

# Lonnie Stubbs: A Man of Enduring Quality

BY SCOTT BELL

It is rare in this business for a person to stay at one club for an entire career. Lonnie Stubbs is an exception to the rule. This year marks Lonnie's 35th year at Club Med at Sandpiper.

In the late 1950s, Lonnie was doing landscape work for General Development Corporation at a housing development in Vero Beach. He was approached about going to work at the then-named Sandpiper Bay Country Club. At that time General Development Corporation, or GDC, had many projects going on all over the state in such places as Miami, Port St. Lucie, Labelle, Palm Bay and others.

Lonnie started at Sandpiper in 1960 as the assistant golf course superintendent, under the well-known architect Chuck Ankrom. Lonnie has been at Sandpiper since the construction of the Sinners Course in 1960. The Saints Course was built in 1961.

The original director of golf was Chick Howard, who is in the Golf Hall of Fame. After Chuck Ankrom left, LeRoy Phillips, a 1992 President's Award recipient, filled in as golf maintenance director for GDC. In 1974 Lonnie became the head superintendent.

Lonnie takes great pride in the fact that he was there in 1960 when the property was being surveyed and that he is still there today. He helped to oversee every facet of the construction, and he knows the property like the back of his hand. As I drive down US 1 in Port St. Lucie past the shopping centers, malls and fast food, I can't help but to think of what it was like in the 1960s when the area was sparsely



Lonnie Stubbs

settled. Consider also the changes in equipment and irrigation that one would see over 35 years.

Lonnie has worked for three different owners of the Sandpiper property. The first was obviously GDC. The second was a company called Tulman and Huntley, who currently own the property and now lease the golf courses to Club Med. Club Med, a French vacation company with holdings all over the world, has been at Sandpiper for over eight years. Lonnie oversees the two golf courses and a nine-hole pitch and putt, as well as the hotel grounds. When Lonnie worked for Tulman and Huntley, they had a day to celebrate his 25th year at the club. Many superintendents were invited for lunch and golf.

Lonnie's son David is following in his

father's footsteps. David is one of Lonnie's assistant golf course superintendents. Two of his other sons, Lonnie Jr. and Thomas, also work on the courses at Sandpiper.

Like Joe Snook and 1990 President's Award recipient Adam Yurigan, Lonnie was a founding board member of the Treasure Coast Chapter. Lonnie was president of the chapter in 1982, second after the legendary Yurigan. Most of the Treasure Coast board meetings were held at Sandpiper between 1980 and 1985. Lonnie, Joe, Adam and Jim Callaghan got the Treasure Coast Chapter started in 1980, and most of them helped out for the first five or six years to help to grow the chapter. They are owed many thanks for that hard work.

Former Treasure Coast Chapter President Jim Callaghan commented that "it is a heck of a milestone for a superintendent to be in the business for 35 years, especially at the same club."

Lonnie and his long time friend, Joe Snook, were both given their President's Awards in 1994. They both exemplify the credentials searched out for the award. They were both instrumental in the formation of the Treasure Coast Chapter, and they easily had the twenty years in the business with ten years as superintendents. To me, they took it a step further. They are an example of what has always been right about our business. Two friends at different courses, helping each other out. When the Treasure Coast Chapter nominated them, someone made the comment that "you can not nominate one without nominating the other."

# Joe Snook: Treasure Coast's Mr. Versatility

BY SCOTT BELL

A good pilot tries to change direction when he sees rough weather ahead, and that's what Joe Snook had to do in 1973. Joe was a pilot for a well-known national company when he realized that the quality of the aircraft that he was flying was beginning to decline and the company was not upgrading or replacing the planes as quickly as they had in the past. He

feared that the company that he worked for would soon be discontinuing or scaling back its corporate flight division, so Joe searched out his old friend, Tom Burrows, who was working in Stuart at the time. Joe had worked part-time for Tom when he was not flying and they both worked in Chicago.

