



Jerry Cozby in his element at Hillcrest CC pro shop.

BY KEN MACLEOD

The PGA of America is celebrating its Centennial in 2016. For about half that century, Jerry Cozby was setting the example of what a PGA professional should be.

Cozby retired from Hillcrest Country Club in Bartlesville after 41 years at the helm of one of Oklahoma's premier clubs. From 1965-69, he was an assistant to a Texas Golf Hall of Fame professional, Harvey Loudermilk, at Oak Hills Country Club in San Antonio.

Whether it was Loudermilk's doing or just his personality, Cozby arrived at Hillcrest with a fully formed conception of the role of the PGA professional, a fierce work ethic and a near fanatical devotion to detail.

Those traits never waned or dimmed. He and wife Karole's family grew to include three fine sons, each of whom has gone on to become a leader in the industry. Time and health issues took their toll as they will in 41 years. Yet Cozby always provided a level

Dedication to his craft

Cozby mentored young pros with tough love

of member service that set the standard for other pros to follow.

"He is wired like an eight-day clock," said son Cary Cozby, who learned the business from his father well enough that he is now the head professional at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa and a five-time winner of the PGA South Central Section Professional of the Year award. "Anybody that's ever worked for him, the members at Hillcrest, us in the family, we all understood that. He brought it every single day. Professionally, I really appreciate that now in my career."

Although a friendly and entertaining storyteller after work, the native of Breckenridge, Texas, was a no-nonsense taskmaster on the clock. If his idol Ben Hogan had shown up one day to take Cozby's place, the only change may have been that the new boss was a little less intimidating.

David Bryan, now the head professional at Cedar Ridge Country Club in Tulsa, is another proud member of the Cozby-trained professional tree. The son of renowned professional Dave Bryan (formerly of Southern Hills, now at The Patriot in Owasso), the younger Bryan thought he understood the golf business when he took his first job as an assistant at Hillcrest.

"I found out there was a lot more to it than what I thought," Bryan said laughing. "Jerry wanted to make sure I knew what the golf business was all about and what being a good club professional meant. It was definitely an eye-opener working for him in that capacity."

Bryan remembers going home to his one-

bedroom apartment so exhausted he would collapse and fall asleep wherever he first sat down and not move until morning. Still, he cherishes the experience.

"At the time I thought he was being hard on me and I didn't understand it," Bryan said. "But I look back now and I grew and learned and it helped make me the professional that I am today. I'm proud to be a part of his professional tree."

Not only are Cozby protégés in charge of Southern Hills and Cedar Ridge, but former assistant Tim Johnson is the general manager at Pinnacle Country Club, site of the annual Walmart Northwest Arkansas LPGA Classic.

"He's been the most influential person in my career," Johnson said. "He taught me how to pay attention to detail, the importance of punctuality, that the underlying core of every club is service. He brought the same energy, drive and dedication every day he came to work."

That commitment has led to a truck load of awards and honors in addition to his im-



Accepting an award from his hero Ben Hogan.

Info on induction ceremony, HOF Classic

Anyone wishing to attend the Sept. 18 induction of Oklahoma Golf Hall of Famers Nancy Lopez, Jerry Cozby, Labron Harris Sr., Tommy Bolt, W.K. Warren Sr. and W.K. Warren Jr. at Southern Hills Country Club can purchase tickets on the Hall of Fame website at www.oklahomagolfhof.org. Individual seats are \$150 and sponsorship tables are available. The dinner will include a cocktail reception at 6 p.m. followed by the induction ceremony.

Also, anyone wishing to sponsor a team for the Hall of Fame Classic Sept. 19 at Southern Hills can also obtain more information and register on the website. Sponsorships come with a foursome in the tournament and a table of 10 at the induction dinner as well as numerous other benefits. Any questions, please call 918-280-0787. The dinner and tournament are the main fundraisers for the non-profit Oklahoma Golf Hall of Fame. Your support is greatly appreciated.

pending induction into the Oklahoma Golf Hall of Fame. He was named national PGA of America Professional of the Year in 1985, which in 2005 brought with it an automatic induction into the PGA of America Hall of Fame. Cozby has at least a dozen honors at the section level and was inducted into both the National Junior College Athletics Association Hall of Fame and the Bartlesville Sports Hall of Fame.

Two stand out, however. Golfweek Magazine named him Father of the Year in 2012. And then there is the hat.

Inside a glass presentation case commanding a prominent perch amidst decades of awards, books and other golf memorabilia, is a faded Oklahoma hat. Cary got it from former Sooner sports information director Larry McAlister and wore it when the Sooners won the 1992 Big Eight Championship. He then worked out in it frequently and passed it on in all of its sweat-stained glory to brother Craig, who himself wore it during his All-American career then passed it on to youngest brother Chance, who did the same.

In 1999 as a Christmas present, the boys presented the hat to Jerry and Karole with this inscription.

"Eleven 'O' Letters, Six First Team All-Big Eight Awards, Two All-American Awards, One Big 8 Newcomer of the Year Award, One NCAA Team Championship, One Big Eight Team Championship, Three 'O' Rings and One Hat!"

Family has always meant the world to Cozby and he considers anyone who has worked for him as part of his extended family. The ability to turn off the gruff working boss persona after hours or when the person has moved on to his next job, and the genuine care and concern for his former assistants are part of his makeup.

