

Q&A: von Hagge

Continued from previous page

spend every buck well, you're delinquent.
GCN: Are there von Hagge School of Design graduates who have gone out on their own?

RvH: Yes. We had three with Nicklaus for awhile. Now they're all on their own. Rick Robbins started with us. Mitch Walker, who is now in the Orient. Lamar Bunn in

the Carolinas. Karl Litten in Florida. And three or four others.

GCN: Do you have a favorite golf course that you designed?

RvH: I have many for different reasons. Some for mere accomplishment because they were such a difficult undertaking and came out well. Some because they are visually spectacular, and I can't take a lot of credit for what was there. The last six years has been our best burst of golf courses ever. About 80 percent of our work is out of

the country, so Americans wouldn't be familiar with them.

GCN: What is the easiest country to work in?

RvH: In regulations, it's Mexico. It has none to speak of. But in some ways, it is the most difficult. You can't get anything done. The equipment is not in the country. Until recently, they have discouraged you bringing in any specialized talent from the States. They like to spread the wealth locally. It takes forever to get something done.

GCN: Will NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] make a difference?

RvH: Yes. We have the tree huggers and Hush Puppies crossing the border in groves. And it should happen, or you'll have the rape of the most gorgeous property in the world. Everybody and their brother is trying to build a golf course down there now. And for every good one there are 20 real bad ones.

GCN: What is the toughest country to work in?

RvH: Sometimes it is the easiest, too: Japan. From a permit standpoint, it's really tough. We're dealing with a course in the Osaka area and there is permit after permit and permit. It's political football as it is in every country. It's a rich man's sport, so the guy who wants to get elected to office will make it difficult for you to get a club together. And still, when it comes to contractors, once you get the project mobilized and on stream, they are the best. They are wonderful.

GCN: You were perhaps the first architect to join with a touring pro [Bruce Devlin] and that dissolved. Would you do it again?

RvH: I was the first to undo it, too. No, never. It's nothing personal, because Bruce is a good guy. I brought him into my company in 1970 at his request. He wanted to learn about the business. Bruce's forte, like most of these players, was in the marketing aspect more than anything else. Bruce was playing a lot of golf and doing a lot of TV. His contribution was more in marketing. But we found for the kind of fees you get that you've got to have an equal division of time and attention if you're going to divide the revenues that way.

I do think for fledgling companies, it's probably a good thing. Like Rick Robbins:

It gives Gary Koch some cushion. He's announcing and trying to develop future sources of revenue. And it's good for Rick, who doesn't have a big identification yet.

GCN: How do you view the evolution of course design?

RvH: For so many years, most golf courses had the tee, the green, the fairway and a row of trees going down either side, with a couple of bunkers now and then.

That was architecture until, I think, when Dick Wilson and Robert Trent Jones began to turn it around in the early '50s. By the early '60s it was in full cry, and then it passed them... Us young pups took it up from there and developed it into a sophisticated presentation. I think very honestly I'm the only who's done anything since then at another level of *why* it [light and movement] should work that way and *how* you can control it.

Long after finishing touches applied, von Hagge stays in touch with clients

By MARK LESLIE

SPRING, Texas — Von Hagge Design Associates has developed a marketing program for its clients that extends six years after course opening and which Robert von Hagge calls "an award-winner."

"Instead of selling a roll of blueprints and showing up now and then, we stay involved," von Hagge said. "It's been a real boon to the guy who's invested his life savings in the project and doesn't know where to go."

With the program, he said, "We've been able to close over 70 percent of the potential members and real-estate buyers in our projects."

The marketing program starts with forming the board of directors, deciding the type of club (equity, non-equity), and forming the charter group. Von Hagge conducts three walking tours with prospective members, speaking on his design philosophy, "so they can become part of that creative effort."

By involving members, he said, "you begin developing the history and heritage of the club, the pride which turns into value which turns into profit."

"The country club is a social statement. The architectural statement is the golf course. But you want them to know you're setting out to create a

premiere, world-class facility that maybe does not exist in their area. We share every bit of it with [prospects] every step of the way."

Von Hagge also hosts two events for the media — one, a preview tournament before the members even get to play the course.

