

## **Joe Sprague, Sr.**

If there is one person most responsible for the success of the R.I. Golf Association over the past 30 years, that man is Joseph J. Sprague Sr. While golf in Rhode Island has been amazingly successful, both individually and as a whole, Sprague is the one person most responsible for making it all happen. He took over an already thriving operation from fellow Hall of Famer Ed Perry and not only kept it going, he brought it to new heights.

For Sprague, serving as the RIGA's executive director was the final chapter of a life as an athlete, teacher and coach. An excellent athlete himself he earned numerous honors on the golf course, including being a finalist in the State Amateur in 1963. He taught at East Providence High, where he also was a successful hockey, golf and cross country coach.

It was after retiring from teaching that Sprague took over the RIGA and guided it for 13 years. His style was simple. In everything he did he was the straightest of straight arrows. The son of a bricklayer who grew up near Wannamoisett and learned the game as a caddy, he insisted on honor and integrity in all he did.

He was tremendous for Rhode Island golf, said Paul Quigley, a fellow Hall of Famer, after Joe's death three years ago, at age 73. Ed Perry was the man who put Rhode Island golf on the map. Joe Sprague was the man who took it out of the good-old boys club and gave everybody a fair shot. "

Sprague expanded the number of tournaments offered in the state. He did an outstanding job in building championship-level competition. But he did not simply take care of the top players. He expanded the Weekly Invitational program, the one that allows all players the opportunity to get to play the state's best courses. He was the man behind the movement to open RIGA membership to all courses, public and private.