

All I knew about Pete Dye was that he's a great golf course architect. I'd never seen the man in person or heard him speak. Boy, was I missing out on a lot of fun. Pete's a piece of work.

I had the opportunity to see and hear Pete speak earlier this year at the American Society of Golf Course Architect's meeting in Columbus, Ohio. He was a blast.

Pete had his audience hooting and hollering with his comments and quips. At 75 years young, he's lean and mean and as feisty as ever.

When Dye took the microphone at the meeting, he scanned his audience of fellow architects, who had just completed a round of golf at nearby Double Eagle GC. "After watching you guys play, my design philosophy has completely changed," Dye cracked.

His peers roared.

I laughed and learned a lot while listening to Dye. He's humble, humorous and not afraid to speak his mind.

If you think about it, those are three interesting attributes for one person to possess. I assume a person with those characteristics would be quite endearing. Dye could charm the pants off Arnold Palmer, another of golf's good guys.

Dye talked about one of the first courses he ever designed at the University of Michigan in the mid-1960s. "Why they hired me, I'll never know," he said. He glanced at Rees Jones, son of the late and great architect Robert Trent Jones, and told Rees that he borrowed from his father's style while designing that course. "I had great admiration for your father," Dye said.

But Dye said he shied away from adopting RTJ's styles when designing Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head, S.C., which opened in 1970.

"I did the opposite of [RTJ], and [my thinking] was in total respect of his work," Dye said. "It was the only way I'd ever gain an identity."

With Tom Fazio in the audience, Dye ripped on Augusta National honchos for deciding to lengthen the course for The Masters next year. Fazio, of course, was hired to oversee the renovation. "Bobby Jones would roll over in his grave if he knew about the decision to lengthen the course," Dye said of the great Georgia

See Pete, Hear Pete Have a Lot of Fun

BY LARRY AYLWARD



**EVEN THOUGH HE'S
"HALF OF 150," DYE
IS GOING STRONG.
HE CAN WISECRACK
AND WAX POETIC
ABOUT GOLF
ARCHITECTURE WITH
THE BEST OF 'EM**

golfer and patriarch of Augusta.

Dye said he heard Fazio was getting a fat fee for his work. "The only good thing about that is the fat cats from Augusta are giving a Catholic a lot of money — and he'll end up giving it to someone else, like the boys' and girls' clubs."

Dye also revealed his "deep" philosophy about signature holes. "I never think about a signature hole when I'm designing a golf course," he said.

Dye partially credits his wife and partner, Alice, for designing the famed 17th hole and island green at the TPC at Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., which is known as the course's signature hole. "When someone hits the green, I take credit for the design," Dye cracked. "When someone hits it in the water, I give the credit back to Alice."

Dye has gained the identity he was searching for in the '60s — and then some. His name is mentioned in the same breath as Donald Ross, Alister MacKenzie, Fazio and other great architects. A recent GCSAA poll revealed that Dye is one of superintendents' favorite architects, even though most of them could probably never afford his fee.

Even though he's "half of 150," Dye is going strong. But he can wisecrack and wax poetic about golf architecture with the best of 'em.

Dye can also still craft the land. His Whistling Straits, built in Kohler, Wis., in 1997, is hailed as one of the world's top modern tracks.

Next time Pete Dye speaks at a conference I attend, I'll be in the front row — ready to laugh and learn. If you've never seen Dye's show, be sure to take it in if you have the chance. Dye is one of the industry's great talents — and characters.

Golfdom editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or l aylward@advanstar.com.