

BORN: September 10, 1929, in Latrobe, Western Pennsylvania. Nowadays he spends the warm months of the year there, but makes his winter home in the Orlando, Florida, area.

MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: US Masters – 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964; US Open – 1960; Open Championship – 1961, 1962

ARNOLD PALMER won the United States Amateur Championship in 1954 and, turning professional the following year, won the Canadian Open for the first of his 61 victories on the US PGA Tour. Over the next four years Arnold won 11 more tournaments including the 1958 US Masters, but that was only a prelude to an astonishing decade to come.

1960 was perhaps Arnold's golden year. He again won the US Masters, to the delight of his new fans who became known as Arnie's Army. Their march continued to the US Open where Arnold shot 65 in the final round to overcome a seven-shot deficit and pass 12 other contenders. Although he did not win the third leg of the Grand Slam, the Centenary Open Championship at St Andrews, he returned to win the Open in 1961 and 1962, and other stars from the US PGA Tour followed him restoring the Open to its pre-eminence amongst the Major championships.

Arnold won the US Masters again in 1962 and 1964, and was indisputably the dominant figure in world golf when he won the inaugural World Matchplay Championship at Wentworth in 1964. In all, Arnold added 19 overseas titles to the 61 he won in the United States. After turning 50 in September 1979, Palmer won the first Senior event he entered – the 1980 PGA Seniors Championship – and he went on to win the US Seniors Open the following year. Arnold has won 12 Senior titles to date, taking his competitive earnings to \$4,721,436.

Greenkeeper's

Chris Boiling joins Arnie's Army at Royal Lytham and St Annes and talks to the golfing legend about course design

Arnold Palmer is the son of a greenkeeper – and could easily have followed in his father's footsteps. His brother Jerry did. He took over from Milfred J ('Deke') Palmer as the superintendent at Latrobe Country Club in Pennsylvania. Now he is also the general manager at the course where his father started working at the age of 16 and continued until his death in 1976. MJ worked his way up to superintendent and then to pro-greenkeeper. "He ended up being both for 50 years until he died at the age of 72," says Arnold, who bought the 18-hole course in the early '70s.

For sentimental reasons? "Well, yes, I liked it and it was where I was raised. It's a great golf course," he told me as he practised for the Senior British Open at Royal Lytham and St Annes.

Latrobe is a small industrial town in Western Pennsylvania at the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains about 50 miles east of Pittsburgh.

