Arnold Palmer:

1960s “Athlete of the Decade” (Associated Press poll), one of “The 25 Coolest Athletes of All Time” (GQ, Feb. 2011), successful businessman and golf legend. In addition to an impressive 92 overall victories, including seven Major championships, four Masters, and PGA Player of the Year in 1960 and 1962, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from George W. Bush in 2004 and the Congressional Medal of Honor from Barack Obama in 2009. Arnold Palmer is also the most successful sports figure universally to brand and license products bearing his name, bringing his traits of character, endurance, reliability and integrity to the forefront of the business.

While many know him for his celebrated golf achievements and related businesses, Arnold Palmer also is a philanthropist, supporting numerous charities and hospitals. Mr. Palmer also dedicated his time to working with NCA in the 1970s on an extensive campaign to retain the tax deduction for club dues. Mr. Palmer talked at length with Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) about the devastating effect the disallowance would impose on private clubs. Please read the “Article from the Archives” on page 26 to see how this issue evolved.

Club Director is pleased to share some of Arnold Palmer’s insights on the game of golf, private clubs and related activities and organizations that contribute to the golf industry and private club world.

Arnold Palmer – You’ve seen a lot of modern changes to the game of golf since your Wake Forest College days. Where do you see the game heading in relation to: New and improved equipment? Shorter versions of the game? Golf course design? Player development?

Arnold Palmer – We will continue to see new innovations in golf equipment and that’s good. Hybrids and rescue clubs, drivers with large heads, new putter designs, even range-finder equipment that is gaining more and more acceptance by golf administrators. Whatever golfers feel will help them enjoy the game more is good.

I am very much in favor of creating the so-called executive courses when the availability of land is limited, but I hope that we will stick with the standard nine- and 18-hole course designs. I don’t think we should be tinkering with what has been the essence of the game over the centuries.

Course designs today are focusing more and more on building in the strategy factor, even though the length that today’s young players are hitting the ball seems to dictate building them longer. The answer is to slow down the golf ball. I’ve been advocating this for years now. If that doesn’t happen, more of our existing courses will be turned into driver-and-wedge courses.

Surveys show that the growth of the game has flattened out in recent years, part of that, of course, is because of the economy. On the other hand, greater effort is being taken to interest young people and bring them into the game through organizations like The First Tee program. I am optimistic that our great game not only will survive but will thrive again in future years.

It’s amazing how much the game has changed in my lifetime even while adhering to the basic foundation laid so many years ago. I really believe these changes have, by and large, been for the better. ☯️
Editor’s Note: The following list was published in Kingdom magazine on August 23, 2009 in honor of Arnold Palmer’s 80th birthday.

Anyone trying to pinpoint the 80 most significant moments in Arnold Palmer’s life is going to be subject to criticism and an immediate backlash of “you forgot” and “how could you leave outs?” We’re fairly sure we’d get these letters were Arnie himself to pick the 80; after all, there are far more than 80 notable moments among his monumental contributions to philanthropy, business and genuine American character (not to mention golf). But which mean more to humanity: the construction of a hospital where more than 100,000 children were born or the seven professional major wins? Which mean more to the man: the 92 professional victories or the birth of his first great-grandchild?

Being fortunate enough to know Mr. Palmer a little, we’re positive that any opportunity to do good or influence young people matters more to The King than all the dollars and dividends. So, sorry Skins Game ‘92, you lose out to the birth of his first great-grandchild?

The unenviable task of deciding which moments would make the cut for this list fell to writer Chris Rodell, with the able assistance of ArnoldPalmer.com’s Scott Curry. We offer it with the full understanding that many of you will have your own ideas on the subject. Thankfully, Arnold Palmer has provided enough moments in his life for all of us to have our own “Best Moments” list. On his 80th birthday, here’s ours:

**September 10, 1929** — Arnold Palmer is born.
**February 22, 1934** — Winifred Walzer Palmer, beloved first wife of Arnold Palmer, is born.
**March 23, 1939** — Kathleen (Kit) Gawthrop Palmer, beloved second wife of Arnold Palmer is born.

**September 7, 1947** — Palmer steps off a bus at Wake Forest, N.C., carrying a suitcase, a golf bag and a scholarship offer from golf coach Jim Weaver.

**January 22, 1951** — Still reeling over the death of close friend and Wake Forest golf teammate Bud Worsham, Arnold Palmer enlists in the U.S. Coast Guard and reports for duty in Cape May, N.J.


