

Twenty years ago Tom Doak was awarded the chance of a lifetime. The New York-born golf course architect received a postgraduate scholarship from Cornell University to study some of the world's finest golf courses in the British Isles. To today's golf fanatics, this may sound like one of those died-and-gone-to-heaven trips.

Doak, who graduated from Cornell, was 22 at the time. He spent nearly a year abroad. What he saw and learned were vital to his training. "It was a fabulous experience," he says.

Twenty years later, Doak has not forgotten that consequential trip. But "not forgotten" in this case is not about reminiscing about the experience. "Not forgotten" is about giving back *for* the experience.

Last month, two college students that study landscape architecture — George Waters and Philippe Binette — went to work as interns for Renaissance Design, Doak's Traverse City, Mich.-based architecture firm. "I decided to set up an annual internship program through my company in the hopes of giving students of golf design the same opportunity I had," Doak says.

About 70 people applied for the internships, which surprised Doak, who didn't expect that many to be interested. That number may also astound some of Doak's peers, who wonder why anyone would want to work for him.

It's no secret that Doak is considered a rebel in some circles. Their disdain for Doak goes back to a book he wrote in 1996, *Tom Doak's Confidential Guide to Golf Courses*. Some architects say Doak dissed their design work in the book, and others say his criticism of some courses was unfair and unwarranted. They could stand someone like Donald Ross assessing their work, but not some young whippersnapper named Doak.

Doak realizes he ruffled some feathers and knows that grudges are still held against him. He doesn't apologize for what he wrote, but he seems to have learned something along the way. Doak says he's put down his pen to let his work, which has been described as "retro-classical," do the talking.

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Give Doak Credit for Giving Back

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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differentiate myself from the others was to point at things in particular and say, 'I would do this and not that,'" Doak says. "But that was done to differentiate me. It wasn't meant to take anybody else down. But I'm much more circumspect about criticizing other people's work now."

Surprisingly (or maybe not), Doak is not a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Some say he hasn't applied for membership because he knows some members don't want him in the group because of his outspokenness. Doak says he hasn't applied because he wants his membership to be about his work, not his controversial reputation.

"I've done 15 courses now," says Doak, whose Pacific Dunes design in Bandon, Ore., is recognized as one of the world's great modern layouts. "I want to apply and have it be about my work."

Doak says he's tired of reading stories that label him a controversial person. But he welcomes stories that label him a controversial architect. "At this point, I'd like people to concentrate on what I'm designing, which is the main reason I'm not writing much anymore," he says.

Doak says it's the architects who don't know him who are the ones who speak negatively about him. If they knew him, Doak says, they wouldn't think he was aloof or insincere.

One thing's for sure, Doak has made a name for himself. But like him or not, give him credit for giving back to the industry at a time when the profession has put the brakes on new designs.

Say what you will about Doak, but recognize his efforts to help the golf course architects of tomorrow get a jump-start on their careers. Doak knows just how good such an experience can be.

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