

The Grill Room by Tim Cronin

Arnie: The people's champion, win or lose

hat Arnold Palmer did better than any athlete before or since, better perhaps than anyone before or since, is make you feel that you and Arnie were the only two people in the room, even if the room was Augusta National and 45,000 people were hanging around to see him.

That personality, that one-on-one connection, is what nobody has been able to match.

Jack Nicklaus won more majors and more tournaments. Tiger Woods won more money than anybody. Ben Hogan hit better shots more often.

Nobody came close to Arnold Daniel Palmer on a golf course when it came to eye contact.

For instance, 1989 at Kemper Lakes Golf Course, hosting the PGA Championship, the one major that Arnold, a proud professional and the son of a professional / course superintendent, never won. Astoundingly, he birdied the first five holes on Thursday afternoon, which nearly toppled the press tent. Now, scribes mused that they wouldn't have to build a story around Leonard Thompson, a fine fellow but no Arnold Palmer.

His Army reappeared, throngs following him. Inspired, Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson started making birdies, and it's not 1989, it's 1975. Palmer finished the round with a 4-under-par 68, two off leaders Thompson and Mike



Rory Spears / GolfersOnGolf.com

AT HAZELTINE NATIONAL Under appropriately leaden skies, the Ryder Cup and American flags are flying at half-staff in Arnold Palmer's honor all week at the 41st Ryder Cup.

Reid. Nicklaus shoots 68 as well. Watson shoots 67.

Asked how he old he felt after the round, Arnie said, "Twenty-nine!"

Friday's play begins, and Palmer is off early. The world greets him on the first tee. Happily, this was not a one-day wonder. He continues to play well. (He makes the cut and birdies the last on Sunday, as does Nicklaus.)

What was most striking was his interaction with fans. "Go Arnie" was heard many times

more often than "Quiet, please" over the course of the front nine. And unlike the ultra-focused Nicklaus, or later, Woods, he didn't look through people. He looked at you, right at you, as you were looking at him. And he smiled. He knew you were out there at the fourth tee to see him and knew you wanted to see him at his best. A look, a smile, and then a look down the fairway to see what adventure awaited.

That is how Arnie's Army was built, one look, one smile at a time, for more than 50

years. That is how golf grew, for the galleries at Augusta National – and Palmer as much as Bob Jones and Cliff Roberts put The Masters on the map – followed him religiously.

Palmer and the image orthicon camera - television's eye - found each other at Augusta and fell in love with each other, transmitting that ardor to more fans. The sight of Palmer coming over the rise on the 15th hole, where TV coverage of The Masters first began, was golf's equivalent of Patton leading a charge over an African sand dune. From 1958 on, Palmer became the star of television golf, the engine that got more tournaments on the air. And long after his star had waned as a player, he took the idea of businessman Joe Gibbs – the businessman. not the football coach - and backed Golf Channel. Twenty-four hours a day of golf from the man who came to the fore when there wasn't 24 hours of golf on television in a year.

Along the way, Palmer's influence – his mere presence – brought the sleepy British Open back to the forefront. That brought forth the modern concept of the Grand Slam. He sold anything and everything, eventually including a canned version of the drink he came up with on his own and came to bear his name, thanks to agent Mark McCormack, the Chicago-bred marketing genius whose handshake deal with Arnold was the foundation of an empire. (And you will have an Arnold Palmer to toast his life, will you not?)

Eventually, he became a golf course designer, though his crew, including the talented Ed Seay, did the detail work, and sometimes all of it.

When he turned 50, the Senior Tour, as it was first known, began to walk, having crawled waiting for the magic birthday. When the 50-



Courtesy CareerBuilder Classic

I WANT TO TELL YOU Bob Hope and Arnold Palmer yuk it up during a 1960s Bob Hope Desert Classic. Palmer won the Hope five times, including his last PGA Tour victory, in 1973.

year-old Palmer missed the first United States Senior Open, held at Winged Foot Golf Club, because the USGA imposed its 55-and-up rule from the amateur side, the competition drew galleries in the high dozens.

