

METHOW VALLEY TAKES HIT

It's been a bad year for golf in Washington's remote Methow Valley. Earlier, Winthrop's Bear Creek Golf Course shelved plans to add nine holes to its existing nine. In late spring, with the Methow River running at flood, the National Marine Fisheries Service shut off all irrigation ditches which rose in or ran through National Forest lands.

Relying on one of these ditches was the Sunny Meadows Golf Resort, which featured a small par-3 venue among its amenities. Barely surviving financially, a buyer was found for the family-owned property, but when Fisheries shut off the water, and made no promises of its return, the buyer left.

The bentgrass greens and half the fairways parched, and the owners are now facing bankruptcy.

After 3 decades, Arrowleaf throws in the towel

By BOB SPIWAK

MAZAMA, Wash. — After almost 30 years of attempts to gain a destination resort in Washington state, the last of three developers has given up. With planned development on 1,200 acres in the upper Methow Valley, which included an 18-hole Robert Cupp course, the R.D. Merrill Co. an-

nounced Dec. 7 that it was quashing its plans for a golf course, lodge and upscale housing.

Had this succeeded it would have been only the second 18-hole course in Washington's largest county. Environmental blockage, appeals, court hearings, from the U.S. Supreme Court (which ruled favorably on

two of four issues) down to the county level were the death knell for earlier developers. The current owners cited delays and lack of cooperation by the state Department of Ecology over water issues for the surrender.

On Oct. 15, the state Department of Ecology (DOE) released "Tentative findings" for water rights for the project. These rulings did not look favorable, but the developers hoped to have DOE's final reports in order to appeal the findings. However, DOE informed Merrill that a final decision could take as much as a year.

This prompted Merrill Chief Executive Officer Charlie Wright to observe, "We have tried to work with Ecology for seven years and have been frustrated by their inability to, among other things, meet committed deadlines."

The Methow Valley rises on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, and its upper end resembles Yosemite. The pristine Methow River runs through it, snaking 70 miles to the Columbia River.

The entire valley is populated by barely 4,000 people. Surrounded by mountains and a 2,000-foot sheer cliff, the site of the course was described by architect Bob Graves as "...about the most beautiful location I have ever seen [for a course]."

Graves had designed an 18-hole course for the previous developer, Methow Recreation, Inc. a decade earlier before environmental opposition forced that owner into bankruptcy.

