Building communities in face of hard times

Iowa families building course to turn over to their community

By Mark Leslie

Members of the Vermeer Manufacturing and Pella Window company families have created a project in Pella, Iowa, that is a twofold familiar theme. They have given the town 200 acres, are building a golf course on the land, and will lease the facility to the community for 20 years. At the end of that time it will become the town's property.

Meanwhile, surrounding the course will be Bos Landen Golf Community, which will be owned and operated by the two families. Homes can be constructed by any builders in Pella.

According to project manager of golf course construction Bob Bruns, the development team includes architect Richard Phelps, land planners Bloodgood, Sharp and Buster of Des Moines and Johnson Golf Course Construction of Highland Village, Texas.

"This is the first major housing development in Pella in nearly 15 years," Bruns said. "We retained ownership of 145 acres of development ground — the 145 acres owned by the two families. In conjunction, the city issued $1 million in bonds to provide development of city streets, sewer, water, etc."

Responsible are Dale and Mary Andringa, daughter of Vermeer Manufacturing founder Gary Vermeer; and Peter Kuyper and Charlie Farver, grandsons of the founder of Pella Windows.

Bruns, a business professor and golf coach at Central College in Pella, said the four golf-lovers saw the need for a new golf course for Pella, a community of 10,000 that has only a private nine-hole country club. They hired Bruns, Kurt Kettler and Darrell Van Hall of Van Hall Builders as the development team, now known as Flanders Investment Group Inc.

While plans were in the works to get underway, the course was nearly ready to open for play Oct. 1.

"In many respects the project has become a valuable learning experience for people involved in the design, approval and construction of golf courses," Bruns said.

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Willard Byrd

By Doug Saunders

The Landings: A vision taken to fruition

Contrary to many planned golf course communities, The Landings was conceived as a long-term project that would take time to be fulfilled, plan from the beginning. Its goals stressed preservation of the natural environment, protection of the sensitive waterways and saltwater marshes, and using this natural beauty to provide unique homesites.

The six courses have been built over the past two decades; and the changes in course architecture and construction ideas are evident in each phase. The first two courses — the Magnolia and Marshwood course — are early Arnold Palmer designs. But improvements in drainage techniques have made portions of these courses obsolete. The sloping fairways that carry runoff into the framework of a master plan that detailed the needs for the golf courses and surrounding residential community. A major concern has been drainage, as the highest point on the island is only 32 feet.

A system of inland lagoons has been designed to control runoff, provide water storage for the golf courses, and tie into the Coastalway, providing tidal flows. The Branigar organization developed the project with a true vision and specific location and how you use the property, the routing plan is the cornerstone of a golf course development, Byrd said. And, after all, that is how he got into the golf business in the first place. He had routed courses in the past, only to have golf course architects enter the picture "and get all the glory."

So why not perform the whole job? he asked.

No reason, Willard C. Byrd and Associates will turnkey the package for a developer, from cash flow projections to land planning, course design, operation budgets, and even drafting guidelines for homeowner covenants and associations.

"We discuss with the owner the type of course they're after, the clientele, whether it will be private, public, low-fee, high-fee, or equity club and get the parameters of what we're going to do. Then how much money is that?"

Byrd's venture in Mexico. Tocquigny served as site coordinator at Katsuragaoka C.C., a Von Hagge-designed course near Mito, Japan.

Willard Byrd: A one-of-a-kind, all-in-one design packager

By Mark Leslie

Many people think mixing golf and housing is like combining apples and oranges. It doesn't work and shouldn't be done, they say. But to Willard Byrd, you can blend a great fruit punch.

Byrd, who has designed more than 100 golf courses, including 10 of Myrtle Beach's 72, stands alone as both a golf course architect and land planner. He was first a city planner with the Federal Housing Administration for eight years, then went into business for himself in 1956 and continued community and large-scale land planning.

Since his break came in 1958 to lay out his first regulation golf course, Northwood Golf and Country Club in Lawrenceville, Ga., Byrd has been a dominant force in the Southeast's world of golf course communities. The 73-year-old Augusta, Ga., resident is now plying his trade in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean as well.