

# Paul Nevers: Six Decades of Golf

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

Paul Nevers is a walking time capsule of golf course experience.

He has been associated with golf from the 1930s to the present. At age 9, Paul began his golf career as a caddy on the Sylvania Country Club in Sylvania, Ohio. He became the club's caddy master at age 16. In those days, caddies helped rake bunkers, fill divots, and did other miscellaneous jobs on the course in addition to carrying bags during the day.

After high school, Paul continued to work on the course until he went into the Merchant Marine and served in World War II. Paul saw action in the Mediterranean Sea as a deck engineer during the

invasion of Africa and Italy and in the North Sea during the Battle of the Bulge in Europe. He received a Letter of Commendation from President Truman for his actions at Antwerp, Belgium.

Paul was attending the Merchant Marine Officer Candidate School in New London, Connecticut when the war ended and he was discharged.

Paul returned to Sylvania where he took over the golf course and worked until he was 28 years

Naples. Thus began the Florida chapter of Paul's career.

Paul's first Naples job was to install irrigation during the construction of the Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Course in 1957. He then joined in the construction of the Palm River Golf Course which was completed in 1959. Paul then started the construction of the Big Cypress Golf Course in 1962. The course became a private club and changed its name to The Country Club of Naples. He remained the superintendent until his retirement in 1987.

The construction and opening of two golf courses remains one of Paul's fondest career memories.

"It was a proud feeling when the courses turned out as planned. I will never forget the applause of the people at the opening ceremonies," Paul recalled. "The other really memorable part of my career has been meeting some very nice people in the business and in education."

As Paul reflected on the changes in the business over the years, he talked about the English-made push greensmowers that could cut as low as 5/16 to 1/4 inch. The 1 to 1 1/4-inch high fairways were groomed with steel-wheeled, hard-seated tractors. The 5-gang cutting units had to be manually lifted and locked in place with rods for transporting.

Work began by lantern light as early as 3 or 4 a.m. There were few chemicals in the early days. Fertilizers and chemicals were often hand mixed and very coarse grained.

The growth and development of turf education has been one the most remarkable changes Paul has witnessed over the years. He thoroughly enjoyed working with Dr.'s Horn, Perry and Dickson from the University of Florida on the turf test plots at the Country Club of Naples.

He has marveled at and enjoyed the evolution of golf maintenance equipment and computerized irrigation systems. He is also pleased by the large number

of people playing and supporting the game of golf.

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## 1994 FGCSA Presidents' Awards

Bill McKee  
**Paul Nevers**  
 Lou Oxnevad  
 Joe Snook  
 Royce Stewart  
 Lonnie Stubbs

*The FGCSA President's Award for Lifetime Service was established in 1990 to honor superintendent pioneers who were instrumental in state and local affairs but who may no longer be actively involved in the FGCSA. Qualifications include 20 years or more of service to the turfgrass industry, 10 of which were as a superintendent.*

old. He started and operated his own concrete/masonry business for five years. At the age of 33, he married his wife Evala, and they moved to

# One of the real pioneers of the FGCSA

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Paul's successful career was nudged and nurtured along by mentors and peers. He credits Louis Cuiapetta, the golf pro at the Sylvania C. C. with getting him interested in golf as a career. And then, there was Wilbur Waters, the superintendent at the Inverness C.C. in Toledo, Ohio.

"Wilbur took me under his wing and showed me the real professional side to superintending.



*Evala and Paul Nevers go through the buffet at the Crowfoot weekend at Grand Cypress. Evala received her own "President's Award" a few years ago — President Ronald Reagan presented her with Girl Scouting's highest award.*

We talked long and often about the business. He was a good friend and colleague. I had some really good times with Dr. Horn and the professors from U. of F. We did the early work with glyphosate (Round Up) at the C.C. of Naples."

Paul is also a successful husband and father to

complement his golf career. His wife of 37 years, Evala, was busy raising their three daughters. She also earned the highest Girl Scouting honor in the nation and received it from President Reagan. She is still active in Girl Scout affairs.

The Nevers girls have made their own marks in the world.

Melodee graduated from the Lake City Golf Operations program and was an Assistant Superintendent for five years. She now owns and operates her own landscape business. Jennifer attended the University of Florida and is now working in the Admissions Department at U. of F. Suzanna was in the Marines. She married and has two children, Samantha and Tony. She lives in Redwood City, Calif.

Paul says, "Our home is on the first hole at the C. C. of Naples. The children have all grown up on the golf course. They loved the outdoors and the wildlife in our yard especially during the early construction days."

Paul Nevers is one of those real pioneers of the FGCSA. He remembers going to Fort Lauderdale to a meeting of 25-30 superintendents at Pier 66. "I was the fifth one to sign up. We tried to charter a state association. We struggled along and things died down for a few years before it got going again!"

Fellow Everglades Chapter founding member, Bob Sanderson, recalls those early days. "Paul, is a real jolly fellow. You like to be around him. I counted on him the most to help get the Everglades Chapter off the ground. He made calls and did whatever was asked to get everybody involved. He is just a super guy!"

With the business so fast paced today, Paul has zeroed in on the current trends.

"Expectations are real high these days. The players are always demanding more! The acceptance level has increased!"

If that is the case, what advice does Paul have for new or aspiring superintendents?

"Be ready to change! New equipment, new methods, new grasses will necessitate changes in practices. However, stand by your convictions! Never be afraid to stand up for what is the right thing to do!"

Our congratulations to Paul Nevers, a superintendent who stood up for us in the early days.