



John Coghill, Sr.: A Name Synonymous with Progress and Perfection

John R. Coghill, the "Squire" of Silver Lake Country Club in Orland Park, passed away on February 10, 2003, at the age of 88.

Mr. Coghill grew up at Coghill C.C., a 36-hole daily-fee golf course in Lemont, owned by his father and uncles.

In 1937, he and his father, Bert, purchased Silver Lake, an 18-hole course in Orland Park. A few years later, they acquired Euclid Hills, a private Masonic club adjacent to Silver Lake, and expanded the facility to 36 holes.

Mr. Coghill graduated from the University of Illinois in 1938; and on December 25, 1939, married Grace Dunne. The newlyweds honeymooned at Professor Lawrence Dickinson's winter turf school at Amherst, Massachusetts. They were blessed with three sons: John Jr., Dick and Bert.

Mr. Coghill was a captain in the infantry in World War II, and was wounded in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 1944.

In June 1958, Mr. Coghill invited the USGA to hold their amateur public links championship on his North Course at Silver Lake. Since then, he has hosted the National Left-handers (1968), the Insurance Youth Classic (1978) and a U.S. Open qualifying (1988).

Mr. Coghill was a charter member of the Midwest Turf Foundation at Purdue University. In 1962, with his friends Paul Burdett, Robert Johnson, Ben Warren and Ted Woehrl, he

organized the Illinois Turf Foundation at Champaign-Urbana.

In 1962, he contracted architect Buz Didier to build an executive nine holes called Rolling Hills, expanding the club to 45-hole status. Rolling Hills' were the first greens seeded to Pennecross bent in Chicago.



John Coghill, Sr. (right) celebrating John MacGregor Jr.'s 75th birthday at the Ravisloe C.C. in 1960.

In 1965, when Moraine Valley College was established on the site of the Warren Sod Nursery, Mr. Coghill served as president of the board of trustees until 1971.

In 1977, Silver Lake added racquetball courts to the clubhouse, and actively pursued the banquet business to stay busy during the nongolfing season.

Mr. Coghill was an avid golfer and played at least nine holes early each weekday morning. In the afternoon, he was on the practice tee. Saturday and Sunday mornings would find him in the pro shop greeting customers.

In 1982, John and Grace sold the golf course to their three sons and retired to Jupiter, Florida. There, he relaxed as green chairman of the J.D.M. Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens.

Mr. Coghill liked to read and often my mailbox was cluttered with articles he insisted that I study. He was keenly aware of all turf problems and offered our nurseries for the university test trials. I have collected memos from Mr. Coghill for many years; they are usually highlighted, "Fix this, NOW!" Two words that best describe the man: PROGRESS and PERFECTION.

Mr. Coghill liked a manicured golf course and strived to provide the Augusta National of the North, which included flowering crabapples, gardens and undulating greens. He was firm in his dislikes as well: he abhorred SLOW PLAY, paved cart-paths, and buffer zones and wetlands. "They are just messy areas to collect candy wrappers and beer cans."

Recently, I listed to the Three Irish Tenors sing a ballad, "The Old Man." I will admit I shed a tear. Hundreds of Silver Lake employees respect John R. Coghill. We all miss the "Squire."

