A full-page photograph of Jerry Palmer, a man with short grey hair, wearing a light blue short-sleeved button-down shirt and light-colored trousers. He is sitting on a grassy area, with his hands clasped in front of him. The background shows a lush green golf course with a winding path, trees, and hills in the distance. A small circular logo on the sleeve of his shirt reads "JERRY PALMER LATROBE".

*With all the limelight on his
legendary big brother,
unassuming Jerry Palmer
gets the job done at
Latrobe Country Club*

BY THOMAS SKERNIVITZ, MANAGING EDITOR

At Home *in* Latrobe

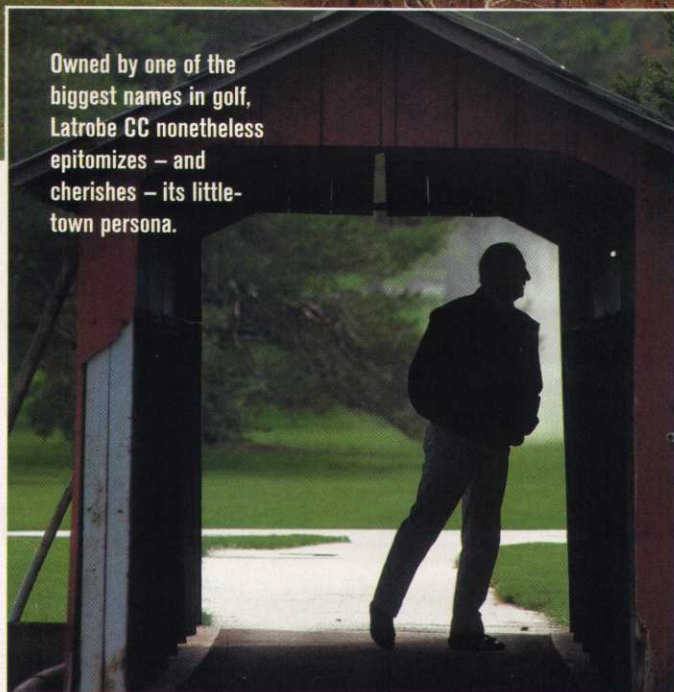
AS HIS 61ST birthday approaches this month, Jerry Palmer says he's never been happier at Latrobe Country Club. It's quite the proclamation, considering almost all of the previous 60 were celebrated in that exact nook along the Chestnut Ridge in western Pennsylvania. ■ Somehow Palmer has resisted the monotony of living and working his entire life at the same 18 holes in the ground. And at a rural club where familial shadows couldn't possibly play longer, he's withstood envy just the same. If there's the slightest concern about being typecast as the brother of Arnold Palmer or the son of the superintendent who had taught Arnold how to play golf, Jerry isn't letting on. ■ "I guess if I had a life's ambition, it was to work for Arnold," he says. "And that's where I am." ►►

ALL PHOTOS (UNLESS NOTED) BY: DOUG OSTER

At Home in Latrobe



Owned by one of the biggest names in golf, Latrobe CC nonetheless epitomizes – and cherishes – its little-town persona.



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Arnold, 75, owns Latrobe CC. The legendary golfer bought it in 1971 as a gift to his father Deacon, the club's longtime pro and superintendent. Jerry, who wound up succeeding their dad as superintendent, is the general manager, having been promoted by his brother in 1989.

"We're a small-town club that just happens

to be owned and operated by a big-time guy," Jerry says.

That means Jerry has to play second fiddle to the commander-in-chief of "Arnie's Army." Yet he is content. When a reporter says he's come to Latrobe to do a story on the GM rather than the club or its famous owner, Jerry gets a good laugh and says, "God help you."

Despite that constant self-effacing approach, Jerry has plenty to offer his employees, members and family. And at least one of the golf gods is appreciative.

"There's a certain enhancing value to having a brother who is honest and is capable of doing a job like this," Arnold says. "I can trust him, and that is one of the most important things in this kind of operation. His work ethic is very good, and I appreciate the fact that he's here to do it."

Leaving Latrobe

Born Milfred Jerome Palmer Jr. in 1944, Jerry spent his teens wanting to share few other traits with his father (who nonetheless was known by everyone as "Deacon"). Raised in a house that

PHOTO (NEAR LEFT) BY: THOMAS SKERNIVITZ

bordered the club's third hole, he was tired of the golf scene. He was bored with the town, too, and by the time he had graduated Latrobe High in '62, he had no interest in seeking a business degree down the street at St. Vincent's College. More than anything, though, he didn't want to become the family's next superintendent.

