



Links Players

The Crown of Righteousness

I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Golf has lost a great one. I recently learned that Mr. Jack Burke, Jr. passed away at 100. I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Burke a few times during my visits to The Champions Club in Houston, and every encounter was memorable.

He always had something to say that was meaningful. One day, when I arrived at The Champions Club for a practice round before the U.S. Mid-Am qualifying the following day, Mr. Burke was the first person I ran into after walking under the vine-covered archway from the parking lot.

He asked me if I was there for the qualifying the next day. I said, "Yes, sir, I am." He looked at me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Son, remember, 'under.' Just get it 'Under.'" I thanked him and went on with my preparation. The next day, I had an OK day, but I shot plus one for the day and missed qualifying for the U.S. Mid-Am by two shots.

I would have qualified if I had "gotten it under" that day. One under was the number. It was a golf experience that I'll never forget.

I heard it said that Mr. Burke, while he was a great player and great champion, probably did more for the game of golf after he stopped competing. I wholeheartedly agree with that. I've quoted Mr. Burke's book "It's Only A Game" in an earlier devotional. I encouraged every golfer to read it.

As you read the book, you realize Mr. Burke was about improving the game. He had strong opinions and didn't always agree with the golfing establishment. Mr. Burke valued the game of golf for true competition, helping others along the way, and building relationships.

It reminds me of another book we all spend a lot of time reading that talks about loving God and loving others.

The greatest quality I saw in Mr. Burke was his availability to everyone. The greatest golfers in the world would seek him out for advice, and he gave them everything he could to support them.

He also always had time for a word of encouragement or advice to help someone like me, whom he didn't even know. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40).

He was mindful of what others needed. That is my encouragement. Be present and always attentive when we can help another golfer or counsel someone seeking answers to life's perplexities. Don't be afraid to help someone out, even if your encouragement is only to see a PGA Pro or, even better—introduce them to a man named Jesus.

One last piece of advice from Mr. Burke's book. He said, "Live your life so that when you die, you fill-up the church. A big funeral says something about how much you were loved or respected." That's great advice for all of us, and I'm guessing that when they celebrated Mr. Burke's life, there was standing room only in the church. Mr. Burke, my tribute to you... Well done, good and faithful servant!

Prayer: Lord, guide me into living my life in service to you and the people you have put in my life.

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Todd Sturgis

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