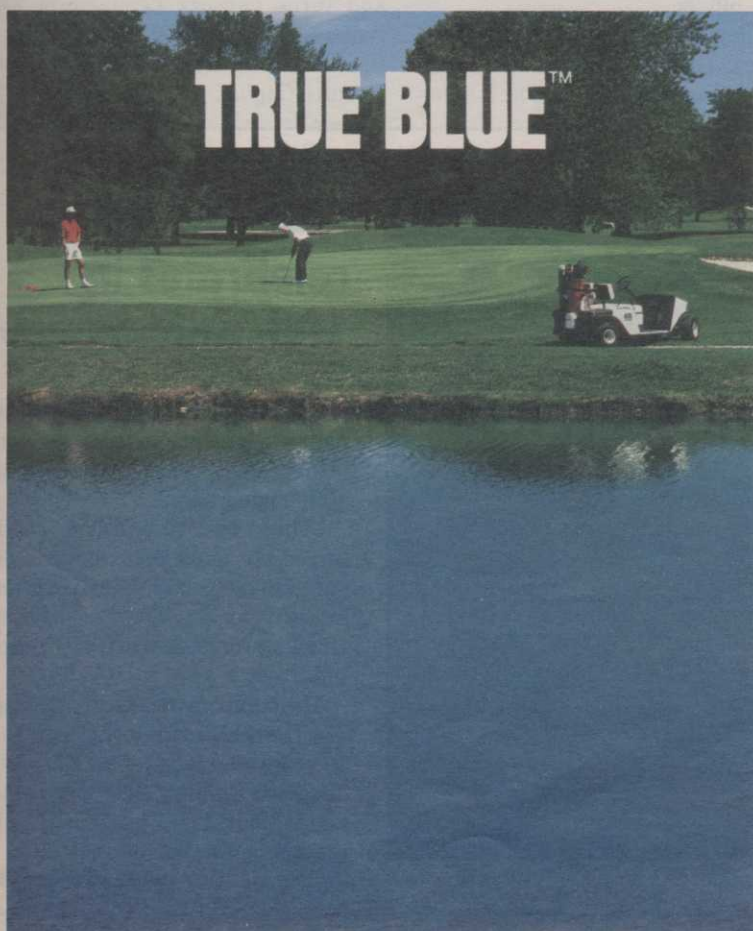
Von Hagge Design Associates trains the superintendent in similar circumstances before he takes the course over. The firm heads up the club's green committee for three years after the course opens.

"We have an arrangement with all our clients that we can do this internship with them," von Hagge said.

Involvement also extends to the landscaping.

"We look at the embellishment of the course because we don't believe you should landscape a course before it opens — rather just prior to or at opening," von Hagge said. "You can't design and construct a home and hang the drapes or pictures with any sense before that happens. It has to be up before you can really feel the mood of what is needed in what area. It's stupid to try."

He added: "We've been polishing this strategy because we feel we have to in order to stay in the strata we're in."



The better, more natural looking lake and pond dye

Why settle for artificial looking dye when TRUE BLUE™ will give your lake or pond a natural, living color appearance. The secret's in our tried and true blue formula that makes the other brand look unnatural by comparison.

Try it and see for yourself why TRUE BLUE is fast becoming the preferred lake and pond dye. The one that's a natural. For more information and a technical bulletin, call or write today.



No Blue



TRUE BLUE



PRECISION LABORATORIES, INC.
P.O. Box 127 • Northbrook, IL 60065
800-323-6280 708-498-0800

TRUE BLUE is a trademark of Precision Laboratories, Inc.

DY'ON OR DY'ON "W" You Make The Choice



Dy'On is the original spray indicator.....the first to let you see where you sprayed.....a temporary dye that will slowly fade away in sunlight. Dy'On is also recommended as a pond and lake dye. Other diluted, imitator products are worth far less.

Dy'On "W" (washable) is not a dye but a temporary colorant. It is equally easy to use as Dy'On yet will rinse off hands, driveways and walkways quickly and easily.

For the best value, use either spray indicator, Dy'On or Dy'On "W". You make the choice.



Regal Chemical Company
P.O. BOX 900 / ALPHARETTA, GA 30239
PHONE 404-475-4837 / 800-621-5208