



ROBERT (RJ) THOMAS HARPER
August 30, 1956 – November 8, 2017

Pebble Beach Company announced with great sadness that RJ Harper, the longtime Executive Vice President of Golf and Retail at the Pebble Beach Co., passed away today after a 14 month battle with pancreatic cancer. RJ was a true icon in the golf industry and someone whose name will always be synonymous with Pebble Beach.

RJ grew up in a difficult environment in Memphis, Tennessee. He received a full scholarship to Rhodes College in Memphis and graduated in 1978. An outstanding baseball and football player at Rhodes (where he is in the Athletic Hall of Fame), RJ still holds several records he set as a running back. RJ received his M. Ed from East Stroudsburg University (Pennsylvania) and subsequently enjoyed a year backpacking through Europe and the Middle East. His next stop was Miami, Florida, where RJ taught high school English and Government and coached both football and women's basketball. It was during these years when RJ began to consider a career in golf. In 1985, RJ married Kelly Yost and together they drove across the country in a Volkswagen van in pursuit of RJ's dream. In the fall of 1985, RJ reached the golf mecca of the world – Pebble Beach. And after that, the rest is history. RJ's tremendous leadership and relationship building skills were quickly recognized at the Pebble Beach Co. as he rose through the ranks from Golf Course Marshal to Pebble Beach Head Golf Professional and ultimately to EVP of Golf (and Retail) for the Pebble Beach Co., one of the most prestigious positions in the golf world. During RJ's 32 year tenure with Pebble Beach Co., he was widely recognized as one of the outstanding leaders in the golf industry. His charismatic personality, one of a kind smile, and outgoing nature endeared him to countless Pebble Beach employees and guests. Many CEO's, musicians, entertainers, athletes, professional golfers, and politicians across the country consider themselves close friends of RJ. One of those great athletes was Arnold Palmer, who inspired RJ to become involved in the game of golf. At the time of Arnold's passing last year, RJ said, "Being able to work alongside Arnold Palmer for the past 17 years, on the world's most amazing golf course (Pebble Beach), has been one of the greatest privileges of my life."

RJ's many accomplishments include serving as Pebble Beach Head Golf Professional during the 1992 U.S. Open, as Championship Director of the 2000 U.S. Open, and as General Chairman of the 2010 and 2019 U.S. Opens at Pebble Beach. RJ was also instrumental in the recent awarding of the 2023 U.S. Women's Open and 2027 U.S. Open to Pebble Beach by the USGA. RJ played a major role in the founding of AT&T Junior Golf on the Monterey Peninsula and served as a board member for many years. He was well known for helping many high school and college golf coaches and programs throughout the United States. At different times in RJ's career, he coached women's basketball at Monterey Peninsula College and football at Stevenson School. RJ was also a talented musician and singer and occasionally sang a few songs on stage with country artist Clay Walker during his national tours.

"All of us at Pebble Beach Company and throughout the golf world are heartbroken by the news of RJ's passing", said Pebble Beach Company CEO Bill Perocchi, who worked with RJ for 18 years. "RJ had a lasting impact on Pebble Beach, and his smile, vibrant personality, and positive attitude and outlook on life will be missed by all and never forgotten. He was a kind, caring person; a consensus builder and true team player; and a dear friend to me personally and to countless employees, guests, and people in the golf industry."

A celebration of life will be held on November 21, 2017 at 9:00am on the 18th lawn of Pebble Beach Golf Links. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to either the RJ Harper Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund at Stanford University Hospital or to a charity of one's choice that focuses on assisting underprivileged children.

RJ is survived by his beloved family, including his two sons, Tucker and JT Harper; his two grandsons, Caden and Hudson Harper; his former wife and close friend, Kelly (Yost) Harper; and his sister, Cathy Carr.