**August 28, 1954** — Palmer wins the 54th U.S. Amateur Championship.

**November 18, 1954** — Palmer turns pro and signs a 3-year endorsement deal with Wilson Sporting Goods that will pay him about $5,000 a year.

**December 20, 1954** — Palmer, 25, and Winifred Walzer, 20, run away to “elope” in the Falls Church (Virginia) Presbyterian Church before a small circle of Palmer family and friends—and no Walzers. Palmer’s future father-in-law, Shube Walzer, boycotted because he was convinced his daughter was making a tragic mistake.

**August 20, 1955** — Palmer wins his first professional tournament, the Canadian Open. The putter Palmer uses for his first victory is stolen from his unattended bag. It has never been found.

**February 26, 1956** — Arnold and Winnie Palmer announce the birth of their first child, daughter Peg.

**March 1, 1956** — Palmer begins taking flying lessons at the Latrobe airport that will one day bear his name.

**July 29, 1956** — Palmer wins the first of three tournaments on what will be his most successful calendar date as a professional golfer. On July 29, he’ll win three tournaments in three decades in three different states for escalating first place prizes of $3,800 (1956), $11,000 (1963), and $20,050 (1971).
January 6, 1961 — Palmer takes a 12 on No.9 at the Rancho Park Golf Course during the 1961 Los Angeles Open after blasting four straight balls OB. Club members install a plaque commemorating the deed.

January 10, 1961 — Palmer is awarded the coveted 1960 Sportsman of the Year by Sports Illustrated.

July 15, 1961 — Palmer secures the title he's most eagerly sought, the British Open, beating Britain's Dai Rees by a single shot in the wind and rain at Royal Birkdale.

June 16, 1962 — Palmer misses an 8-foot par putt on the 9th hole of the final round of the 1962 U.S. Open at Oakmont during a match that would have him three-putting 13 times over four days to eventual winner Jack Nicklaus's one three-putt. Years later, Palmer cited the missed putt on 9 as the one he'd most like to mulligan.

July 13, 1962 — Palmer retains his British Open Championship title with a victory at Troon.

April 12, 1964 — Palmer is at his most dominant as he cruises to a fourth Masters victory, finishing 6 shots ahead of Dave Marr and Jack Nicklaus. It is the last of his seven major professional victories.

December 25, 1964 — The James Bond film, “Goldfinger,” is released in America and includes a caddie who speculates the arch-villain is cheating, telling Sean Connery as Bond, “If that’s his original ball, I’m Arnold Palmer.”

February 23, 1966 — Palmer flies his new Jet Commander to New York for wife Winnie’s birthday, then receives the Gold Tee Award at the Metropolitan Golf Writer’s Association.

June 18, 1966 — Palmer takes a seven-stroke lead to the tenth of the U.S. Open at Olympic Country Club’s Lakeside course. In one of golf’s greatest collapses, Palmer shoots a four-over par 39 on the back nine while Billy Casper’s 32 forces a Monday playoff, which Palmer loses.

September 10, 1966 — Dwight D. Eisenhower secretly flies to Latrobe and knocks on Palmer’s door for a surprise birthday visit. Palmer says it was “the thrill of a lifetime.”

August 11, 1967 — Palmer wins $2,000 at the American Golf Classic at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio. The sum makes him the first professional golfer in history to earn more than $1 million in career earnings.

August 17, 1967 — Golf Magazine takes a peek inside the guest book aboard Palmer’s Jet Commander. Recent passengers include former President Eisenhower, Bob Hope, Andy Williams, Dinah Shore, Dow Finsterwald, Vic Damone, Dave Marr, Doug Sanders, Bruce Devlin and more.

February 14, 1969 — The Palmers visit President Eisenhower at Walter Reed Hospital for coffee and heart-shaped cookies. It will be the last time the friends are together.

September 13, 1969 — Palmer breaks his own course record from September 23, 1968, with a 12-under par 60 at Latrobe CC. The round included three eagles, eight birdies, five pars and two bogies, one of them on the sixth hole, a reachable par 5. “I’m still kicking myself for that bogey at six,” he says 40 years later.

November 30, 1969 — Palmer ends a year-long slump by winning the inaugural Heritage Golf Classic in Hilton Head, S.C.

December 7, 1969 — One week after winning at Hilton Head, Palmer launches a vaunted charge to win the Danny Thomas Diplomat Classic.

January 12, 1970 — Actor Kirk Douglas is asked, of all the famous people you’ve met and known, who possesses more personal magnetism than any other? His answer: “Arnold Palmer.”


June 8, 1970 — From now on, it’s Dr. Palmer after Wake Forest presents the golfer with an honorary doctorate of laws degree.