The rule was changed the next year. Palmer, 51, won the 2nd U.S. Senior Open at Oakland Hills Country Club. Decades later, asked if the rule was changed to get Palmer in the field,

Frank Hannigan, the USGA's executive director in 1981, said, "Isn't every rule changed for Arnold Palmer?"

Think about it. Palmer's presence grew one tour to heights unimagined and effectively created another. Anyone in the last 50-plus years who ever played on any American golf tour, including the ladies, owes Arnold Palmer. As Walter Hagen, whose Roaring '20s exploits made a real

golf tour possible, did before him, he put money in everyone's pocket.

We digress. Fast-forward to 1993, when Palmer is 63 and a ceremonial player at Augusta. Not, however, on this particular Thursday morning, when he birdies the first three holes, his name goes up on the big scoreboards and he stands on the fourth tee as the undisputed leader of the Masters Tournament. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be there on those sylvan acres, to stand by that tee and see the King back on the throne in Camelot, if but for one brief shining moment, will recall it forever.

(Nicklaus saw that scoreboard, in miniature, when he walked into the clubhouse, and thus inspired by Palmer once again, fired a 67 to tie for the lead at age 53. Forever rivals and friends, these two.)

Now fast-forward to 1997, and Olympia Fields Country Club. Palmer is playing a practice round a couple weeks in advance of the U.S. Senior Open. Olympia member Larry Spalla called a local reporter – your obedient servant - so an exclusive interview could be gotten with Palmer to crown the Daily Southtown's pre-tournament coverage.

Palmer comes off the 18th, sits down in the lobby for a TV interview, and then I get my turn.

There are a dozen people hanging around, including Sam DiGiovanni, Arnold's pal for decades, but suddenly, there's nobody else in the room but us. He gives lively answers, there are some laughs and some serious moments, and some combined. This was not long after his prostate cancer surgery, and a question about his mortality was in order.

Quipped Palmer, "I leave all those questions to Sam."

It was pitch-perfect Palmer.

Fast-forward once more, to 2013, and the par-3 course at Augusta National. There are more people than Billy Payne could count swarming the layout, especially around the first tee, just before 3 p.m. That's when the Big Three, Palmer, Nicklaus and Gary Player, will tee off, coinciding with ESPN's coverage of the biggest little show in golf. Already, those of us in the mob – to quote Jack Whitaker, c. 1965 - have seen Jack Fleck tee off. It was just good to know that at the time he was still with us.

Player is on the tee first, then Nicklaus. Each gets an enormous hand from the gallery. Then up comes Palmer. An ovation, long and heartfelt. And, as it quiets, a women, probably in her 50s, wearing a yellow dress and possessed of a voice as southern as a Waffle House, exclaimed, "My God, it's Arnold Palmer." As they say down south, we thought she was going to have an attack of the vapors.

All three hit it toward the green, and nobody particularly cared where the balls landed except the players. As someone else said to his wife a few holes later, turning to make for the exit, "We can go now. I've seen who I came to see."

At the time, Arnold Palmer was 83.

What other athlete would have been a draw at 83? Or any year beyond his 50s?

My absent friend Tim Sassone said it perfectly in 1988, when Medinah Country Club hosted the U.S. Senior Open. Arnie entered the interview room for a chat, and someone outside said, "Palmer just walked in."

Said Sassone, "Golf just walked in."

Golf has a void today, matching our broken hearts. Arnold Palmer is gone. There was and will be nobody else like him. Hail and farewell.

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ARNOLD PALMER, 1929-2016 An American original