"My dad had some ideas that — you know, I knew *everything* back then — were quickly rejected," Jerry says. "He thought that Penn State's two-year turf program would be the thing for me to do, and then I could become the superintendent. Well, there was no way I wanted to do that."

Jerry's angst prompted a knock at the family's front door. "My parents had a good friend of theirs who was a colonel in the U.S. Air Force," Jerry says. "Next thing you knew, I was in the Air Force."

The next four years would represent Jerry's longest stint away from Latrobe. He split time between Japan and France and had a "wonderful" military career, he says. "I never considered staying in, but I enjoyed it immensely." Best of all, his tour of duty ended in 1966 and he missed out on the Vietnam War.

"Had I gone to school and graduated from college, I probably would have ended up going and fighting," Jerry says. "That was a good thing."

Jerry tried studying business at Robert Morrison College in Pittsburgh before going to work for Arnold's namesake company in Chattanooga, Tenn. Unhappy, he finally returned to Latrobe, where he spent the next eight years doing office work for metals manufacturer Kennametal Inc.

'Make your pap proud'

Eight years of desk work, a short-lived marriage and having to raise his two babies, Deken and Amanda, by himself, prompted Jerry to reconsider a walk in his father's footsteps. And to his dad's delight, he enrolled in Penn State's turf program in 1974.

In February of '76, just a few months shy of Jerry's graduation, Deacon Palmer died of a heart attack following a round of golf and lunch at Bay Hill Club in Orlando. At age 71, he had already relinquished his club pro duties, but he was planning to gradually work Jerry in as the new superintendent. Suddenly, with the spring season looming, the closest thing to a

club superintendent was the son who had run away from the role a decade earlier.

"We were all really shook up from the standpoint that we just didn't see this coming," Jerry says. "Arnold came home right away, and he just said something like, 'It's yours, boy, now you go do it. Take care of it and make your pap proud.'"

Compounding matters, Jerry found himself alone at Latrobe CC following the funeral. Family members resumed their lives away from the club, and Jerry's arthritis-stricken mother Doris, too ill to remain behind, went with them. "We were all here, and then every-

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Remembering Winnie

AS MUCH AS Jerry Palmer appreciates his big brother, he genuinely misses Arnold's first wife. No one — maybe not even Jerry himself — took more pride in Latrobe Country Club than Winnie Palmer.

"She added her own special touch to most everything here," Jerry says. "She loved the club just as much as the family does."

Arnold and Winifred Walzer married in late 1954, shortly after Arnold had turned professional. When her husband bought Latrobe CC in 1971, Winnie wasted little time making an impact.

"She and Arnie had the resources to do it, so they did it. He let her do it," Jerry says. "Winnie came in and started to seriously assess the décor and the changes that she wanted to do. That was her interest. She was an interior decorator, and she loved to do it. And we get a lot of compliments on the club."

One of Winnie's bigger projects — one that Jerry supervised — was the restoration of an old barn adjacent to the golf course. Just a few years later, on Nov. 12, 1999, she died after a 13-month-long battle with cancer. She left behind Arnold, their two daughters, Peggy and Amy, and six grandchildren.

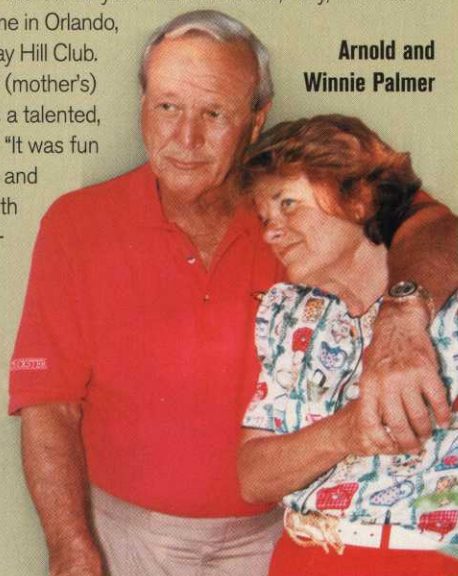
Despite her passing, Jerry has maintained the club with Winnie in mind. And he's received plenty of help over the last six years from his niece, Amy, who has traveled to Latrobe from her home in Orlando, where she works at her dad's Bay Hill Club.

"Amy kind of followed in her (mother's) footsteps as a decorator. She is a talented, talented young lady," Jerry says. "It was fun for me to have her come home, and it's something that I could do with the kids. It was a common interest and it was family working together. It didn't feel like a job."

With Arnold having remarried in January, Jerry is expecting his new sister-in-law to add her touch to Latrobe.

"Kit is a wonderful person, too," he says.

— By Thomas Skernivitz,
Managing Editor



**Arnold and
Winnie Palmer**



Latrobe overflows with nostalgia, including hundreds of photographs that adorn the clubhouse.

