Q&A: Griffiths
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have been there longer. It’s quite a challenge to try to sort out the different ideas and philosophies of the society and where the business is going.

I personally have a major concern of where the golf industry is going. We have been fortunate to have been in a golf boom since 1966. We had a lot of ups and downs through the 1970s and ‘80s. And I look with a bit of guarded optimism to the market growing, then my concerns are as paramount. The more affordable golf is, the bigger our market is.

DG: Much of it hinges on the green fee.

GCN: Do you feel the cost of green fees is driving some people out of the game, and in the same way, a lower cost would draw those people into the game?

DG: I don’t think it’s driving them out of the game, but they’re playing less than they would if it were more affordable.

The biggest challenge facing golf development is cost — no question. There are numerous things that are driving the costs up that aren’t necessarily due to the architects’ flair or flippancy. A lot of the increased costs relate to the difficulty of the sites we’re working on. We’re working on properties that deal with floodplain, environmentally sensitive areas, landfills, quarries, segmented parcels and other limitations that add to the time and permitting costs. If only every site were 200 acres of gentle, rolling meadow land or flat, meadow land, or 20 acres of wooded land. It’s a little scary. Our bread-and-butter is the more expensive golf courses.

GCN: Do you feel the agencies be better educated than the general public?

DG: For the most part, the individuals within the agencies are far better educated concerning environmental issues than the general public. But education is not necessarily the issue.

The society has pushed the last two years, and I will push subtly, that the golf industry has a tremendous challenge in promoting that golf is good, producing recreation and relaxation and preserving open spaces. Responsible golf maintenance certainly enhances the environment. It is not detrimental.

These are basic issues we can’t back off. If you were to poll kids through junior high school, most people would say they were very surprised at the perception younger people have for development and golf development. You’d find many perceive that it is not positive. And you certainly do not change that perception with facts and figures.

It’s very important that we do everything we can to promote that responsible development is possible. It is very rare that we can always done with facts, figures and tables.

To get across to the general public, we continually need to campaign for what we’re doing. Golf development and parking lots are one in the same in many peoples’ mind.

GCN: [Golf architect] Ed Seay said we will be seeing six-, eight- and 10-hole golf courses, depending on how much land is available. What do you think of that idea?

DG: I don’t have a good answer. We looked at alternative facilities for varying acreage for years, those varying from par-3 to executive to nine-hole to a combination. We’ve done less than 18 [holes] or less than nine [holes]. But, still, you have to deal with the general public’s perception and how they are accustomed to playing golf.

I would pose the question: “Are we allowed to have brown grass fairways and bump-and-run and all the nuances of Ireland and Scotland? Are they acceptable by the U.S. golfing market?” No. So, we as designers have some wonderful alternative solutions, but I doubt they will be accepted by the golfing public.

Two things here: I feel strongly that golf can be an excellent business venture. We work very diligently to make the facilities we design viable business ventures for our clients.

So when I talk about perception and will people use it, that’s where I’m coming from. If I’ve got 30 acres and I want an 18-hole golf course and I’m able to support that out of my pocket book, that’s a different issue.

We would do a course for a client who could afford it. He had 15 acres. We built five greens and 11 tees and have a wonderful 18 holes of golf.

Facilities like that are fun. They’re built with small amounts of money, and they could be a great place to learn and to make golf available on properties that can’t contain a regulation-sized course.

GCN: You may be best known for Bent Tree, Chateau Elan, Pole Creek and Fox Hollow. But what do you see is your greatest accomplishment in design?

DG: Still being here. A peer said, “Our greatest accomplishment is the people we have worked with.” I would pose the question: “Are we promoting that golf is good?”

In the past, we’ve been the champions of that. We’ve been the voice of the USGA [Professional Golfers Association], PGA [Professional Golfer’s Association] and NGA [National Golf Foundation] and all we’ve worked on promoting golf as a good partner with the environment. Laymen and the green movement don’t necessarily agree with what we are advocating.

GCN: But shouldn’t the agencies be better educated than the general public?

DG: It’s very important that we do everything we can to promote that responsible development is possible. It is very rare that we can always done with facts, figures and tables.

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

YORK, Maine — Construction could begin in April on The Ledges, an 18-hole, daily-fee course in this Southern Maine coastal community. Developer Pat Rocheleau hopes to complete at least nine holes this spring and open them late next spring or early summer. Bradley Booth is the course architect. No residential component is planned.

Booth is also beginning work this fall renovating two holes at Lincoln, (R.I.) Country Club.

Family builds public 9

HAMMOND, La. — Ponchatoula residents Art and Gus Zieske are building a small-scale, nine-hole public golf course in Hammond. The Zieskes planned to open Ironwood Golf Club for play in April.

The course has been carved out of a 35-acre tract of land about a mile east of the of the Zieskes’ old Ironwood Driving Range. The new Ironwood courses will include two par-4 holes and seven par-3 holes ranging in length from 100 to 230 yards.