July 25, 1971 — Palmer wins the Westchester Golf Classic in Harrison, N.Y and gets a congratulatory call from President Nixon.

September 3, 1971 — Arnie and Winnie Palmer become the sole stockholders of Latrobe Country Club, the course where he grew up and learned how to play golf.

September 25, 1971 — The Wake Forest Sports of Hall of Fame inducts Palmer as a member during the halftime of a game with Miami, as the Wake band spells out “A-R-N-I-E.”

February 11, 1973 — Palmer beats Jack Nicklaus and a crowded field of challengers to win The Bob Hope Classic. At 43, it is Palmer’s first win in 18 months and will be his last on the PGA Tour.

June 17, 1973 — Palmer shoots a disappointing final round 72 to finish fourth at the U.S. Open at Oakmont. The bitterness of the loss is soothed by the fact that winner Johnny Miller shoots a record 63.

December 23, 1973 — Palmer, while at a Bay Hill Christmas party, smokes his last cigarette.

Arnold Palmer and long time associate Doc Giffin in office at Latrobe Country Club.

February 6, 1976 — Deacon Palmer plays 27 holes in the warm sunshine at Bay Hill Club while his son Arnold shoots a 64 at the Bob Hope Desert Classic. Later, Deacon Palmer is found dead in his room of a heart attack. His son often hints that it’s a way he wouldn’t mind going.

May 19, 1976 — Palmer navigates what some reporters call the greatest water hazards of his career as he circumnavigates the globe in a Lear 36 in less than 58 hours, a world aviation record that earns headlines around the world.

January 20, 1977 — Jimmy Carter is inaugurated as the 39th president of the United States, replacing Gerald Ford, who in his first act as a private citizen flies a chartered jet to Pebble Beach Golf Course to play golf with Arnold Palmer in the Crosby Celebrity Pro-Am.

January 10, 1980 — Palmer uses an 8 iron on the 144-yard sixth hole at Indian Wells Country Club during the 1980 Bob Hope Desert Classic to score his 10th career ace.

July 13, 1981 — Palmer wins the USGA Senior Open at the South Course at Oakland Hills C.C., Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

September 3, 1986 — Crowds gather in hopes of seeing Palmer ace the same hole three consecutive days at the 1986 Chrysler Cup Pro-Am. Alas, Palmer’s shot goes into the rough.

September 28, 1986 — A third consecutive Palmer one-putt eagle on the par 5 16th punctuates a final round 68 at the Union Mutual Seniors Golf Classic at the Purpoodock Club in Maine.

March 27, 1990 — Palmer addresses Congress on the 100th anniversary of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s birth: “I spoke from the heart about a man I loved like a second father, and Congress gave me—or should I say President Eisenhower—a standing ovation.”

September 6, 1997 — Arnold Palmer aces the 122-yard second hole at Latrobe Country Club for the third time. Also on this day exactly 32 years previous, he’d aced during an exhibition in Johnson City, Tennessee.

CD – How have private clubs changed over the years? What changes do you see in the future?

AP – I would say that private clubs have developed a more relaxed atmosphere. The clubs have recognized that they face much more competition to attract their family members to club activities in this day and age when there are so many more activities appealing to adults and children. One thing most clubs have done, it seems, is to adjust from rigid rules to today’s lifestyles in dress codes, food service and the like.

It has also been good to see that many racial and ethnic constraints in the private-club world are melting away in these more-enlightened times.

As for the future, I see the industry going with the technological flow and utilizing the constant advances to their best advantage, just as they have up until now.

CD – Arnold Palmer Design Company has always been very concerned about the environment. What are the keys to designing, building and managing successful golf and country clubs? Are there ways to reduce the cost of the game by becoming more environmentally friendly?

AP – Contrary to what some uninformed people say, I think that golf courses usually enhance the wildlife and environment on and around them. A good example would be the course that we created on property that was a landfill. Another would be Arbor Links, a daily-fee course we built for the Arbor Day Foundation in Nebraska that is, in effect, a living environmental laboratory.

People are working very hard to improve the environment by using less water and fewer chemicals. I think it is imperative that this be done.

When I’m designing a new course, I am sometimes influenced by existing holes I’ve seen and played. When you consider all of the courses (some 300) we have done on a wide variety of land and terrain, you won’t detect that influence in very many holes. Persons who don’t know who the designer was don’t come away from our courses identifying them as Palmer courses.