In 1974, Tom Burrows was the Golf and Landscape Director at Mariner Sands

in Stuart. He hired Joe to work in the landscape division of the development company. Shortly after Joe began working, his immediate boss moved on and Joe was put in charge of the landscape division. Unfortunately, the development company was struggling and rumors of bankruptcy were floating around. Tom left his position, and Joe was asked to run the golf course as well. Joe ran the first

# Joe Snook: A friend to many —

eighteen until one day when the comptroller for the project approached Joe while he was mowing the first green. Joe was told to gather the staff and lock up all of the equipment in the maintenance building — the company was closing the doors. Joe asked if he could finish mowing the green and was told that there was no need to because they were going to let the course go. He then reminded the comptroller that they had not been paid. Joe was told “no problem, just go down to the pro shop and take what you think your last pay was worth.” Joe got a set of clubs and some sport jackets as his final pay. The course was let go for a period of time, and the grass and weeds did grow up.

Joe was unemployed for only two days when the pro that he worked with at Mariner Sands called and told him of a job at Riverbend in Tequesta. Joe has

been at Riverbend Country Club since 1975. His course is always in fine shape, thanks to his years of dedicated service. He was also back near his buddy Tom, who had been working at Turtle Creek in Tequesta. Joe has been working with his assistant, John Scotten, for those same 20 years and he has enjoyed their relationship.

In the 1970s, the South Florida Chapter included Palm Beach and the Treasure Coast, as well as Dade and Broward. For meetings, the guys would often have to drive to Miami or Ft. Lauderdale. Joe and Tom would join up with Lonnie Stubbs to attend the SFGCSA meetings. Tom and Lonnie got Joe signed up to join the GCSAA. In 1980, Joe helped to form the Treasure Coast Chapter. The area was growing and more courses were being built. Joe served as president of the Treasure Coast Chapter in 1983 and 1984.

Jim Callaghan, superintendent at Rio Mar Country Club in Vero Beach, has known Joe since the late 1970s and says, “Joe was instrumental in getting the chapter started.” Jim said that Joe could always be counted on to come through.

Tom Burrows and Joe have been friends for nearly 30 years. When I asked Tom if he had any good stories to tell about Joe Snook, he replied, “There are not enough hours in the day to tell all of the stories about Joe Snook.”

Joe Snook has been involved in golf course management for over twenty years and he helped start the Treasure Coast Chapter. Joe was an integral part of the first board here. Joe has been a friend to many. In fact, Joe was part of a dual nomination for the President's Award in 1994. His long time friend and colleague, Lonnie Stubbs, is also honored in this issue.



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# Lou Oxnevad: In the Old Tom Morris Mold

BY DAN JONES, CGCS

Today's designs...tomorrow's white elephants?

All the new golf courses have shown a trend toward severe, highly penal designs that frustrate the average golfer and, in the long run, alienate a growing number of new golfers or old members. These are the ones who pay the bills.

The average golfer wants a course that makes him strive to play a better game without penalizing him for every slight mistake. It is much easier to build a fancy course, impossible to score on, where money is no object, than to improve on a very fine proven course.

The above is a typical remark by Lou Oxnevad. Straight forward and to the point. No politics, no side steps, just the straight honest facts.

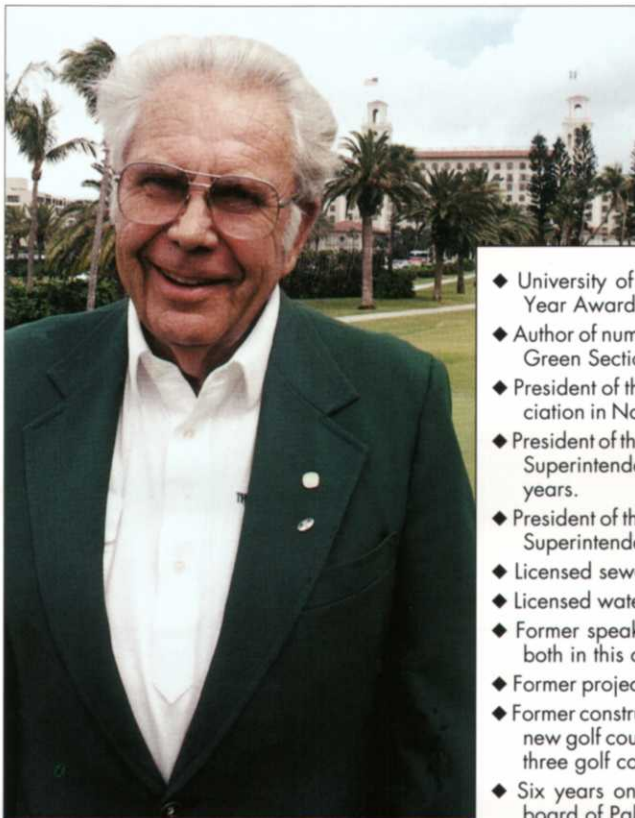
Lou was born in San Bernardino, California, 67 years ago. He is married to Selema, and they have four grown daughters. Lou's parents divorced when he was six years old, and Lou went to 13 different schools while growing up. He attended a one-room school house which provided 12 grades with one teacher for 38 students.

