

ClubCorp founder dies at 76

'King of Clubs' pioneered multi-course ownership/management

By DEREK RICE

DALLAS — ClubCorp founder and chairman Robert H. Dedman Sr., who pioneered multi-course ownership and management, died Aug. 20 of an apparent heart attack. He was 76.



Robert H. Dedman Sr.

Dedman founded ClubCorp in 1957 with the purchase of 400 acres

in Dallas on which he developed Brookhaven Country Club, his first golf property. An industry executive once described Dedman as "the Henry Ford of the club management business."

In its 45 years, ClubCorp has grown to a sizable empire, holding \$1.6 billion in assets. Internationally, the company holds or operates more than 200 golf courses, country clubs, private business and sports clubs and resorts. Among the jewel's in ClubCorp's crown are Pinehurst in Pinehurst, N.C., Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio, and Indian Wells Country Club in Indian Wells, Calif.

It was the purchase of Pinehurst from a consortium of banks in 1984 that established ClubCorp as a major resort operator. The Donald Ross-designed course was in a state of disrepair at the time, but Dedman knew the course had high potential, so he invested in restoring it to its status of "St. Andrews of America."

In addition to founding and running ClubCorp until 1998, when his son, Robert Dedman Jr., took over, Dedman was quite a philanthropist. Over the years, he gave more than \$77 million to Southern Methodist University, where he had earned his masters of law degree. The law school at SMU was later renamed in his honor.

In a statement, Robert Dedman Jr.

spoke of the loss his family, as well as the ClubCorp family as a whole, felt at his father's passing.

"My family is deeply saddened but extremely gratified by the immediate and overwhelming outpouring of sympathy," he said. "And

I believe I speak for our extended family of ClubCorp members, guests, business partners and employee partners when I say we have lost an inspirational leader, a caring mentor and a devoted friend."

Among Dedman's closest friends were Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and golf legend Jack Nicklaus. Nicklaus and his wife, Barbara, issued the following statement:

"Robert Dedman was certainly the

leader in how to make golf work as a business. What he created and built will serve as a model for many others in the industry for years to come. Not only did I enjoy my professional and personal relationship with Robert, but I considered it a privilege to know him and call him a friend."

In his 1999 book, "King of Clubs: Grow Rich in More Than Money," Dedman outlined the role value has played in the business

practices of ClubCorp. "To succeed, you must give value," he wrote. "The value in a club (or whatever else we build or buy) is still the most important commodity we have to sell... We have always based our reason for being on giving value... This philosophy of giving value enabled us to get a bigger, more diverse membership base, which in turn added value for our members and employee partners."

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First Tee opens Kentucky facility

PINEVILLE, Ky. — After nearly four years in planning and development, The First Tee of Pine Mountain opened in late August.

Located at Wasioto Winds Golf Course, The First Tee facility expects to attract more than 300 youth participants this year. The facility will work closely with local school systems and state and federal agencies to identify and transport youths to Wasioto Winds.

The Hurdzan-Fry-designed facility was built by Earth and Energy Construction. It features an 18-hole course, driving range, chipping and putting practice area and an indoor training facility. There is also a four-hole course for beginners.