

More Than Business Partners

Ohio golf course owners Arnold and Todd Ingraham are father and son first and foremost

BY LARRY AYLWARD,
EDITOR IN CHIEF

While a golf course brought Arnold Ingraham and his son Todd back together after being separated by many miles and many years, that amazing thing called unconditional love also played a role in their reunion.

Todd was 6 years old when his parents divorced in 1979. A year later his mother moved him and his sister, Heather, from Ohio to Georgia and later to New Jersey and Southern California.

"It was not a happy time," Arnold recalls of the family's breakup.

Shortly after the divorce, Arnold joined the family

business, Bunker Hill Golf Course, in Medina, Ohio. Arnold's mother needed assistance in running the course, which she and her late husband had purchased in 1940.

Arnold knew the course, which wasn't in great shape, needed some attention to remain competitive in the area. He invested some money into it to improve its marketability. He began developing leagues to bring in more business.

Todd and Heather, meanwhile, would visit their father, who lived in a house on the course's rolling property, for a few months every summer. Life was like a roller-licking ride on a merry-go-round when Todd was with

his dad at the course. He loved playing the game and hanging out at the course. When the summer ended, it was sometimes difficult for Todd to go home.

Arnold knew his son would excel at running the family business, but his offer wasn't just a business one.

"Dad wanted us to live with him and he would have happily had us there," Todd says. "But kids went to live with their moms back then. That's just the way it was."

Todd understood that then and he understands it now. For the record, Todd has a loving relationship with his mother and still refers to his stepfather as "Dad."

Arnold also understood the situation, and he tried to make the best of it.

"I really tried to stay involved with them," he says of his kids.

"There was some hard times, especially when they were young. I don't think divorce is ever a happy situation. But it has worked out."

Actually, it has worked out wonderfully for father and son. In 1996 Arnold called Todd and Heather with a proposition.

"He said, 'I've been running this business for nearly 20 years, and I've had enough. I'd like some help or I might sell it,'" Todd remembers.

Heather declined her father's offer, but Todd was intrigued. He was 22 at the time and at a period in his life when he wanted to make a change.

While Arnold knew that Todd loved the course and would do well in helping to run the family business, his offer wasn't just a business one.

"I wanted to pass it on to him as a legacy," Arnold says.

While Todd viewed his father's proposal as an opportunity to join the family business, he also saw it as a sign of his endearment.

"I think he saw an opportunity to get me closer into his life, which he always wanted," Todd says. "And I've always appreciated that. I've always felt love from

"I WANTED to pass it on to him as a legacy," Arnold Ingraham (left) says of his proposal to son Todd.



him, even though there was the divorce."

In Bunker Hill's modest clubhouse, there's a small, framed picture on a shelf that celebrates Arnold's and Todd's relationship. The photo, taken in 1980, shows Arnold presenting a trophy to a beaming Todd.

Actually, the trophy had been awarded to Arnold years before for his performance in a golf tournament. Todd received a few of such trophies from his dad. The story goes that when Todd would break a certain score for nine holes, Arnold would dust off one of his old tro-

phies, place a new placard on it with Todd's name and reward him with it.

Now, as business partners, Arnold and Todd are winning awards together. The National Golf Course Owners Association named Bunker Hill as the Ohio Golf Course of the Year in 2004.

Todd says he and his father have clicked largely because of their love of the game.

"I've talked with other owners who really aren't that interested in golf," Todd says. "It's just a business to them, but it's a passion to us."

They are business part-

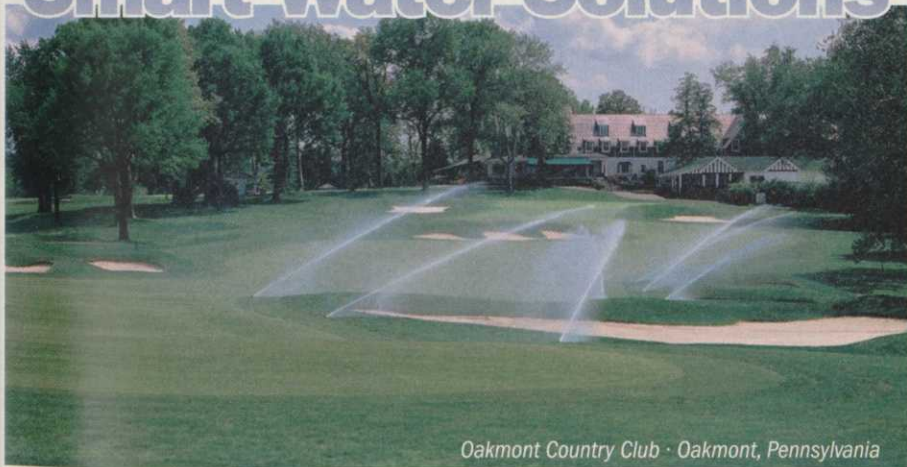


FROM FATHER to son, trophies were often passed in recognition of improving nine-hole scores.

ners, but their true bond is their blood. After all, it was their unconditional love for

each other that brought them back together to the golf course. ■

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