BY TIM CRONIN

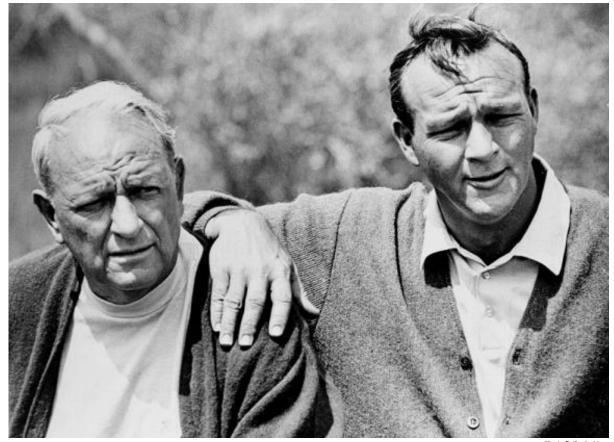
s best as can be discovered, the first mention of Arnold Daniel Palmer's exploits as a golfer was in the April 28, 1944 issue of *The Pittsburgh Press*. Prep sports writer Paul Kurtz, in a roundup, noted the following about a 14-year-old western Pennsylvania freshman:

"Latrobe revealed a promising newcomer in Arnold Palmer in trimming Jeannette, 14 1/2 to 1/2, in the Section 3 opener. Palmer demonstrated exceptional skill in the early match, having a score of 70, two over par, at the Latrobe Country Club course."

A little over a year later, in the Aug. 6, 1945 *Press*, far removed from the front page report on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, golf writer Joe Huhn wrote, "Arnold Palmer, the brilliant 15-year-old Latrobe Country Club player, appears to be the most promising youngster that has come to the fore in recent years. With proper development he should become a National figure in golfdom.

"He has fine form, and appears to have that one requisite which is so essential in the development of a champion, golf temperament."

Messrs. Kurtz and Huhn were absolutely right in their descriptions of the lad: Promising. Exceptional. Brilliant.



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THE FOUNDATION Milfred Jerome "Deacon" Palmer, Arnold's father, taught him how to act on and off the course in Latrobe, Pa., from before he swung a club. Arnold eventually bought Latrobe Country Club.



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WHERE IT BEGAN Arnold Palmer's victory over Robert Sweeny Jr. in the 1954 U.S. Amateur at Detroit Golf Club convinced him he could have a successful career as a professional.

Arnold Palmer was all that, and so much more.

Friendly. Competitive. Genuine. Original.

There were countless great golfers before Deacon and Doris Palmer's son swung a club, and there have been many to come along since his heyday. But nobody made a impact on American golf the way Arnold Palmer did. Nobody.

Worldwide, only Old Tom Morris was a peer.

Thus the outpouring of happy memories mixed with boundless tears when the news came early Sunday evening that Palmer had died, at 87, at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center a day before he was to undergo surgery to fix what had been ailing him.

He had fallen twice in 2015 and was slow in recovering, but was said to have rebounded recently. Yet, it was a shock to see how frail he was at this year's Masters, when he received an ova-

tion at the first tee but wasn't able to return the favor by smacking a golf ball down the fairway.

Oh, but the fairways he had walked.

As a kid, when his peers declared themselves Ben Hogan or Bobby Jones on the first tee, he said, "I'm Arnold Palmer."

He was.

When he entered the United States Amateur in 1954, the era of the career amateur remained in full flower. Poor caddies became pros and mostly scraped out a living. A really solid amateur player with an equally solid job – stockbroker, insurance salesman, doctor, lawyer – could make much more in a year than the leading golfer on the PGA of America's tournament circuit, and without the hassle of travel. He could also take weeks off to play in the big amateur tournaments – the Western Amateur, the Trans-Miss, the U.S. Amateur, and the regional tournaments that interested him.

That's what Frank Stranahan of Toledo, Ohio, was doing. The best amateur since Jones, Stranahan had the benefit of wealth – he was the son of the founder of the Champion Spark Plug Co. – and skill. He played top-level amateur golf well enough to win four Western Amateurs, a pair of British Amateurs, beat the pros in three regular tour tournaments, and finished second in the Masters and British Open – twice in the latter – and 10th in the U.S. Open. But the closest he had come in the U.S. Amateur, the one he and his father R.A. really wanted to win, was a runner-up placing to Sam Urzetta in a 39-hole marathon in 1950.

It was also Palmer's goal. He was 24, a salesman in Cleveland, and impressing as a player, including a springtime tie for seventh at the Azalea Open. The amateur circuit appealed to him.