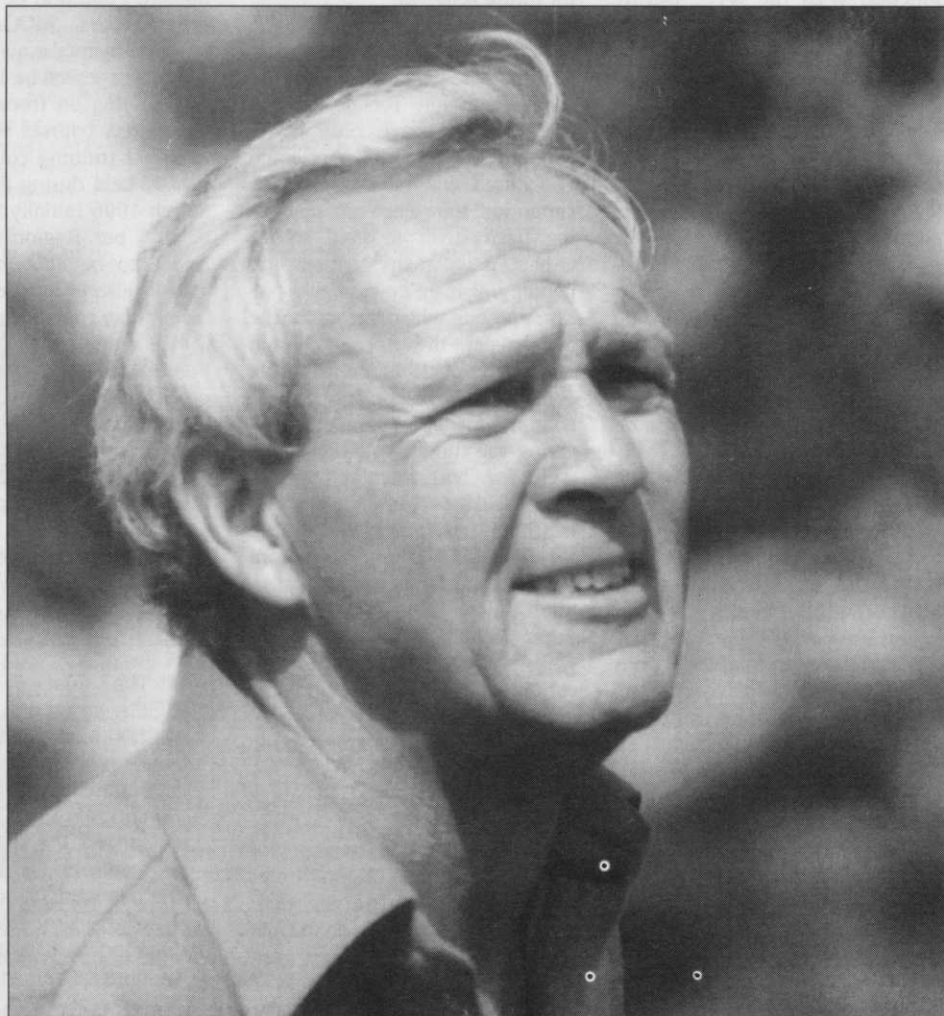
This is where Arnold learned his art using cut-down clubs. "My father was my only teacher," he recalls. "He gave me my first lesson – how to hold the club – when I was four years old. It lasted about five minutes and my lessons over the years never lasted much more than 10. I remember he put my hands on the club, showed me how to grip it and said 'Don't ever change it'. And I use the same grip today as I used then."

This grip and his distinctive swing have helped him win 92 tournaments, including the US Masters (four times), US Open (once) and British Open (twice).

His father also taught him about courses. "I worked with him building the course at Latrobe and learned a lot from his theories. He was a bit of the old school especially where things like drainage were concerned. It was all surface drainage then."

Helping his father build an additional nine holes at Latrobe in 1964 was Arnold's introduction to golf course design and construction, and he continued to stay involved with the design of courses on a limited basis during the heyday of his tournament career.

His call to design during this period was



son makes good...

through friends and associates requesting his expertise for their golf course projects. On several projects during this time (1969-71) he worked with noted architect Frank Duane.

The interest and popularity in golf course development grew in leaps and bounds in the '60s and '70s. And, as you'd expect, the golf course design services of the game's most dramatic and popular champion also increased rapidly.

In 1971 Arnold Palmer and golf course architect Ed Seay began working together – a partnership that continues today. Palmer's executive vice president and chief operating officer Ed was one of Arnold's playing partners during his Royal Lytham warm-up, with Arnold offering the less accomplished golfer this simple but effective piece of advice: "Keep your head still"

The cornerstone of Arnold Palmer's and Ed Seay's design philosophy is creating and producing the kind of golf courses for which the company's clients are asking. Most often they are looking for fun, beauty, excitement and challenge. Seldom is a course of extreme difficulty requested.

"I believe in traditional straight forward design that produces courses with lasting quality and that are exciting and enjoyable for all players. The designs are founded on the principals and strategies of the game and are sensitive to the land and the environment," says Arnold. "All of the great courses blend in naturally with the existing environment. We respect and try to preserve the existing terrain and environment on every course as much as it will allow us to do so and still stay within the framework of playability. Put simply, we do not force or design unnecessary gradework or features.

"Over the years I think we have persuaded a lot of people that you can build a friendly type golf course and do it in a way that will be good for the average player but that at the same time you can make it difficult enough on an occasion for the professional."

The greenkeeper's son was quick to add, though: "And I think of maintenance-friendly golf courses too. I like to keep the golf courses so that they are easily maintained and I think you're going to see, as time goes on, more of that because of the extremely high cost of maintaining some golf courses."

