

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.



Phillip Friel Jr.

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 Hatchville, 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.I.) 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 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," Brown said. "He always wanted to find new ways to do something on the golf course. He never wanted you to fertilize 18 greens the same way. He'd have us fertilize half a green this way and half that way to see what worked best. As long as you worked with him, he was very loyal to his superintendents..."

"If you listened to him and had a bad year, he didn't use that as an excuse to fire you. He really cared about people. He'll be missed."

Friel's sons continue to operate the family business.



Left to right, Norm Pelletier, Phil Friel, Pete Drown and Jeff Brown.

Friel remembered by those he helped

Editor's note: Jeffrey Brown is superintendent 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 teenaged boys — Brown, his brother Mickey, Peter Drown, Bill Andrews and Greg Misodoulakis — who were introduced to the game at 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 JEFFREY 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, he finally gave up and offered us all jobs.

Billy and Greg grew up on the other side of town at a semiprivate course called Whip-Poor-Will, which Mr. Friel later bought. Billy, who eventually became a professional golfer, began taking golf lessons from Mr. Friel at age 15. According to Billy: "My father knew I loved golf and wanted to be a golf pro. So he talked Mr. Friel into giving me lessons."

Greg met Mr. Friel for the first time at a golf clinic held at Green Meadow. We were laughing at how many times Mister came up to us on the driving range, grabbed our left hands and turned them over. After every session he would chuckle and say "Don't you write this stuff down?"

In the mid-1970s, the five of us played

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Valid complaints elude even the pros

Editor's note: This is a response to articles in the September issue regarding the drought plaguing the Northeast.

To the editor:

When the superintendents of the Northeast Region golf clubs try and explain to their members how they were affected by the prolonged drought, their members may point to the comments by Lee Janzen, in the *Chicago Tribune*, during the PGA which stated that "bad weather is no excuse for not having perfect greens."

His comments and other similar ones by a few other complainers will hold more weight than the golf course superintendent's valid reasoning. My question to Tiger Woods would be: "How can you shoot 10 under par, win the event and then complain about the course?"

Gary Grigg, CGCS, MG
Naples, Fla.

Interns and the learning curve

To the editor:

I couldn't agree more with Terry Buchen's article about turf students and assistant superintendents. As usual, Terry enlightens us with an excellent article.

Personally, starting at the bottom and working at low-budget golf courses has been a valuable asset in this profession. One needs to be very savvy, learn a number of skills and work quite hard to produce a quality playing surface when not having all the tools. We have also heard from interns at our course who have

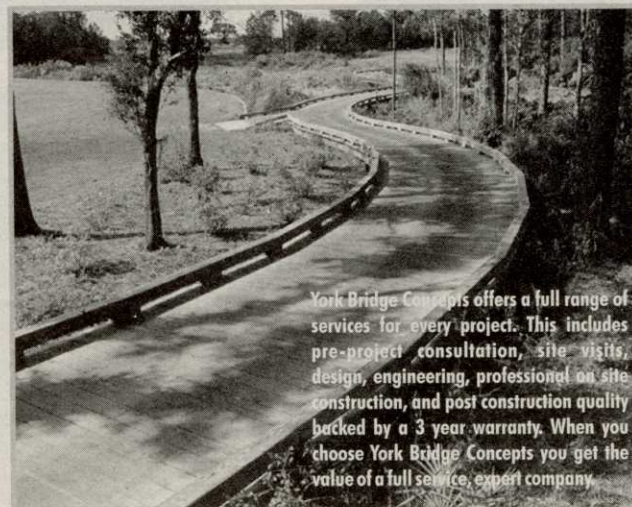
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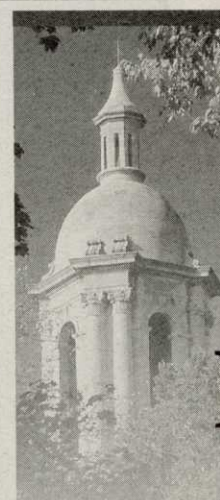


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Nicklaus — Jack, Jack II — team at Aliso Viejo

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we enjoy the relationship. The commitment has always been to quality and that did not change here."

"The Aliso Viejo project presented a unique opportunity for both my father and me to create a golf course in an urban setting with a rolling hill-

side environment," said young Jack.

"This allowed us to design a course that focused on the strategy of the game of golf. The various elevation changes in the course complemented this philosophy."

Maybe the most dramatic change comes at the par-3 6th

hole of the Creek nine, where a short-iron tee shot drops some 90 feet from tee to green.

From a tee that provides a view of the entire valley, the player surveys a wide but shallow green guarded by a bunker in front and thick, native rough behind, making club selection almost as important as execution.

On the Ridge nine, both the 4th and 9th holes play dramatically downhill from the namesake natural ridge that cuts through the property. At just 360 yards, the 4th dictates that the tee shot — likely played with something less than a driver — be placed right of a long bunker that guards the left side of the

fairway and short of another bunker in the fairway some 240 yards off the tee.

From there, a short-iron approach is played to a green heavily guarded by water and sand.

The same lake that wraps around part of the 4th green also protects the putting surface at No. 9. This time, from tees perched high on the ridge, a drive must stay left of the waste bunker to set up a good approach angle at this 411-yard, par-4 hole.

"Our design at Aliso Viejo places the emphasis on precision rather than power," said the younger Nicklaus. "With a variety of tee locations and the proper weaving in of the bunkers, water and rough, you can allow the golfer the choice of different landing areas and shot strategies. You always want a course that is challenging, but still fair. The Aliso Viejo Course does this."

"My father and I have had the opportunity to co-design numerous projects," young Jack said. "Each time we're asked to collaborate on a project it is both a treat for me and a benefit for the client."

"When we join our design minds we are able to feed off each other's like and dislikes, strengths and subtleties, to create the best possible golfing experience."

Letter on interns

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worked at other high-caliber clubs, that they did not get the time spent with them or a diversity of job duties.

We limit the number of interns to one or two for this reason. Don't get me wrong as it would be great to have a half dozen or more employees who are dedicated to the profession and have some experience.

But it is not fair to the students who are interning to learn more. It is hard for a superintendent to spend time with a couple of interns in addition to the training we do daily with our key people, i.e. assistants, equipment manager and spray and irrigation technicians.

My message here is the same as Terry's. When looking for an internship or changing jobs to enhance your career, interview the superintendent so you get the most out of what you are striving to achieve.

And don't forget the small unknown golf courses that are out there because there are truly some diamonds in the rough.

Sincerely,
Stephen Maas
The Valley Club
Hailey, Idaho

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