All the spoils are bagged and hand-carried, and gravel and sand is even sometimes placed by hand. It's also not unheard of to hand plant entire fairways. Seventy-five women line up across the fairway and away they go. Each lady has a sack of sprigs and a putty knife. Each sprig is manually planted and a fairway can be grassed in as a day with an enormous success rate. Nearly every sprig takes.

There's a term here: "Philippine Time." This is applied to situations where things don't happen exactly when scheduled. This means meetings start at 10:30, deliveries promised first thing in the morning show up around noon, and jobs to be finished in a couple of days usually take three or four.

My first job in The Philippines was an 18-hole rebuild at the old naval station at Subic Bay. The old course was in the middle of a rain forest and jungle. It's one of The Philippines' last virgin rain forests standing.

It came complete with native jungle tribes, wild pigs, cobra, pythons, monitor lizards, parrots and fruit bats the size of small dogs. It was like working on the Discovery Channel every day.

The surroundings were spectacular, which was a nice offset because the work was a real trial at times. Golf construction is still relatively new to the Philippines and this fact is reflected by the inconsistent materials. Sand and gravel deliveries had to be monitored daily. What usually showed up in the truck was nothing like the sample we had approved. The minute you stopped checking your materials, a dirty load would be delivered. The main reason for this is the processing operations. Most of the sand and gravel is hand-sifted and loaded. Without proper screening plants, consistent loads were a rare commodity.

An additional headache at Subic was the weather. Monsoons and typhoons plagued our construction efforts and earthmoving activities. I've come to refer to seasons in Subic as the muddy season and the dusty season. You're either slogging through mud or coughing up dust.

It was at times like trying to breathe through a wet wool blanket. Mud slides, washouts and flooding were our main concerns. Despite the adversities, we were able to complete our construction efforts in 12 months.

My current job is at a Graham Marsh design on the tiny island of Boracay. Here, problems are quite different, yet equally difficult. Being on an island poses unique concerns. Despite the adversities, we have to bring in all materials and equipment by boat and barge. I've lost barges to typhoons, had barges sink, trying to dock and, of course, getting stuck on sand bars is common place.

Like Subic, the crew in Boracay is very good — hard-working individuals who are willing to put in a full day. The work is tough and their living conditions are less than what we're accustomed to. Most of the crew live in houses made of thatch and bamboo. Many don't have running water or power at their places. Despite their situations, their attitudes are amazingly upbeat.

I've developed a great deal of respect for The Philippines and its culture. I've also learned so many things since working here over the years. My only hope is that I've been able to teach my crew half as much as the Philippines has taught me.