As for wildlife, often there is more local wildlife on a site after many courses are completed than beforehand. ☞
**Q&A**

**CD** – Let’s talk about golf as an Olympic sport in 2016. Do you have any thoughts about whether a new course will be built in Rio de Janeiro for the games? How would you organize the competition?

**AP** – I am sure Brazil will be building a new course for the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and I would love to have the opportunity to be its designer. We are doing a course in Sao Paulo now, so we already have a foot in the door in Brazil. It usually takes about three years from start to finish of a new golf course and they will want to have that course open well before the Olympics there.

It almost certainly will have to be a stroke-play event with so many countries involved. Probably teams of five or six players with several of the best scores of each team counting. It should be quite interesting. Look for some unexpected developments.

**CD** – Are you involved in any current project for The First Tee program?

**AP** – I have been involved in one way or another with The First Tee since its inception. My company built one of first short courses for The First Tee chapter in Augusta, Georgia, only a few miles from the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club. And I have been the honorary chairman of The First Tee of Pittsburgh for many years. I am also honorary chairman of an extensive Junior Golf Weekend being supported throughout Western Pennsylvania this spring by a wide range of golf and governmental organizations at some of the area’s finest clubs.

I am always pleased to help promote the game with our young people who will be the backbones of golf and the club industry in future years.

You might find it interesting to know that a few years ago we gave the Pittsburgh First Tee a couple of hundred sets of woods and irons that I had shipped to Latrobe when we closed the Arnold Palmer Golf Company a decade or so ago. I’m sure they are being put to good use.

**CD** – You celebrated a landmark birthday in 2009 – your 80th – and have been in the spotlight for more than 50 years. NCA is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Any thoughts about how organizations like NCA can continue to provide valuable services to the golf industry just as you continue to innovate, inspire and contribute to the world of golf?

**AP** – The National Club Association is certainly one of the most important of the many organizations that make up the framework of support for the many aspects of the game of golf. As the private club industry’s only active voice in Washington, the NCA plays a key role in keeping all of us up-to-date and aware of what is going on in the halls of our federal government.

In these trying economic times, the private-club industry has been struggling with the budgets and balance sheets. Since I am heavily involved with clubs in Latrobe, Orlando and Pebble Beach, I am facing this and find it particularly important that we have a watchdog in Washington to try to insure that legislation affecting the club membership is beneficial and not detrimental.

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May 29, 1988 — The Los Angeles Times reports that Arnold Palmer remains No. 1 in the endorsement field. The paper reports Palmer will earn $8 million in endorsements this year.

September 18, 1988 — Palmer, 59, shoots a final round 70 to win the Crestar Classic at Hermitage Country Club near Richmond, Virginia, and the $48,750 first place prize. It is his 10th win since turning 50 and his final professional victory.

June 20, 1993 — President Clinton presents Palmer with The National Sports Award at a gala banquet in Washington.

March 17, 1994 — Palmer breaks personal precedent and charges a fee for his autograph. Told that business at his grandchildren’s 18th hole lemonade stand is slow, Palmer takes time out from his hosting duties at Bay Hill and agrees to sign autographs for anyone who’ll buy a $1.50 glass of lemonade. Thirty minutes later, the stand closes after taking in $50 and running dry of lemonade.

May 8, 1994 — Palmer becomes the key early investor in what will become a wildly successful and lucrative cable network, Golf Channel.

June 17, 1994 — Arnold Palmer, the sentimental favorite, misses the cut at the 1994 U.S. Open at Oakmont, but stirs many in the hometown crowd to tears as he makes his final appearance in a U.S. Open.

April 4, 1995 — Augusta National honors Palmer by dedicating a plaque to him next to a newly constructed water fountain near the 16th tee. The four-time Masters champ was only the fourth player ever so honored.

July 21, 1993 — The K Club, future site of the 2006 Ryder Cup championship, opens with Palmer and his design team on hand for the festivities.

September 15, 2003 — The 100,000 birth is recorded at the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children.

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Arnold Palmer and his beloved Cessna.
Special Offer for NCA Members

Throughout his career Arnold Palmer has been well known for giving back to the game of golf. In 2003 he teamed up with TMC USA to launch Kingdom magazine for the members and guests of his courses. One of America’s premier luxury golf lifestyle magazines, the publication retails at $20 a copy, with 25 percent of all subscription revenue donated to the Palmer Hospitals. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Club Association, Kingdom magazine is giving back to club members, by making 10 copies available for your club free of charge. For more information on how to get this high quality magazine delivered to your club, contact Joe@arnieskingdom.com. (Please note a small delivery charge will be made.) Kingdom is available digitally at www.arnieskingdom.com.