to be called the Frank Lloyd Wright of golf.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Always characterized it simply as "Hard Par, Easy Bogey." Considered himself a defender of the game against the onslaught of ever-improving players and equipment. Built courses exceeding 7,400 yards back in the late 1940s because he was convinced shorter courses would soon become obsolete. Built huge greens that placed a premium on putting. Used water hazards in new, enticing, exciting and aggravating ways.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Enormous tees (often 100 yards long) that accommodated four or even five separate sets of tee markers. Huge greens with distinct levels that provide big targets for duffers, smaller targets for professionals. Jagged edged bunkers intended to emulate windswept dunes. Fairways pinched at 260 yards by clusters of bunkers left and right. Bold water hazards that could be carried in heroic attempts to shave a stroke.