Prominent New England course owner Friel dies

NASHUA, N.H. — Phillip J. Friel Jr., 83, a former golf pro who owned and operated 13 golf courses in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, died here Aug. 30.

Friel was born in Boston and served in the U.S. Army during World War II before becoming the pro at Woburn (Mass.) Country Club (CC). He later worked as head pro at Bellevue Country Club in Melrose, Mass., and Nashua (N.H.) Country Club.

He enjoyed considerable success as a golfer, competing in seven PGA championships and winning the New England PGA as well as the Maine and New Hampshire Opens.

But he had his greatest impact on the New England golf scene as a course developer, owner and operator. While the head pro at Nashua CC, he designed and built Greenmeadow Golf Club in Hudson, N.H., in 1960.

He and his sons — Phillip, Thomas and David — went on to design, build and acquire numerous courses throughout New England.

In addition to Greenmeadow, Friel Golf Management's Massachusetts operations include Beverly Golf and Tennis, Cape Cod CC in Hingham, and Hampden CC. New Hampshire courses include CC of New Hampshire in North Sutton, Overlook Golf Club (GC) in Hollis, Pheasant Ridge GC in Gilford, Souhegan Woods GC in Amherst, Waumbek GC in Jefferson, Whip-Poor-Will GC in Hudson, White Mountain GC in Ashland, and World Cup Golf Center in Hudson; and Foster (R.L.) CC.

"He was a very thorough person in terms of what he saw and wanted done on a golf course," said Chuck Welch, head superintendant at Greenmeadow Golf Club in Amherst. "We had a lot of competition, but when you were out there, you knew you were working with someone who knew what he was doing."

"He had a very good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods Golf Course in Amherst, N.H., who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

"We had a lot of competition, but when you were out there, you knew you were working with someone who knew what he was doing."

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

"We had a lot of competition, but when you were out there, you knew you were working with someone who knew what he was doing."

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Friel remembered by those he helped

Editor's note: Jeffrey Brown is superintendant at Souhegan Woods Golf Course in Amherst, N.H. Golf Course News asked him to write this article shortly after the recent death (see obituary at left) of Phil Friel.

Brown was one of a group of five teenage boys — Brown, his brother Mickey, Peter Drown, Bill Andrews and Greg Misudilakis — who were introduced to the game at Mr. Friel's Green Meadow Country Club in Hudson, N.H., a quarter of a century ago. "We grew up playing golf together at Mr. Friel's course and ended up in the golf business mainly because of him," Brown said.

By JEFF BROWN

"It's difficult to put 25 years of friendship and golf experiences into a few words. My first encounter with Mr. Friel was at age 12, when he showed me the way off the course for spending too much time hunting for lost balls in the woods. I think Peter and Mickey had similar experiences. Mr. Friel kicked us off so many times, I finally gave up and offered us all jobs.

"I enjoyed considerable success as a golfer, competing in seven PGA championships and winning the New England PGA as well as the Maine and New Hampshire Opens.

But he had his greatest impact on the New England golf scene as a course developer, owner and operator. While the head pro at Nashua CC, he designed and built Greenmeadow Golf Club in Hudson, N.H., in 1960.

He and his sons — Phillip, Thomas and David — went on to design, build and acquire numerous courses throughout New England.

In addition to Greenmeadow, Friel Golf Management's Massachusetts operations include Beverly Golf and Tennis, Cape Cod CC in Hingham, and Hampden CC. New Hampshire courses include CC of New Hampshire in North Sutton, Overlook Golf Club (GC) in Hollis, Pheasant Ridge GC in Gilford, Souhegan Woods GC in Amherst, Waumbek GC in Jefferson, Whip-Poor-Will GC in Hudson, White Mountain GC in Ashland, and World Cup Golf Center in Hudson; and Foster (R.L.) CC.

"He was a very thorough person in terms of what he saw and wanted done on a golf course," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Greenmeadow Golf Club in Amherst. "We had a lot of competition, but when you were out there, you knew you were working with someone who knew what he was doing."

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.

"He was always reading articles about grass and was a great one for experimenting," said Chuck Welch, head superintendent at Nonesuch River Golf Club in Scarborough, Maine, who worked for Friel at Sable Oaks Golf Club (a former Friel property) in nearby South Portland.

"He had a good eye for what needed to be changed to make a golf course more playable for the average golfer. He was one of the most gracious people I ever met."

Jeff Brown, head superintendent at Souhegan Woods in Amherst, N.H., worked for Friel most of the past 25 years.
Friends remember Friel

Continued from page 9

on the same high school golf team. Mr. Friel would always make himself available to us while we practiced after school. Greg recalled how, "Mr. Friel would see me at the range. He'd come over and ask 'How's it going?' Then always 'Let me see you hit one.' Those were some of the best days of our lives."

We were all very competitive and liked beating one another. We still do today. We won the Tri-City Tournament one year, with Peter making a key putt on the last hole to give us the title by a single stroke. Mr. Friel can take some credit for that putt.

By the late 1970s we were all working for Mr. Friel at Green Meadow. His nephew, Dennis Friel, was the superintendent. Dennis taught us the techniques he and his uncle had perfected for growing grass. We can all still remember Mr. Friel riding his mini bike around while checking out the course.

By the early 1980s our careers had begun to take shape. Peter became superintendent at Green Meadow. I was in college and working as Peter's assistant. Mickey was contemplating turf school.

Greg was the assistant pro at the Whip. Billy had graduated from college and was working as the assistant superintendent at Wentworth-by-the-Sea in Portsmouth while contemplating turning pro. The following year, Mickey, Greg and I enrolled at the University of Massachusetts' turf school.

After graduation, Greg returned to Green Meadow as Peter's assistant. Mickey came to Texas to work for me at Austin Country Club (ACC), where we were both fortunate to meet and befriend the late Harvey Penick, the longtime pro who coached Tom Kite and Ben Crenshaw and wrote "The Little Red Book."

The turf experience and knowledge of the game we gained from Mr. Friel while at Green Meadow helped us prepare ACC for the Harvey Penick Invitational.

While Mickey and I were in Texas, and Peter and Greg were running Green Meadow, Billy was working at becoming a golf pro.

"It was Mr. Friel," Billy recalled, "who called the golf director at John D. MacArthur Golf Club [in West Palm Beach, Fla.] and secured my golf pro apprenticeship."

I returned to New Hampshire in the mid-1980s and began work...