Dey left positive legacy for golf

"There was no one like him and never will be. He was a fighter who believed in doing the right thing." That observation by William G. Bengyfield, recently retired as national director of the United States Golf Association’s Green Section, perhaps best summed up longtime friend Joseph C. Dey Jr.

Dey died March 4 at age 83 at his home in Locust Valley, N.Y., after a five-year battle with emphysema.

Dey turned around Bengyfield’s life. In the U.S. Air Force during the Korean Conflict, Bengyfield was considering the military as a career when he received a letter from Dey inquiring of possible interest in a job with the Green Section.

Bengyfield’s feel have been on the ground since.

Dey, who with Richard Tufts held the Green Section together in its formative years, told Green Section personnel that a shoulder patch on their blue jackets reading “Greenspeople” might be apposite. "You’re not present to make golf rules," he admonished.

As for intervening in club disputes, Dey said the answer was simple. "Decide what is best for the game and forget the politics."

In 35 years with the USGA, Dey helped shepherd that organization from a small operation to a group respected around the world.

He took on perhaps his toughest task rather late in his career. In January 1969 he became the first commissioner of the PGA Tour. Touring professionals and the PGA of America were sharply divided. Diplomacy, some tough talk and respect for Dey’s unwavering demands for fairness healed the split.

He served as secretary of the World Amateur Golf Council from its inception in 1958 until 1969.

Golf’s gain was journalism’s loss.

Dey dropped out of the University of Pennsylvania to become a part-time sports writer with the New Orleans Times-Picayune. Next came posts at the Philadelphia Public Ledger and Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, and duty included covering football and the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team.

His specialty, though, was golf, and his reporting highlight was a shot-by-shot description of Bobby Jones completing the Grand Slam in the 1930 U.S. Amateur at Merion (Pa.) Cricket Club.

His last tournament coverage as a sports writer was the 1934 U.S. Amateur at The Country Club of Brookline, Mass. Frank Hardt, USGA secretary, recommended Dey as the new executive secretary.

Pierce said it

In a story in the February issue announcing Pioneer Peat, Inc.’s new soil blenders, president Mike Pierce commented on the machines making blending more affordable.

The quote was mistakenly attributed to Chuck Dixon of International Sports Turf Research Center.