



Charlie Smith

JUL 4, 1928 - NOV 14, 2020



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Charlie Smith Obituary

Charlie Smith, 92, Elyria's legendary golf pro and former owner of Forest Hills Golf Course passed away quietly November 14, 2020 at his home. Born July 4, 1928 in Olean, New York, Charlie began his sports career in high school where he was a three-year letterman in basketball. He caddied in the summers at a local country club and discovered he had a natural golf swing. Charlie spent hours watching the pro at the club give lessons and soon realized his calling; to play and to teach others to play the game of a lifetime. He turned pro shortly after graduating from high school and moved to Toledo, Ohio in 1950 to serve as the assistant pro at the famous Inverness Club where his primary role was teaching. In the winters, he would travel to Florida with the head pro at Inverness and continue to refine his teaching and playing skills. He also served 2 years with the US Army during the Korean War. During his time in Toledo, he met the love of his life at a YMCA dance, his wife, Lee (Schafer). They moved to Elyria in 1959 when Charlie was offered the head pro job at Spring Valley Country Club. In 1965, along with two friends, Charlie bought Forest Hills Country Club where he led its expansion from nine to eighteen holes. Ten years later he sold his interest in Forest Hills and focused on tournament competition and teaching. He retired at age 80 ending a career marked by giving over 30,000 golf lessons and competing at the highest levels of professional golf. During his competitive career, Charlie brought national attention to Elyria on multiple occasions, but the story surrounding his first U.S. Open is movie-worthy. In 1962, he played in his first of two U.S. Opens. The Open that year was held at Oakmont Country Club, and his journey to reaching the first tee captured national news. Following the qualifying rounds, Charlie was the first alternate in case another player dropped out before the start of the tournament. The night before first round of the Open, he received a call from the Tournament Director indicating that another player, tour great Dow Finsterwald,



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had to cancel and that Charlie was in. His tee time was at 8:30 the next morning. Charlie's car was in no condition to make the 300-mile trip. A member at Spring Valley loaned him his car, and the late night ride was on. Apparently the thrill of the moment got the better of Charlie and he was stopped by the police for speeding. When the car's registration did not match-up with Charlie's name, he was taken to the police station under suspicion of driving a stolen vehicle. Following a phone call to the car's owner, Charlie was back on the road by about 4:00 AM. He arrived at Oakmont at the break of day, but the guard at the gate turned Charlie away because he was not on the player roster. A few phone calls to tournament officials and he was admitted to the players' parking lot. With little time to spare, he raced to the club house, where he was greeted with the news that his caddy had quit when he (the caddy) learned that he would no longer be assigned to a tour superstar but instead, to a humble club pro who weighed less than an empty golf bag and stood about as tall. Charlie was assigned to a new caddy who, until 10 minutes earlier was in charge of shining shoes in the locker room. Off to the driving range to warm up for 15 minutes and then to the first tee. Charlie's adventure was picked up by the national news media and covered widely. Although he missed the cut, no player in the field had a story to match Charlie's. Charlie continued to distinguish himself on the national stage by qualifying for another U.S. Open (1977) and the US Senior Open in 1990. His son, Dan, a former golf standout at Elyria High School, caddied for Charlie at both of these tournaments. Charlie also qualified for the National PGA Championship. Throughout his career in Elyria, he was recognized as one of the top players in the state holding numerous senior titles and a top-ten finish in the Ohio Open. Charlie was inducted into the Elyria Sports Hall of Fame in 1991. In his later years, when dementia robbed him of most memories, he would sit and re-read the clippings about his induction; it was a great source of comfort and pride until the very end. As a person, Charlie was known as a gentleman who was kind, humble and quick to smile. He made all whom he met feel at ease and welcome. Charlie and Leona lived a long and happy life together. High points included travel to the Holy Land and a tour of Europe to re-trace the historic sites of WW II. He was a 60 year member of First United Methodist Church and enjoyed fly fishing. Charlie is survived by his wife of



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64 years, Leona; his son Dan (wife, Jonlee Andrews); daughter Diane (husband, John) Boyd; and a grandson Joshua. A service for the family was held at Dicken Funeral Home & Cremation Service, Elyria. Reverend W. Kent Joy officiated. Burial was in Ottawa Hills Memorial Park, Toledo. A celebration of Charlie's life will be announced in the spring. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you show kindness to a stranger and do something that helps bring joy to others.