“Even today I stay (here at Latrobe). The rest of them go. I stay. That’s my job.”

JERRY PALMER

LATROBE CC GENERAL MANAGER

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body was gone,” Jerry says. “They went back to doing whatever they were doing and I stayed. Even today I stay. The rest of them go. I stay. That’s my job.”

Intimidated, and with almost a full semester of school remaining, Jerry survived his first season with immense help from his veteran crew. “My success was their doing,” he says. Two of those members, Dave Schmucker and Dave Repko, remain employees today. And Repko’s little brother, Marty — the first person hired by Jerry that bicentennial summer — is now the club’s superintendent, having succeeded Jerry in 1989.

“Marty was just 16 years old when we hired him ... and he’s been working here ever since,” Jerry says. “We sent him off to Penn State and got him educated in the two-year program as well.”

Sound familiar? Deacon, a one-time Penn State student himself, would have been proud in more ways than one.

“You know how everybody says, ‘Boy, if I had only listened to my dad.’ Well, I finally did,” Jerry says. “And he was right.”

Right teacher, wrong sport

When it came to golf lessons, Jerry at least tried to pay attention to his dad. “He was a good teacher of golf,” Jerry says. “I mean, he

taught Arnold Palmer.”

Regardless, Jerry’s game never materialized. He might have been a decent swimmer and skier (on snow and water), and he would become a quality runner in his 50s, but “I couldn’t play golf worth a damn,” he admits. “My dad tried. My brother has tried. And somewhere up here (pointing to his head), it’s lost.”

When Jerry was in junior high, his father made one last-ditch effort at turning his youngest son into something similar to his oldest. He set Jerry up with top-notch clubs and had him hit 100 balls a day into a net inside the garage.

“It was awful,” Jerry recalls. “It was awful because I was awful. I just did not want to stand in our garage and hit 100 golf balls every day in the middle of winter with no heat out there. I guess I was spoiled, I don’t know.”

Several years later, Jerry grew to appreciate the sport. And with Deacon now playing at his side on many occasions, his game reached its apex. Better yet, so did their relationship. “We had fun,” Jerry recalls. “And I’ll remember those times as some special father-son times that had I not played golf, I wouldn’t have been able to be with him. It was something that I’ll remember and enjoy remembering the rest of my life.”

Pinching pennies

Deacon Palmer the superintendent had a favorite line of advice: “Keep your mouth shut and listen.” He stressed frugality and continual improvement.

“He didn’t like to spend money. He improvised, and that’s what made his crew smart,” Jerry says. “To this day, when it comes to new, big, fancy equipment, we have some, and we’ll have it 25 years from now. That was his way of being a superintendent. Did he know about the grass? You betcha he did. He knew that, too.”

Since Deacon’s death, Jerry and Marty Repko have made numerous changes to the course, usually upon the recommendation of Arnold. They’ve renovated five of the original push-up greens, added an automatic irrigation system and built a continuous cart path that drew the ire of members when management asked them not to stray from

Continued on page 28

"The golf course was good all the time" under Jerry's supervision.

ARNOLD PALMER
LATROBE CC OWNER

Continued from page 26
it for several years.

"The golf course was good all the time," Arnold says of his brother's term as superintendent.

Jerry appreciates his managerial duties — "I like the business. I like it 24/7" — but misses his superintendent days and isn't averse to getting his hands dirty on occasion. "People who are superintendents love the job or they wouldn't do it, because it's not an easy job," he says. "You have to be political. You have to know how to schmooze and all that. But all that aside, it's a great life."

An ideal day as the general manager starts at 5:30 a.m. with the opening of the clubhouse. "I still get a kick out of checking everything before everybody else does." The day proceeds with a packed dining room and a healthy, playable golf course. "You never know who Arnold is going to bring home," Jerry says. "He has pulled some surprises, but we try to be prepared for anything and everything."