One thing Palmer's courses have in common is the absence of gimmicks and trademarks. "Hopefully all our courses are different. We do not have a design trademark, nor do we want one," confirms Seay. "We do, however, strive to design all of our courses so that they are beautiful, constructed soundly within the budget and are fun to play."

"I truly enjoy designing fun and challenging golf courses," adds Arnold.

Nothing in UK

The Palmer-Seay touch has left its mark on

courses located throughout the world. Seay, who is a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, had the distinction on his own, prior to his joining Palmer in 1971, of designing many well known courses. The most prominent of these is Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, which was the site of the Tournament Players Championship from 1977-81, as well as some 100 other courses and residential developments in the United States.

The Palmer Course Design Company has been involved in over 200 golf course projects covering 27 states, as well as internationally in Japan, Thailand, Korea, China, Taiwan, Guam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Spain, Australia, Canada, Philippines, and the first 18 hole course in mainland China.

But, as yet, they have done nothing in the UK. "I would like to know why," commented 65-year-old Arnold.

"I would too," interjected Ed.

'I knew as a youngster that I needed to be outside on a golf course, either playing or maintaining it'

"We have negotiated proposals to do golf courses in the UK on several occasions over the years but, unfortunately, for either financial or personal reasons on the part of the clients, it has not become a reality," explained Arnold whose company is currently working on 52 projects.

Sadly, for him, none are links courses.

"I would love to build a links course. We have built a couple but we don't have the opportunity often to build links golf courses," he said.

The most recent one they did – The Links of Kuilima, Kahuku, in Hawaii – received widespread acclaim and was rated by Golf Digest as one of the top four new resort courses in 1993.

"It's on the ocean and I think it qualifies very well as a links course. It is a very good golf course, one that is very difficult in the right conditions but a very playable golf course," he said. "It's one of my favourites."

Gets involved

When he is designing a course, Arnold likes to get involved in every aspect including the specification of grasses "I enjoy it – the nitty-gritty, the day-to-day stuff is fun."

As well as Ed, he receives tremendous help and support from Harrison Minchew and Erik Larsen, vice presidents and senior golf course architects with the Palmer Course Design Company.

"All of us work very well together. I give

them my feelings and thoughts on a particular hole or course and they fit it in," explains Arnold.

He knew from a very early age that golf was something he was going to do. "I knew as a youngster that I needed to be outside on a golf course, either playing or maintaining it," he recalls.

While he was growing up at Latrobe he used to take on and beat his fellow caddies, and continued his winning ways when he went to high school, dominating the game in Western Pennsylvania. He won his first of five West Penn Amateur Championships when he was 17, competed successfully in national junior events and went to Wake Forest University (then College), where he became no1 man on the golf team and one of the leading collegiate players of that time.

Deeply affected by the death in a car crash of his close friend and classmate, Bud Worsham, younger brother of 1947 US Open champion Lew Worsham, Arnold withdrew from college during his senior year and began a three-year hitch in the Coast Guard. His interest in golf rekindled while he was stationed in Cleveland. He was working there as a salesman and playing amateur golf after his discharge from the service when he won the US Amateur in 1954 following his second straight victory in the Ohio Amateur earlier that year.

It was during this period that he met Winifred Walzer at a tournament in Eastern Pennsylvania. They were married shortly after he turned professional in the autumn of 1954. "I thought about doing a lot of other things, including aviation (he pilots his own Cessna Citation VII jet aircraft). But while I was a manufacturer's rep I decided that I really wanted to be out in the air and playing golf."

During his illustrious career he achieved more than most men can dream about. But, he confessed to me, there are two unfulfilled goals. He has given up hope of ever achieving the first, but the second is still a possibility.

"I have never won the PGA Championship. This is certainly something that I would have loved to have accomplished in my younger days," admits Arnold, who finished second three times and bowed out of the competition earlier this year after 37 appearances.

"Secondly, I would like to continue to build golf courses and do design work, especially something that I haven't done yet – create a golf course totally following my own conception of what should be done in its design and construction."

All his design work to date has reflected his client's wishes, and he has not yet designed a course that just satisfies him or his company.

Even though Arnold is 65 he shows no signs of slowing down, so one day we may just see a course that is totally an Arnold Palmer design. And it may be his first course in Britain...