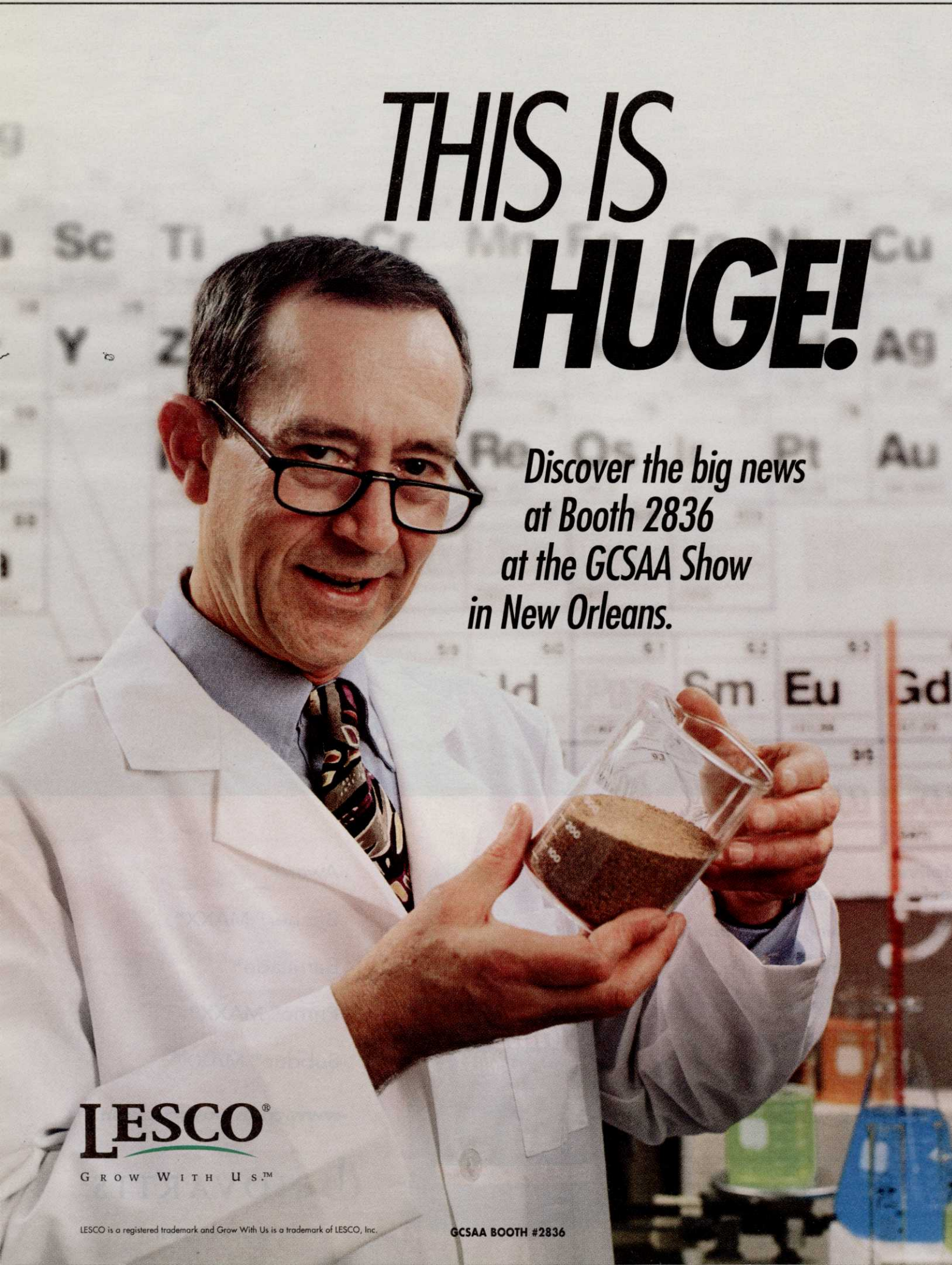
In the early 1970s, the Aspen Corporation had planned a resort in the same area, but with the emphasis on downhill skiing. Resistance was sufficient for Aspen to sell out in 1985 and take its money to develop around Whistler, British Columbia, Canada.

The new owners were confronted with fierce opposition from a local environmental group, which was frequently augmented by larger, national groups such as the Sierra Club.

The process continued, through millions of dollars in development and legal expenses, and it was during the tenure of Methow Recreation, Inc. that Bob Graves was called upon to design an 18-hole course, which was to include a golf academy and other amenities.

When Methow Recreation was in danger of defaulting on its loans, the land was bought by the Merrill Co. of Seattle, in 1992 in partnership with Lowe Development Corp. Wanting a fresh start, Graves' plans were aban-

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Georgia alumni welcome development for rec, fellowship

STATHAM, Ga. — The University of Georgia and Dr. Stan Coley have enjoyed a scholarly and, indeed, familial relationship over the last 40 years. Coley has earned three advanced degrees from the school, and in turn prided the school with his groundbreaking research in embryology. In November, however, the two celebrate a groundbreaking of a different sort with the formal announcement of The Georgia Club, a 1,000-acre mixed-use development here featuring two golf courses designed by Denis Griffiths.

The Georgia Club is the combined vision of Coley and the University of Georgia National Alumni Association. Coley and his partners, Donal Geaney and Derek Quinlan, are developing the property with the purpose of bringing forth a special enclave dedicated to providing association members with a world-class resort and private club amenities.