The 1954 U.S. Amateur was held at the Coun-



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REBIRTH Arnold Palmer's visit to the centenary Open Championship in 1960, part of a swing that included the Canada Cup and some endorsement appearances lined up by Mark McCormack, helped bring the British Open back into the forefront and created the modern Grand Slam. He won across the pond in 1961 and 1962.

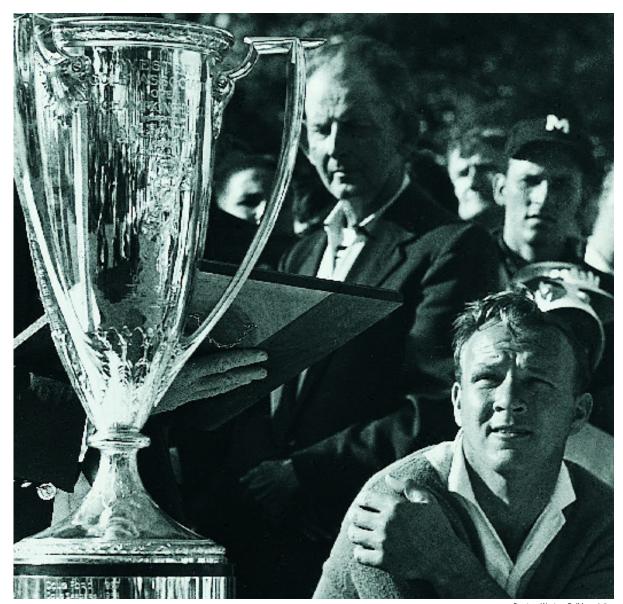
try Club of Detroit. After qualifying, Stranahan and Palmer ended up in the same quarter of the draw. They had crossed paths a month earlier at George S. May's Tam O'Shanter Country Club in the All-American Amateur, part of May's two week carnival of golf. Palmer closed with a 4-under 68 to win with 3-under 285, while Stranahan, who had won the All-American Am six straight years, ended up third. The following week, Stranahan beat Palmer by a stroke at Tam for the World Amateur title despite Palmer's closing 69 for another 285. (May was never modest when naming his tournaments.)

They met again in the U.S. Amateur Round of 16, and Palmer knocked him off, 3 and 1, via 1-under-par golf. Stranahan, 0-for-9 in the National Amateur, abandoned that quest, turning pro to make money beating pros he'd already beaten.

Long before knocking off Stranahan, Palmer showed the gallery a glimpse of what would become a signature of his in years to come, the gambling trouble shot. In a tight first-round match with Frank Strafaci, Palmer found himself in a fairway bunker on the 17th hole. Ignoring the odds, Palmer grabbed a 4-wood and hammered it onto the green to win the hole, the margin in his 1-up victory.

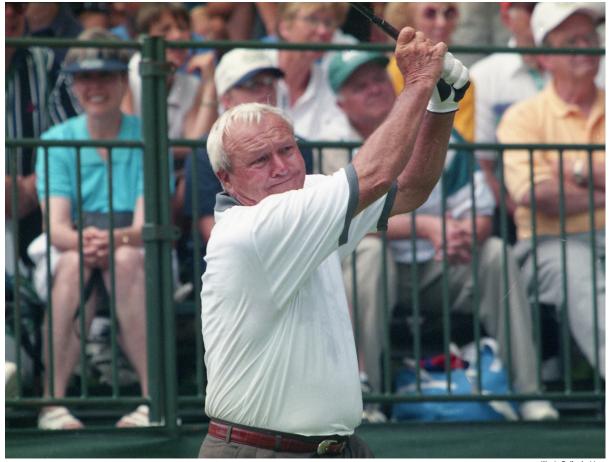
Was that the shot and result that convinced Palmer, after he'd dispatched 43-year-old Bob Sweeny Jr., an Oxford graduate, former RAF pilot, and retired investment banker, by a come-frombehind 1 up margin in the championship match, that he'd be able to compete with the pros?