So, how did Lou get into the superintending business? We have to go back to World War II to get the answer.

Lou served with the 82nd Airborne and upon discharge in 1947 moved to Northern California, where he worked for the Division of Parks and Highways. He and Selema raised flowers for arrangements at resorts. They lost their home to a forest fire and moved back to Louisburg, North Carolina, where Lou attended North Carolina State University, majoring in horticulture.

Lou and Selema started a small nursery, and Lou worked part-time for the state measuring and plotting land for contour plowing and crop rotation. Louisburg has a nine-hole golf course with sand greens. They asked Lou to take it over and convert the greens to grass. A group from Saudi Arabia came over to Green Hill CC to learn how to maintain sand greens. Lou converted the greens and used a one-man paporinator bag to spray the greens.

Lou then moved on to Carolina CC,



Two class acts: Lou Oxnevad and The Breakers Hotel  
Photo by Dan Jones

## Lou Oxnevad: A Man For All Seasons

- ◆ University of Florida Horticulture of the Year Award for 1975.
- ◆ Author of numerous articles for the USGA Green Section.
- ◆ President of the Triangle Turf Grass Association in North Carolina for two years.
- ◆ President of the South Florida Golf Course Superintendent's Association for two years.
- ◆ President of the Florida State Golf Course Superintendent's Association.
- ◆ Licensed sewage plant operator.
- ◆ Licensed water treatment plant operator.
- ◆ Former speaker at national conventions both in this country and in England.
- ◆ Former project manager on two projects.
- ◆ Former construction superintendent on six new golf courses and the remodeling of three golf courses.
- ◆ Six years on the planning and zoning board of Palm Beach Gardens.
- ◆ Formerly involved with the drilling of 147 wells, one of which was 2,220 feet deep.
- ◆ Currently doing consulting work for croquet courts and golf courses.
- ◆ Designer and builder of waterfalls and estate gardens.

where he rebuilt the greens and changed them from common Bermuda to Tifton 328 bermudagrass. The total maintenance budget was \$42,372 and a walking greens mower cost less than \$200.

Lou then went to McGregor Downs CC, where he built the golf course in a virgin forest. He spent the first year cutting timber and building a lake. He hydro seeded the greens with Penncross bentgrass.

In 1968, Lou moved to Florida to take the superintendent position at Lost Tree CC in North Palm Beach. Fred and Glen Klauk worked for Lou during summer vacations and helped install a new irrigation system. While at Lost Tree, Lou built two golf courses at John's Island.

In 1972, Lou went to Riviera CC in Miami and rebuilt the greens. There he rowplanted 419 bermudagrass into common bermudagrass.

In 1980, Lou built Highridge CC in West Palm Beach under the watchful eye of golf course architect Joseph Lee.

In 1984, Lou worked for Ransome Mowers getting the Florida market established.

Then in 1985, Lou found a home at

the Breakers Hotel and Club in Palm Beach. For ten years, Lou took pride in caring for the golf course and hotel grounds. Lou remained at the Breakers until his retirement on April 1, 1995. (No fooling.)

Lou has done so much for the golf course superintendents in Florida. In 1975, he asked Dan Jones to get involved with the Florida Green Magazine. Lou trained and encouraged many of our golf course superintendents. For 11 years Lou represented us on the USGA Green Section Committee. Lou was the first certified golf course superintendent in the state of Florida. Now there are more than 125 in our state.

The list could go on and on. Lou has represented his profession well. He can look back with pride on his contributions to our industry, and I wish him well as he enters into another challenge — retirement.