The groundbreaking celebrated the first amenity at The Georgia Club, an 18-hole championship golf course.

The highlight came when The Georgia Club gave a check to the UGA National Alumni Association for \$1 million. The funding represents The Georgia Club's long-term commitment to the association and its programs.

"This is truly a milestone day for our association and its members," said the alumni association's executive director, Dave Muia. "Certainly, we're grateful for The Georgia Club's generosity to the National Alumni Association, but we

equally appreciate and fully applaud the efforts of Dr. Coley and his partners in bringing this landmark development to fruition. It will be an enormous asset to our membership."

"The Georgia Club is committed to financially support the National Alumni Association's efforts," Coley said. "Today, we also dedicate our talents for the

purpose of expanding the avenues through which alumni members can stay connected to the University of Georgia. We will do so in a setting of recreation, fellowship, and reflection, to enhance the value of their collegiate experience."

The master plan for The Georgia Club calls for the two 18-hole golf courses, a gated member's club, a swim and tennis

club, guest cottages, fitness center, tailgating fields, a 250-room hotel, plus a variety of single-family homes and villa residences. There are also plans for a 66-acre business park set along the University Parkway corridor.

The first of the two courses is under construction and is scheduled to formally open in the spring of 2001. It will offer membership to UGA National Alumni Association members. It will also accept limited outside play. The second course planned for the spring of 2002 is expected to be a private facility for exclusive use of club members.

Colligan designing two in Texas

ARLINGTON, Texas — John C. Colligan has started construction on two area golf courses — Squaw Valley North, in Glen Rose, and Mansfield National Golf Club, just off SH 360 in Mansfield.

Squaw Valley North will become the second 18-hole undertaking for Somervell County, complementing the existing golf course on which Colligan was project architect.

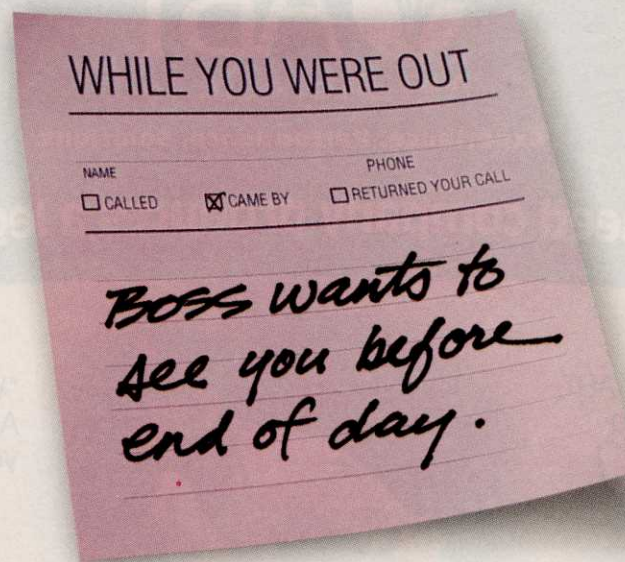
Both courses are scheduled to open in the fall of 2000.

Arrowleaf 'dead'

Continued from previous page

done and Bob Cupp was hired to design the new course on the development, which was renamed Arrowleaf. However seven years and a reported \$15 million later, with no end in sight in the ongoing conflicts with the DOE, Merrill Chairman Charlie Wright opted to abandon the project. Ironically, 14 miles away at Bear Creek Golf Course in Winthrop, the owners' plans to add nine holes to the existing nine were thwarted by the DOE's sloth in acting on water permits. For five years, Bear Creek's paperwork was shelved from year to year, with the owners having to pay the agency annually to renew the permit applications. Bear Creek had had enough and cancelled its expansion plans.

In his office, Merrill Project Manager Terry O'Reilly summed his feelings up as he gathered up now-defunct golf course plans. "We had the vision and the plan, but the Department of Ecology just didn't have the will." ▶



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