Cozby took up the game when his father Steve partnered with Mike Holder's father Speck to build a crude nine-hole course with sand greens on an old prairie dog town while the fathers were working for Gulf Oil in a west Texas camp.

The Cozby family moved shortly after to Odessa, where Jerry became a terrific high school player, a two-time national champion at Odessa Junior College and then a small college national champion at Lamar in Beaumont. He may have been a four-time national cham-



The hat worn by all three Sooner sons.

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Golfweek's 2012 Father of the Year with his clan.

tion, but the senior-laden team elected to attend their graduation rather than compete in the College Division championship.

He met Karole at Lamar and took her first to San Antonio, then out of her beloved Lone Star state when he got the job at Hillcrest in 1969, promising her they would return after five years.

"Well, here it is 47 years later and we're still here," Karole said. "I couldn't have asked for a better life. Golf has been so good to us as a family.

"I still miss the days of being involved on

the collegiate and amateur levels. Jerry was on the job pretty much seven days a week and I was with the boys and loved every second of it."

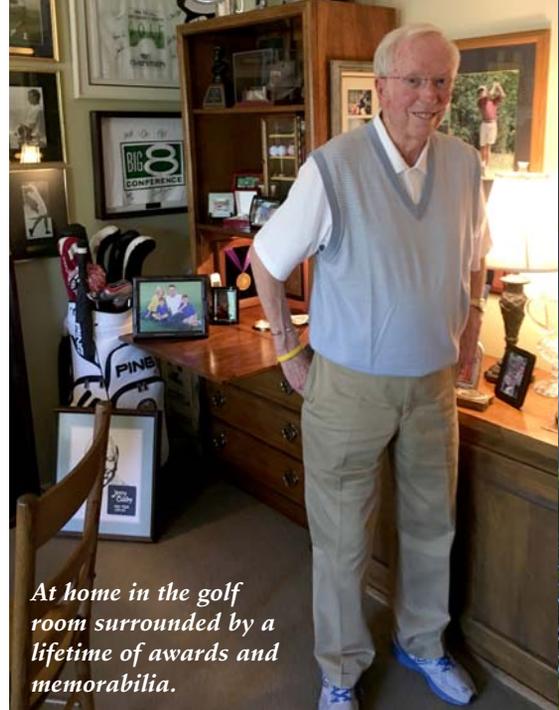
The Cozby family and what it has meant to golf was certainly a consideration by Oklahoma Golf Hall of Fame selection committee members who were impressed by not only Cozby's individual accomplishments and dedication, but by the family and its growing legacy in golf. In addition to Cary's position at Southern Hills,

Chance and Craig both hold vital positions in Ping Golf.

"I can't think of a better upbringing," Cary said. "To be surrounded by a golf course with awesome parents who did everything in the world for us. We had everything we needed plus some."

Although he more than earned all his recognition, Cozby also knows he's led a blessed life.

"When I think back to those sand greens I grew up on, it's been very flattering to receive these type of awards," Cozby said. "I



At home in the golf room surrounded by a lifetime of awards and memorabilia.

just have to pinch myself. There are a lot of other good golf professionals, a lot better than I am.

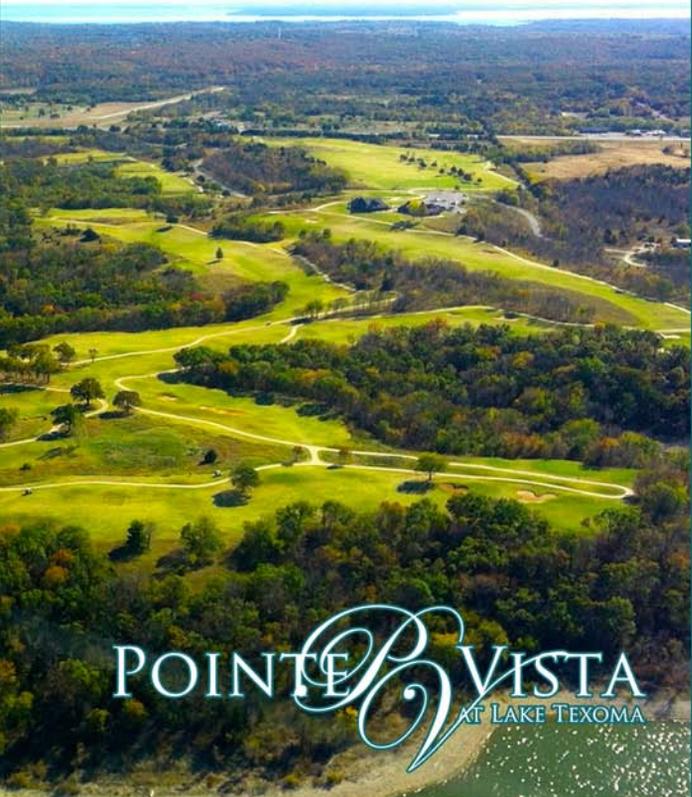
"One thing I've always tried to do and believe in is to make sure all of the golfers at your facility are having a good time and enjoying the game. Hopefully we as golf professionals have done something to help them play to the best of their ability."



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