It should have been, for the next 20 years were filled with tales, and eventually television pictures, of Palmer in some dire situation that would surely lead to a double-bogey, whereupon he would grip a club clearly unsuitable for a mor-



Courtesy Western Golf Association

WESTERN OPEN CHAMPION Arnold Palmer admires the J.K. Wadley Trophy after winning the first of his two Western Opens, at Blythefield Country Club near Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1961. He also won in 1963.



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ONE LAST SHOT Arnold Palmer drills a tee ball during a practice round for the 1997 U.S. Senior Open at Olympia Fields Country Club. Dramatically, Palmer made the cut by making par on the final hole on Friday.

tal to attempt the shot, flex those Popeye forearms, swing hard and see the ball fly into the sky like Sputnik, only with a softer landing.

Anybody could make birdie from the fairway. Palmer made saving par from the rough more exciting than a Hollywood blockbuster.

His skill carried him to the top of the leader

board quickly. He broke through by winning the 1955 Canadian Open, and soon there was no stopping him. Arnold Palmer was about to become Arnold Palmer.

Golf, that sedate country club sport, instantly became athletic with Palmer leading the charge. Palmer approached the first tee the way Sugar

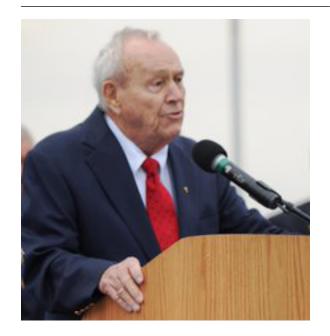
Ray Robinson climbed into the ring, with purpose and vigor. Dramatics replaced boredom.

His victory in the 1958 Masters brought forth a 7.7 Nielsen rating for CBS, astonishing for Sunday afternoon, much less golf, and more than double the previous year's number. Advertisers noticed, and Palmer, after his endorsement deal with agent Mark McCormack, became a familiar figure to more than just golf fans. He'd appear on filmed shows like "Challenge Golf," talk shows, in commercials, in countless print advertisements, and somehow manage to win five, six, seven, eight tournaments a year every year. You wondered how many Palmers there were.

Palmer winning was dramatic, whether it was him coming from seven strokes off the pace to win the United States Open at Cherry Hills in 1960 after driving the first green on the last of his four attempts, or triumphing at Troon in the 1962 British Open.

Palmer losing was equally dramatic. A grimace after a missed putt was a photographer's dream. When he blew the 1961 Masters, shanking his second shot on the 72nd hole after accepting congratulations from George Low, and then making double-bogey to hand a green jacket to Gary Player, even Player was dumbfounded.

The same was true at Olympic Club in 1966 only more so. A seven-stroke lead for Arnold Palmer over Billy Casper with nine holes to play in the National Open? ABC was going to televise a parade over the final few holes. Instead, they broadcast a collapse like none other in the history of the game, Arnie slashing about from here to there while Casper made every putt he had to. In the following day's 18-hole playoff, Palmer again led at the turn and watched Casper catch and pass him to claim his second Open.



Rory Spears / GolfersOnGolf.com (left); Illinois Golfer Archive (right)

SALESMAN Arnold Palmer (left) spoke at the opening ceremony for the Palmer Cup, an international championship for college players, at Rich Harvest Links in June 2015. For decades, he was the go-to golfer for Fortune 500 companies to peddle their wares. Presumably, that Cadillac on the right had Pennzoil in the engine block.



Had there been one more dollop of good fortune along the way, one more putt dropping somewhere in the course of 90 holes at Olympic Club, and at Oakmont in 1962, where Palmer and Nicklaus famously tangled, and at The Country Club in 1963, where Palmer was in a three-man playoff, he could have won four National Opens in seven years.

Instead, he won just the one despite threatening in several more, including 1972 at Pebble Beach, where Nicklaus' near-ace on the par-3 17th on Sunday was one of the determining factors, the following year at Oakmont, where Johnny Miller passed everybody, and in 1974 at Winged Foot, where he finished at 12-over-par 292, but only five strokes behind lead survivor Hale Irwin.

