

FAR HILLS, N.J. (Jan. 14, 2016) – The United States Golf Association (USGA) will bestow its highest honor, the Bob Jones Award, to Judy Bell, of Colorado Springs, Colo., at an award ceremony on June 14, 2016, during the week of the 116th U.S. Open Championship at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club.

Presented annually since 1955, the Bob Jones Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates the spirit, personal character and respect for the game exhibited by Jones, winner of nine USGA championships.

Known for her generous spirit and larger-than-life personality, Bell, a native of Wichita, Kan., has championed a welcoming and accessible game as one of its most prominent ambassadors for more than six decades.

“Judy is a towering presence in golf and her contributions to shaping the USGA can be seen to this day,” said Tom O’Toole Jr., president of the USGA. “Her devotion to the game makes her a worthy recipient of our organization’s most prestigious honor. From her earliest days as an accomplished player through her tenure as USGA president, Judy has been a staunch advocate and diplomat for the game. Those mantles were always delivered with her unique kindness and infectious personality. Judy is a real treasure!”

The youngest of four children and the only girl, Bell largely credits her mother’s tenacious, straightforward and generous personality, as well as her can-do attitude as her strongest influences. The USGA’s first female president (1996-1997), Bell possesses a passion for women’s and girl’s golf that continues today, particularly through the LPGA-USGA Girls Golf program, which she helped found.

Her two-year USGA presidential tenure was hallmarked by the establishment of the “For the Good of the Game” grants program, which dedicated more than \$65 million toward national and local projects devoted to improving the lives of communities through accessible golf. Bell was the program’s director from 1999-2010, and asserted hands-on service focused on providing opportunity to and building character among countless youth, particularly minorities, girls and those with disabilities.

“I grew up around people who volunteered and it was something I felt strongly about, even as a child,” said Bell in her 2002 book, *Breaking the Mold*. “We all believed that if you’re asked and you have an opportunity to give back, you just step up to the plate and do what you can.”

Bell was also instrumental in the development and management of the USGA Foundation’s leadership and service fellowship program, which provided two-year, graduate-level training to nearly 70 young professionals interested in careers in the non-profit sector. Many fellows continue to serve in leadership roles for a variety of service-based organizations and associations. The program fostered strong relationships within the golf community to promote accessibility, particularly through state and regional golf associations.

“Judy has an amazing capacity to connect with people of all walks of life,” said Steve Czarnecki, a fellow of the USGA Foundation and its assistant director of grants and fellowship for 13 years. “To her, the USGA committee member, golf course superintendent at a host club, USGA staff member or state and regional golf association representative is every bit as important as anyone else in the sport – herself included. Judy wanted everyone to have an opportunity to experience the game and benefit from the many wonderful lessons it conveys.”

On the course, Bell was a passionate and well-respected amateur player who competed in 38 USGA championships, including three trips to the U.S. Women’s Amateur quarterfinals and one U.S. Girls’ Junior semifinals appearance. She also won three consecutive Kansas State Women’s Amateur titles from 1952-1954, the first at age 15. Bell also competed for the victorious 1960 and 1962 USA Curtis Cup Teams and captained the 1986 and 1988 USA Teams. The Women’s State Team Championship Trophy was named after her in 1998.

“Judy was the most fun captain I had in my playing career,” said Carol Semple Thompson, a seven-time USGA champion and 12-time USA Curtis Cup Team member. “She makes everyone feel welcome and happy. She is also a pioneer, becoming one of the most important women in golf administration. Her advancement to the Executive Committee and presidency was a natural progression of her hard work, her passion for the amateur game, and her relationships with so many players and people in golf.”

Bell’s volunteer career with the USGA began as a member of the U.S. Girls’ Junior Championship Committee (1961-1964). She served 17 years on the USGA Women’s Committee beginning in 1968, including four years as chairman (1981-1984). In 1987, Bell became the first woman named to the USGA’s Executive Committee and served on nearly every committee before becoming the association’s 54th president in 1996.

“Tom O’Toole called me the other night and we chatted a while,” said Bell. “Then he told me that I was going to get the Bob Jones Award. I was floored and in denial. Tom is a great friend and finally convinced me it was real. I’m honored beyond words.”

Bell was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in the Lifetime Achievement category in 2001. She is also a member of the Wichita Sports Hall of Fame, Kansas Sports Hall of Fame, National Golf Coaches Association Hall of Fame and Colorado Sports Hall of Fame, among others. Both the PGA and LPGA have recognized her contributions to golf through honorary membership and the Patty Berg Award, respectively, as well as the American Society of Golf Course Architects with its Donald Ross Award.

In 2015, Bell was named “Woman of the Century” by the Colorado Golf Association. That same year, she became an honorary member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews.

Bell joins a list of Bob Jones Award winners that includes national champions such as Francis Ouimet (1955), Babe Didrikson Zaharias (1957), Arnold Palmer (1971), Jack Nicklaus (1975), Ben Hogan (1976), Annika Sorenstam (2012) and Payne Stewart (2014), as well as those who have contributed to the fabric of the game in other meaningful ways such as Richard S. Tufts (1967), Joe Dey (1977), Bing Crosby and Bob Hope (1978), P.J. Boatwright Jr. (1993), President George H.W. Bush (2008) and Barbara Nicklaus (2015).

An official photo of Ms. Bell can be accessed via the following link: [USGA TO HONOR JUDY BELL WITH 2016 BOB JONES AWARD](#)

Media Contact: Janeen Driscoll ([jdriscoll@usga.org](mailto:jdriscoll@usga.org))

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