Galyean focusing on golf resort market

By J. BARRY MOTHES

LEWISBURG, W.Va. — His kids call him Mr. Spa. It's a simplification, to be sure, but Tag Galyean, an architect, designer and design consultant, deserves the nickname as much as anyone.

Galyean, 55, is carving himself quite a niche these days in the resort world. He renovates, designs and master plans clubhouses, hotels and spas, many of them for historic resorts with famous golf courses. His fast-growing portfolio is heavy with prestigious names: the Broadmoor in Colorado, Pebble Beach in California, the Greenbrier in West Virginia, The Cloister at Sea Island in Georgia.

Spas — indulgent respites from reality usually offering some combination of swimming, saunas, massage and other bodily refreshers — are one of Galyean's design specialties. Lucky for him, or maybe more accurately thanks in part to him, spas are enjoying a revival at resorts looking for another client-pampering revenue source to go along with tennis and golf.

But Galyean's work also occasionally takes him directly into the golf realm, as the new 100,000-square-foot multilevel Broadmoor clubhouse/recreational complex shows. Tag Galyean is well-connected to the golf world. His younger brother, Gary, lives in Vero Beach, Fla., and publishes *Gary Galyean's Golf Letter,* a monthly newsletter of practical and esoteric golf history, resort and travel tips, reader surveys, book reviews and other snippets.

Tag Galyean

Galyean ended up in Lewisburg, because of a job at the Greenbrier resort in the mid-1980s, an early renovation and redevelopment project he describes as a personal and professional epiphany.

"I moved onto the grounds at Greenbrier and did everything, the designing and building, in a very hands-on style in a master-builder type project," he said. "I lived in the bowels of the resort and, as a mature designer, had this master builder experience at one of the best-managed places in the world.

"I came out of that experience understanding resorts in a way other designers don't ever have an opportunity to understand. It's not brain surgery or anything, but resorts are a different world and it is complex."

The new five-star Greenbrier spa and fitness center project drew rave reviews and was cited as the first contemporary recreational facility of its kind to become a successful profit center for a resort.

Since the Greenbrier project in the mid-1980s, Galyean has enjoyed an impressive procession of projects. From 1990-1992 he was retained by Guinness Enterprises to represent the company's design interest in U.S. golf-resort development and international spa development. There was the $13 million renovation project at The Equinox in Vermont in the early 1990s with golf course architect Rees Jones (Galyean oversaw the rebuilding of the hotel). There was the $30 million resort development called the Lodge at Koele on the island of Lanai for CSX Resorts. There was Hanbury Manor northeast of London and, of course, the five-star spa and clubhouse at the fabled Broadmoor in the Rocky Mountains.

Currently, Galyean is working on a new clubhouse/spa/recreation complex at the Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Va., for Anheuser-Busch. He's also working up a spa facility at famed Pebble Beach and another at Doral in Florida — all places with strong reputations as golf resorts.

"To my knowledge it's unprecedented that the same designer is working at all these places," said Galyean in a telephone interview, "except the Olmsted brothers, who worked as [landscape] designers at the turn of the century. It's also unprecedented that the designer is living in Lewisburg, W.Va., rather than Fifth Avenue in New York

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Galyean: Dr. Spa

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or Sausalito or some other sexy place. A lot of this has to do with electronics, faxes, FedEx packages, modems. It doesn't matter where you are if you have the reputation to produce."

Galyean left the big-city architecture and design world in the mid-1980s to become a freelance design consultant. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, he also serves as a thesis advisor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and lectures on resort master planning at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Galyean said the resort work fits his personality and standards.

"Number one, the client understands that good design is essential to their success," he said. "There is, going in, a value placed by the owner and management on good design and there aren't a whole lot of building types that you can say that about.

"Two, the success is immediately readable. There's so much about this that's like theater. You're creating an environment for people to have a three or four-day experience. It's got a bit of fantasy about it. It's about making people happy, romantic, calm. It's a mission. You open the doors to a place and the guests comment in the first 48 hours like theater critics. I like that.

"The work is challenging. There's always disruptions, weather issues, seasonal issues — I like that, too. The need to integrate all these different disciplines in a symphonic way is essential to success. But it's not as if I'm the only one. I work with teams of great, talented people — hundreds of them."

Naples stadium

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