He never did win the PGA Championship, finishing tied for second three times, the last time in 1970. But when in 1980 the calendar found

him 50, Palmer entered and won the PGA Seniors' Championship, as it was then known. Said Palmer, "This is the PGA I never won."

He would win a second Senior PGA in 1984, along with a U.S. Senior Open – in 1981, the first one he was eligible for – and two Senior Players Championships. Those five senior majors, along with five other senior tour titles, added to 62 wins on the PGA Tour and 23 more in worldwide play brought his victory total to 95.

The last was the 1993 Senior Skins Game, where he beat Nicklaus, Raymond Floyd and Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez. While it was considered unofficial by the Senior PGA Tour, the cheers were heartfelt, the smile was as big as ever, and the check, worth \$190,000, cashed. Palmer had also won the year before and in the 1988 inaugural.

At that confection, Palmer scored a \$240,000 payday, the largest of his playing career. It was

about \$7,000 more than he had won in any year on the regular Tour.

Purses had skyrocketed and a Senior Tour had been created in his time. One man was largely the reason for it: Arnold Palmer.

He did so much more, from fronting the USGA Associates / Members program to mentoring players to designing golf courses to setting avaition records to raising funds for charities – including Orlando, Fla., hospitals named for himself and Winnie, whom he lost to cancer – and finally backing the plan for a 24-hour cable channel devoted to the game: Golf Channel.

Arnold Palmer is survived by his second wife, Kit, daughters Peggy and Amy, six grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and yes, an army of admirers. A private service was scheduled for today, Thursday, Sept. 29, and a public memorial for Tuesday, Oct. 4.

Len Ziehm

On meeting a king in Boston and Bay Hill

rnold Palmer is gone. Where do I begin to tell you how impactful this is to golf – and to me personally? I'm not sure I would have taken up this sport – one that I love with a passion but don't play very well – had it not been for Arnold Palmer.

It was back in the mid-1950s when my family lived on Chicago's Northwest side. I was about 11 years old and my mother wanted me to see an exhibition event at Medinah.

Actually, I think she wanted to mainly see Arnold, the most charismatic athlete of our time.

We went, he didn't win but the day was enjoyable. My mother took me out to play on a course shortly thereafter, and a life-long love affair with the game began.

Over the years I covered some of his tournaments, the first being the 1968 Western Open at Olympia Fields – my first PGA Tour event as a golf writer working for a major metropolitan newspaper. Palmer didn't win that one, either, but he was accessible to the dozen or so media that attended. The media crowd and the galleries would, of course, grow considerably from those days.

On the professional level, my best up close and personal experience with Palmer came in Boston. I was sent there to cover something else, but wanted to do a feature on Palmer in advance of the budding Senior PGA Tour (now called the



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EYE ON THE BALL Note Arnold Palmer's grip in this photo. His dad Deacon put his hands on a club when he started to play and told him to never change it. He never did.

PGA Tour Champions) planning a Chicago visit. A few other writers from around the country had the same idea, and we gathered at a restaurant where Palmer was planning a private dinner with friends.

He knew we'd be there, and we expected a

brief, friendly chat. We'd get a story and he'd be back with his friends in a few minutes. Not so. He stayed and talked with about half dozen scribes he barely knew for a good hour as his friends waited (I hope) patiently.

Much more recently we visited Palmer's Bay

Hill Club in Orlando, Fla., as part of golf/travelwriting adventures in 2015. Palmer was there, dining with his guests, getting his picture taken, just being Arnie. I have a treasured piece of golf art from that visit signed by the king himself.

Palmer's competitive career was winding down when I came on the golf-writing scene. He won his last PGA Tour event in 1973, but he kept playing - and that's a big reason the golf kept growing and senior golf became a viable part of the pro sports scene.

In 49 years playing the PGA Tour, Palmer earned \$1,784,497 and won 62 tournaments including seven major titles. He earned much more than that in endorsements and other ventures, of course. His income from 2014, for instance, was reported at \$42 million by one respected business publication.

Palmer is certainly not about money, though. He walked with kings and played golf with presidents, but he never lost touch with more common folks.