Sign of the hard times

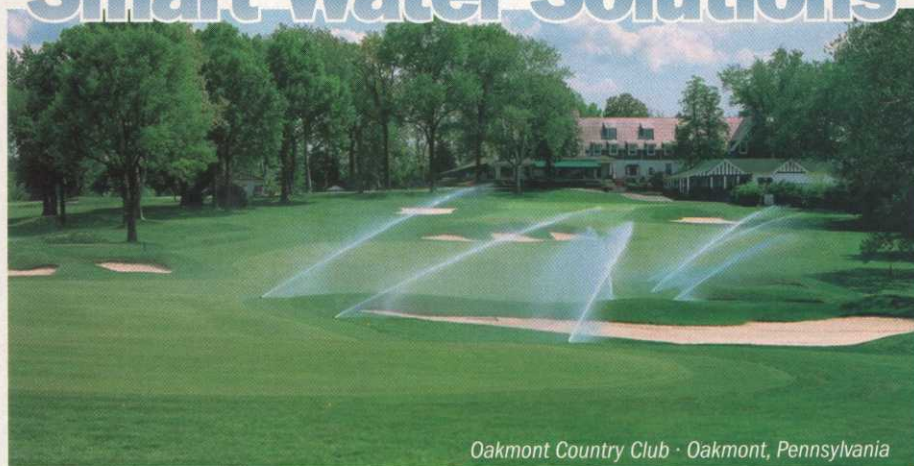
Despite being owned by a golf legend, Latrobe CC isn't immune to industry-wide economic struggles. Jerry blames a glut of courses; formidable courses, no less, even in rural Pennsylvania. "Not all these places are going to make it," he says. "And not all the small private clubs are, either. I know of at least two in the county here that have been sold and are being bought out by people who are going to develop the land."

Could Arnold Palmer's course meet the same fate? "Oh, it could happen here very easily," Jerry answers. But it won't, he continues, as long as he and Arnold are still alive. "After we're gone, there's nothing we can do about it."

Fortunately, Arnold's daughters, Amy and Peggy, have expressed interest in assuming control of the club. "Well, I hope my children are going to come along," says Arnold, whose first wife, Winnie, died of cancer in 1999. "And I have a couple of very capable young men working for me who are pretty aware of what is hap-

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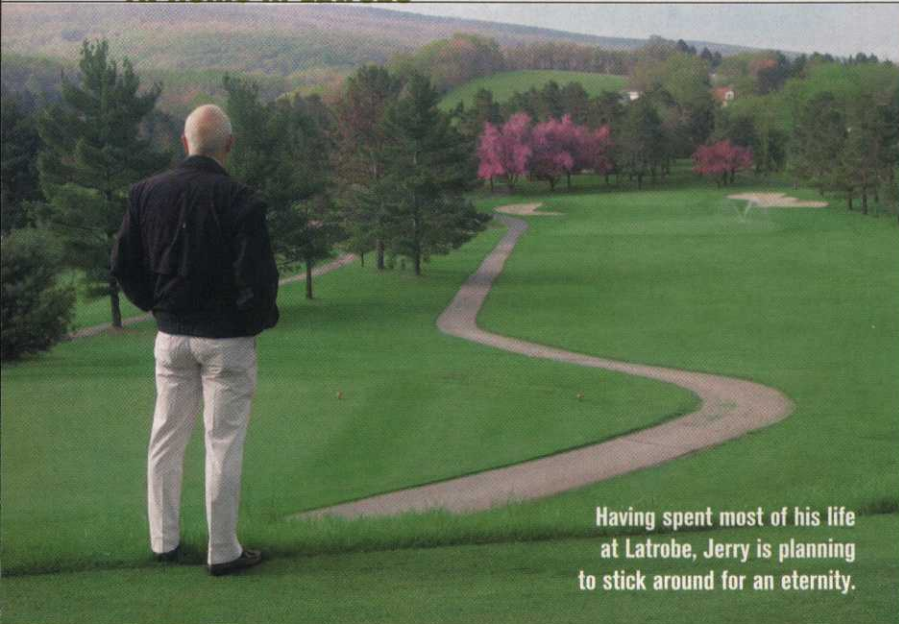
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At Home in Latrobe



Having spent most of his life at Latrobe, Jerry is planning to stick around for an eternity.

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pening here. Sometimes I'm not sure that they're as aware as I'd like them to be, but they're picking up on it and I suspect that they will have something to do with it when we're all gone."

Until then, the facility plans to reverse gears and start promoting the fact that Arnold still

lives in Latrobe from May through October before heading to Bay Hill Club, which he purchased in 1976.

"We've always kind of protected (the club) from the public," Jerry says. "But that attitude has kind of changed. We need to introduce Latrobe to the public and say, 'Hey, look what you have here that's available.' It's a great facility, and the fact is it is where Arnold Palmer learned to play golf and still calls home."

While it won't make many press releases, it's the home of Jerry Palmer, too. Always has been, forever will be. With his house tucked just a few yards behind the 16th tee, he sees heaven in his backyard every day.

"This property is what we consider home," he says. "It's where we were born and raised and hopefully where we'll end up when we go the other way. My parents' ashes are here and my sister-and-law Winnie's ashes are here. They're all scattered here on the property. And God willing, the rest of us will be able to be here, too. I'm going to put it in my will."

Like he said, it's his job to stay. ■

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