



News & Information
November 25, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dan Quatrocelli
dquatrocelli@pgahq.com
CTPGA.com
Facebook.com/CTPGA
@ConnecticutPGA
860-430-2302

2015 Connecticut Section PGA Hall of Fame Inductee Profile: Jim Orsi

SOUTH GLASTONBURY, Conn. (November 25, 2015) - Russ Held, Connecticut Section PGA Publicist

Jim Orsi never dreamed of the Hall of Fame. And for good reason. When the longtime golf professional at New London Country Club retired in 1988, the Connecticut Section PGA had not yet established a shrine to recognize its best.

"It wasn't something I could look forward to . . . they didn't have one," Orsi said. "Since they told me, I've been able to think about it a little at a time. I get very emotional about it, in a good way. I had no idea I'd ever be elected. When I retired, they didn't have it.

"You can't go any higher than this."

Orsi is part of a Hall of Fame class that includes fellow pros Tim Gavronski of Shuttle Meadow CC and Tony Kelley of Wyckoff CC. The Section will induct its eighth class at its Hall of Fame Induction and Champions Tribute on Nov. 30 at Lake of Isles in North Stonington, Conn. The program also includes recognition of the 2015 PGA Member Championship winners, Player of the Year awards and the winner of the President's Award.

Connecticut Section PGA Hall of Fame committee member Gary Reynolds said Orsi's willingness to volunteer his services, knowledge and experience helped build a stronger association. "He stepped up and continued to step up at times when others did not want to," Reynolds said. "That really helped build a bridge for the future, with his sacrifices. He has been a steadfast supporter of the Section and of the business of the Section."

Orsi's legacy in the Section spanned parts of four different decades, a run from 1955 to 1988 at New London. "My whole life was golf," Orsi said. "It was almost 24/7. I was on the job most days. If I had a day off, I'd still be at the club . . . playing with members. I really loved working there and I enjoyed giving service to the members. We all worked long hours to do that."

New London CC has since been renamed, under new management, as Great Neck Country Club, but Orsi's legacy there lives on. "He never argued with anybody, he accommodated everyone," Orsi's wife Janet said. "He's a pleaser. He treated everyone equally and never had a bad word to say about anyone. Service was his No. 1 goal and he would bend over backwards for anybody. He worked from sun up to sun down, right through December and Christmas. That's why he was there for 33 years, no one wanted him to leave."

Orsi's venture into the business as a teenager happened by chance, when a high school friend was working as an assistant pro at Shennecossett CC in Groton. "He said, 'Get a job caddying here,'" said Orsi, a native of the city of Groton. "I started shagging balls during lessons for the pro, the late Del Kinney. He started to let me hang around the pro shop, doing odds and ends. I had done nothing with golf before then. But I got more interested when we could play on Mondays . . ."

A few years later, Kinney moved on to New London CC. "He asked me if I wanted to join him there as an assistant, and I gladly said yes," Orsi said. "After four years he left . . . but I stayed."

Orsi was hired as New London's head pro, earning him the distinction at age 26 of being the youngest head pro in the state. "I was never so happy in my life," Orsi said of his first head professional opportunity. "I knew there were a lot of other assistants, older than me, who could have been me."

Orsi earned Class A status with the PGA of America in 1955, a milestone that has since earned him Half-Century and 60-year recognition. "I liked the members and they liked me," Orsi said. "They were always very friendly and we went on trips together. We went to Scotland four or five times, to Bermuda three or four times. A lot of goodwill tournaments, as we called them."

Orsi's efforts were recognized beyond the grounds of New London CC, as he was honored by the Connecticut Section PGA as its Professional of the Year in 1969. "That was a big surprise," Orsi said. "I felt like there were a lot of other deserving choices for the award."

He served as secretary of the Section for 10 years and was a correspondent for PGA Magazine, roles he first assumed on a temporary basis. "I really enjoyed that, but no one in the Section wanted to do it," Orsi said of his secretary's role. "I volunteered for one year and it ended up being 10."

Orsi said his interest in and catalyst for a career in golf connects him with Kinney. "He was my mentor, the only pro I worked for," Orsi said. "When I walked in . . . he'd tell me the pro shop was mine. I had to catch on quickly, there was more responsibility when you're the one in charge."

With his attention to membership service, Orsi found little time to play competitively at the state and regional levels over the years. "At tournaments, I'd shoot between 74 and 78 consistently," Orsi said. "And that wasn't good enough to win out there."

His lowest round in competition was a 65, a gem carded during the winter at a California course. Orsi said a 66 he once posted at New London CC came during a casual round. "I won a couple of low pro tournaments, but I did not have Tour ability and I knew that," Orsi said.

Orsi has enjoyed a retirement that has allowed him to reflect on memories that included a tour with the U.S. Army through Italy during World War II. "I was part of the 115th Military Police Organization," said

Orsi, whose birth name is Cesare James. "I was enlisted for three years, right at the end of the war. I spent 16 months in Italy, I could speak Italian. My parents came direct from Italy."

Orsi and Janet now live year-round, near the shore in Waterford, after spending the better part of 20 winters in Emerald Dunes Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Fla. "I had a friend there who got me a job there and it was great for me," Orsi said. Orsi recalled the likes of Otto Graham, Jerry Lewis and Bob Cousy playing at New London, and crossing paths with celebrities such as Celine Dion, author James Patterson and Donald Trump at Emerald Dunes.

"I miss being around the membership," Orsi said of retirement. "I stay busy with our walks and watching people pass by the house. I still hit shots in my backyard. But only chip shots, 10 yards or less."

About the Connecticut Section PGA

The Connecticut Section, PGA of America is a not-for-profit organization chartered by The PGA of America in 1933 to promote golf and enhance the livelihood of its members. The Section is comprised of more than 350 men and women PGA Professionals who are employed at over 170 golf facilities throughout Connecticut and Western Massachusetts and who are committed to growing the game of golf. More information about The Connecticut Section is available on the organization's web site, located at www.ctpga.com.

###