Rather than dwell on his playing record and business success, I thought you might enjoy some tidbits – provided in no particular order – about Palmer's life that I feel tell more about this extraordinary man:

Before winning the 1954 U.S. Amateur he served three years in the U.S. Coast Guard, a stint that interrupted his amateur career – he had left Wake Forest after the death of pal Bud Worsham – and stymied his plans to be a touring pro.

He beat prostate cancer himself and created the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children in Orlando, which is ranked among the best such hospitals in the world.

One U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, sent Palmer a picture of his swing in hopes he would



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A KING AND A PRESIDENT Arnie and Ike became fast friends through golf at Augusta National.

critique it. Another president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, flew to Palmer's home in Latrobe, Pa., to make a surprise appearance at his birthday party. The day after Gerald Ford left the presidency he had a golf game with Palmer.

Perhaps Palmer's biggest victory came when he rallied from a seven-stroke deficit in the final round to win the 1960 U.S. Open, but he also blew a seven-stroke lead on the back nine of the 1966 Open at Olympic Club in San Francisco before losing to Billy Casper in a playoff. He

blew the lead in the playoff, too.

Palmer built the first golf course in China and designed more than 300 courses around the world.

The son of a greens superintendent, Palmer broke 100 for 18 holes when he was just 7 years old. He met his first wife Winnie on a Tuesday and asked her to marry him four days later. They were married 45 years until her death in 1999.

He signed what must be a zillion autographs and – unlike most every other athlete – his name was always provided in a legible manner. He was confident enough to wear pink before that color was fashionable.

He has a drink in his name – an Arnold Palmer is comprised of iced tea and lemonade - that is known world-wide. He also had his own winery.

He played in 50 Masters Tournaments and was a major factor in the creation of Golf Channel.

He became a pilot to overcome his fear of flying.

He was awarded both the Congressional Golf Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom – the only sports figure to have both.

He attended Wake Forest, where a statue stands in his honor. In 2013 he rode into one of that school's football games on a motorcycle.

In 2010 Esquire magazine named him one of the 75 best dressed men of all time.

Palmer had his very own Army, and it was always vocal and supportive, but Arnie's Army isn't the only segment of society that will sorely miss him now that he's gone.

We're pleased to welcome noted golf writer Len Ziehm to our pages with this column.

ARNOLD PALMER BY THE NUMBERS

\$1,784,497

in career PGA Tour earnings

Key victories as an amateur 1954

All-American Am.

U.S. Amateur

62 PGA Tour wins as a professional

1955

Canadian Open **1956**

Insurance City Open Eastern Open

1957

Houston Open Azalea Open Rubber City Open San Diego Open

an Diego Ope **1958**

St. Petersburg Open

The Masters

Pepsi Championship 1959

Thunderbird
Invitational
Oklahoma City Open
West Palm Beach
Open

1960

Palm Springs (Bob Hope) Desert Classic

Texas Open Baton Rouge Open Pensacola Open

The Masters United States Open

Insurance City Open Mobile Sertoma Open

1961

San Diego Open

Phoenix Open
Baton Rouge Open
Texas Open
Western Open

British Open

1962

Palm Springs
Desert Classic
Phoenix Open

The Masters

Texas Open Tournament of

Champions Colonial National

Invitation

British Open

American Golf Classic

1963

Los Angeles Open



Phoenix Open Pensacola Open Thunderbird Classic Cleveland Open Western Open Whitemarsh Open

1964

The Masters

Oklahoma City Open 1965

Tournament of Champions

1966

Los Angeles Open

Tournament of Champions N

worldwide victories

as a professional

Houston Champions

1967

Los Angeles Open Tucson Open

American Golf

Thunderbird Classic

1968

Bob Hope Desert Classic

Kemper Open

1969

Heritage Classic
Danny Thomas
Diplomat Classic

1970

National Four-Ball (with Jack Nicklaus)

1971

Bob Hope Desert Classic

Florida Citrus

Invitational Westchester Classic

National Team

(with Jack Nicklaus)

1973

Bob Hope Desert Classic

plus 10 Senior PGA Tour wins and 23 more titles worldwide

