

Fazio discusses Pine Valley and the mystique of its amateur architect

We asked Tom Fazio to comment on Pine Valley Golf Club in terms of its design and its designer, George Crump. This month's issue of *Golf Course News* is centered around amateur architects, and Crump is their patron saint. He designed only one golf course in his life, Pine Valley, considered by many to be the world's greatest golf course.

Fazio is, of course, a golf course architect of some repute. He also has some special insight into Pine Valley: His uncle and fellow designer, George Fazio, played professionally out of Pine Valley in the 1940s; Tom has been a member of the club since the early 1980s; and he laid out *The Short Course* at Pine Valley, 10 warm-up holes designed to mimic shots one might encounter on "The Long Course."



Tom Fazio

tees and the natural vegetation of sand and brush you must play over. That, in itself, creates the drama and excitement for the golf hole and also creates a very difficult golf course to play.

"But I think Pine Valley's reputation evolved like the land evolved. If you look at early pictures, there were far fewer trees on the site. As the course evolved, the intimidation evolved. I don't think it was necessarily predetermined.

"For example, the cedar trees on the 6th hole — the dogleg right. I'd be very surprised if those trees were there 50 years ago. And they make the hole. The same situation exists on 14.

"How much does nature help? How much does nature help modern courses? Who can say?

"Fifty years from now, I wonder whether they will give me credit for things I didn't do. I wonder..."

"I feel that there are five items or areas that make Pine Valley great:

1. A True Golfer's Golf Club
2. The Environment
3. The Stately Ambiance of the Facility
4. Great Management
5. The Design Detail of the Golf Course

"It's only been in the past 20 years that we have had the rankings and ratings of golf courses. The undulations of the greens, the shapes and forms of the bunkers, the rolling and contours of the fairways, the beauty and drama of the tee shots — all these create this wonderful experience. I think it's a combination of all the above qualities and certainly the design detail accounts for the uniqueness of this golf course.

"I feel that of all the golf experiences that I've had throughout my career, the one place I know that I as a golfer would want to be every day of my life for the rest of my golfing life, I can honestly say Pine Valley would be the ultimate place to be."

Fazio was asked if Crump's amateur standing played a role in the design of Pine Valley.

"I don't think you can separate them. It was the only course he ever did, and that definitely adds to the mystique of the place. But when you go and critique things now, you have to be very careful. You can't get inside someone's head. Unless the designer's around to give his insights, it's impossible to know what his intentions were.

"I think it's fair to say, though, that Crump introduced target golf. And if it existed at other golf courses, he certainly expanded on it... It certainly is unique and possibly the ultimate in target golf.

The golf course has so much variety, strength and character that it's almost hard to pinpoint one issue as being the strong design element.

"I personally feel that of all the golf courses that exist in golf, Pine Valley may be the only one where by moving a tee, fairway or green, you may not be able to improve it. You may be able to move something for sake of change. But in terms of actually moving or recreating or adding something relative to design to the golf course, I personally don't think you could make it any better.

"The land [Crump] had made it possible, of course. You could have done it with wetlands, but you can't play out of wetlands. The sandy, loam soil that exists on the property also allows for excellent drainage, thereby creating a quality turf. Also, it is very advantageous from a golf design standpoint because it allows the contours to be varied in so many different directions. Generally speaking, as a designer, I would say that the ideal site for a golf course would relate to an environment that would have dense vegetation, rolling terrain and sandy soils. Those three exist at Pine Valley."

"There are many aspects of the property that relate to a quality environment. The dramatic land forms. The strong, rolling contours that run throughout the property offer very dramatic hues and undulations. The vegetation and numerous varieties of specimen trees — from oak to pine trees, to scrub oak, to varied hardwoods — exist throughout the entire site.

"If I had to pick one particular item to characterize, or to actually describe, the golf experience at Pine Valley, I would say this: When you stand on every tee, the framing and definition of the hole are so strong and visually attacks your eye, that it almost becomes a frightening experience. That's target golf — meaning not as many



A SHORT INTERPRETATION OF THE ORIGINAL

Architect Tom Fazio, a member at Pine Valley, completed *The Short Course* at the Clementon, N.J., club in 1991. The purpose of this 10-hole track is to prepare members for the regulation 18 holes at Pine Valley. Each of the 10 "Short" holes corresponds to another on the "Long" course. The 10th hole on *The Short Course* (above) is meant to simulate the necessarily uphill approach to the second green on the regulation course.

ASGCA sees growth in public sector

Public golf courses properly supported by solid demographic data and good planning will be the most active segment in the golf market in this decade, according to Jerry Matthews, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

"Demand for more affordable golf courses should continue well into the next decade," said Matthews. "Municipal governments that provide an environmentally friendly public golf course with rates consistent with what the market will bear will generate considerable revenues and significant profits."

Matthews cited the National Golf Foundation's recent report that shows a growing demand in the number of golfers in the United States.

"In 1960, there were about 6,300 golf

courses in the United States, and about 4.4 million players," Matthews pointed out.

"Today, there are more than 14,000 golf courses in the United States, and more than 24 million players. Clearly, the demand for public courses exists."

He added that a properly managed public golf course can generate profits that will support other recreation activities and other public programs.

"Some golf courses in the southeast and western regions of the United States are realizing annual net profits in excess of \$300,000. That money can be used to support plenty of other worthy local projects, and with the federal government putting increasing pressure on local governments to support their own programs, a well-run golf course is a godsend," said Matthews.

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