

Lou Oxnevad: In the Old Tom Morris Mold

BY DAN JONES, CGCS

Today's designs...tomorrow's white elephants?

All the new golf courses have shown a trend toward severe, highly penal designs that frustrate the average golfer and, in the long run, alienate a growing number of new golfers or old members. These are the ones who pay the bills.

The average golfer wants a course that makes him strive to play a better game without penalizing him for every slight mistake. It is much easier to build a fancy course, impossible to score on, where money is no object, than to improve on a very fine proven course.

The above is a typical remark by Lou Oxnevad. Straight forward and to the point. No politics, no side steps, just the straight honest facts.

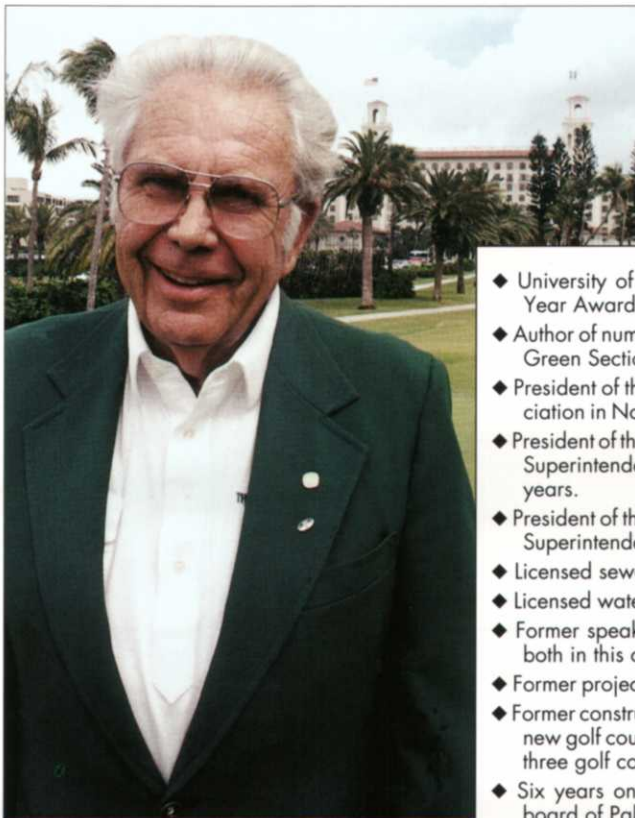
Lou was born in San Bernardino, California, 67 years ago. He is married to Selema, and they have four grown daughters. Lou's parents divorced when he was six years old, and Lou went to 13 different schools while growing up. He attended a one-room school house which provided 12 grades with one teacher for 38 students.

So, how did Lou get into the superintending business? We have to go back to World War II to get the answer.

Lou served with the 82nd Airborne and upon discharge in 1947 moved to Northern California, where he worked for the Division of Parks and Highways. He and Selema raised flowers for arrangements at resorts. They lost their home to a forest fire and moved back to Louisburg, North Carolina, where Lou attended North Carolina State University, majoring in horticulture.

Lou and Selema started a small nursery, and Lou worked part-time for the state measuring and plotting land for contour plowing and crop rotation. Louisburg has a nine-hole golf course with sand greens. They asked Lou to take it over and convert the greens to grass. A group from Saudi Arabia came over to Green Hill CC to learn how to maintain sand greens. Lou converted the greens and used a one-man paporinator bag to spray the greens.

Lou then moved on to Carolina CC,



Two class acts: Lou Oxnevad and The Breakers Hotel
Photo by Dan Jones

Lou Oxnevad: A Man For All Seasons

- ◆ University of Florida Horticulture of the Year Award for 1975.
- ◆ Author of numerous articles for the USGA Green Section.
- ◆ President of the Triangle Turf Grass Association in North Carolina for two years.
- ◆ President of the South Florida Golf Course Superintendent's Association for two years.
- ◆ President of the Florida State Golf Course Superintendent's Association.
- ◆ Licensed sewage plant operator.
- ◆ Licensed water treatment plant operator.
- ◆ Former speaker at national conventions both in this country and in England.
- ◆ Former project manager on two projects.
- ◆ Former construction superintendent on six new golf courses and the remodeling of three golf courses.
- ◆ Six years on the planning and zoning board of Palm Beach Gardens.
- ◆ Formerly involved with the drilling of 147 wells, one of which was 2,220 feet deep.
- ◆ Currently doing consulting work for croquet courts and golf courses.
- ◆ Designer and builder of waterfalls and estate gardens.

where he rebuilt the greens and changed them from common Bermuda to Tifton 328 bermudagrass. The total maintenance budget was \$42,372 and a walking greens mower cost less than \$200.

Lou then went to McGregor Downs CC, where he built the golf course in a virgin forest. He spent the first year cutting timber and building a lake. He hydro seeded the greens with Penncross bentgrass.

In 1968, Lou moved to Florida to take the superintendent position at Lost Tree CC in North Palm Beach. Fred and Glen Klauk worked for Lou during summer vacations and helped install a new irrigation system. While at Lost Tree, Lou built two golf courses at John's Island.

In 1972, Lou went to Riviera CC in Miami and rebuilt the greens. There he rowplanted 419 bermudagrass into common bermudagrass.

In 1980, Lou built Highridge CC in West Palm Beach under the watchful eye of golf course architect Joseph Lee.

In 1984, Lou worked for Ransome Mowers getting the Florida market established.

Then in 1985, Lou found a home at

the Breakers Hotel and Club in Palm Beach. For ten years, Lou took pride in caring for the golf course and hotel grounds. Lou remained at the Breakers until his retirement on April 1, 1995. (No fooling.)

Lou has done so much for the golf course superintendents in Florida. In 1975, he asked Dan Jones to get involved with the Florida Green Magazine. Lou trained and encouraged many of our golf course superintendents. For 11 years Lou represented us on the USGA Green Section Committee. Lou was the first certified golf course superintendent in the state of Florida. Now there are more than 125 in our state.

The list could go on and on. Lou has represented his profession well. He can look back with pride on his contributions to our industry, and I wish him well as he enters into another challenge — retirement.