To send flowers
to the family or plant a tree
in memory of Charlie Smith, please visit our floral store.

[Read More](#)



Tribute Wall

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KJ

Kristen A Jones posted:

Charlie was a prince of a man and I always enjoyed knowing him. He has had to journey the long road Home, and we all truly wish him peace in his rest. Warmest sympathy to all the family. Kristen Jones and family

November 24 at 8:00 PM

JP

Jeanne Smith Prince posted:

Dear Dan and family, My deepest sympathies on the loss of your father. From your old friend who lived down the street, Jeanne

November 21 at 8:00 PM

DM

Dave Moskal posted:

He taught me to keep a fishing rod in my golf bag. I think he liked that better than chasing birdies!

November 19 at 8:00 PM

TG

Tim Gebhardt posted:

As a board member of the Elyria Sports Hall of Fame, I'd like to send our condolences to Leona and the family of Charlie. Not only a great, legendary golfer, but a great man. Again, sorry for your loss. The Hall of Fame will miss him.

November 17 at 8:00 PM

JL

John Lydon posted:

Charlie my old boss 1961 to 1964 Spring Valley C.C.

November 16 at 8:00 PM

RR

Richard & Linda Roth posted:

Dear Lee and family, We were sorry to hear of Charlies passing. Dick enjoyed the good tips Charlie gave him in lessons and the patience he had. He was also supportive of EHS basketball. We were grateful for getting to know both of you through FUMC all those years. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Dick and Linda Roth

November 16 at 8:00 PM



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RK

Richard Kukucka posted:

My early years growing up in Elyria, was our neighbor on Whitman Blvd., Charlie Smith. Mr. Smith was a golf professional, where there was the biggest golf bag in his garage, all white bag that was First Flight in green letters. Mr. & Mrs. Smith would always be sitting in lawn chairs on the driveway, having coffee, when passing by the Smiths' we were always to say hello. As always, Mr. & Mrs. Smith would wave and smile with a hello, Getting older I had an opportunity to learn the profession of caddying, Spring Valley Country Club was just down the street and ravine. I would get up early, not quite awake, and start my walk to the course, just me and the sidewalk, when "Howdy neighbor!", shot out of the Smiths garage! There was Charlie, bright eyed and bushy tailed ready to head to his golf course, he would ask "where you going?", still startled by someone with that much energy at 6:30 am, "I am going to caddy", Charlie came forward from the garage, "good luck", I said, "thank you, Mr. Smith", Charlie shot back, "No! it's Charlie! Have A good day!" Charlie had the most infectious smile every time he saw you. I took many a golf lesson from Charlie, HE WAS THE BEST!!! Our condolences Mrs. Smith, Dan and Diane. The Kukucka family

November 16 at 8:00 PM

JL

Joseph Lynch posted:

Prayers to the Charlie Smith family. I worked at the Silver Tee driving range back in the 70's and early 80's where Charlie gave so many lessons. He was nice enough to give me many pointers on my own swing back then. Rest in Peace Charlie! I know you touched many lives in your time on earth. Joe Lynch

November 16 at 8:00 PM

CG

Charles(Buddy)Goodwin posted:

Hello God, just thought I'd congratulate you on your recent acquisition, PGA professional Charles Smith. Surely you have had your eye on him for the longest of time. His final score card showed a birdie on every hole he played. Gentleman, husband, father, grandfather, athlete, mentor, instructor, apostle, and friend were just the front nine of his lifetime qualities. Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, brave, and finally reverent filled out his boy-scout worthy back nine attributes. Yes sir, Lord, when you drafted Charly in the first round on Sat. Nov. 14th your team had done its research. He never went to bed over par for a day. Those privileged to play in his game here on earth were left better persons after making his acquaintance. So spit-shine that halo, let it reflect all the good that wonderful man did in furthering your work. Those of us still here are grateful you shared him with us. AMEN! Buddy Goodwin

November 16 at 8:00 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Charlie by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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