

# THE RESORT BOOM

Two factors are spawning a growing market for resort living. They're both a result of a resurging economy.

First, it's becoming financially easier for families to take winter vacations and get away from the colder climes. Second, financial institutions are seeing this burgeoning market and sinking their reserves into resort construction.

The following three articles (*Grand Champions*, *Sea Pines*, and *Horseshoe Bay*) illustrate exactly how landscape construction and management is handled at the nation's leading resorts.

Though the financial rewards are great, managing the landscapes in this sector of the industry is not easy, as the following three profiles indicate.



An artist's rendering of what the Grand Champions Resort will look like upon completion late this year.

## GOING ALL OUT

European design and lots of irrigation make the new Grand Champions Resort in Palm Springs a haven for travelers who want to escape winter.

**R**ae Price goes all out to bring authenticity to his landscapes. Even when that means visiting Europe.

Price, senior principal of Peridian Inc., Irvine, Calif., traveled to Spain to capture the Mediterranean look at the new Grand Champions resort in Palm Springs.

During the trip, Price and architect Tom McKinsey researched resorts throughout Spain. The result is a white plaster main building which provides stark contrast to the outside terraces flowing with bougainviella.

The landscape—concentrated groves of date palms, grapefruit, and olive trees—emphasizes the Mediterranean flavor. Price estimates he has used 150 30-foot date palms, 100 olive trees, and 75 mature grapefruit trees.

Price discovered a different attitude among the Spaniards about landscaping. "Their attention to detail and maintenance is rather unique," Price explains. "Many places have full-time resident gardeners making sure it's always presentable."

Price brought back that attitude along with his knowledge of Mediterranean landscapes. He's paying close attention to details as he puts the finishing touches on the ritzy resort, due to open Nov. 14.

The Palm Springs site is the first of four Grand Champions resorts being built. Peridian is also building one in the British Virginian Islands. The other

resorts will be located in Hawaii and Spain. Sites for more resorts have already been pinpointed.

The Palm Springs resort consists of four parts. Although Price is using the same materials throughout the 15-acre site, each area is distinct.

First is the main hotel complex. Price describes it as a "low-profile hotel," with only five stories. He compares it with the Beverly Hills Hotel or Boca Raton in Florida.

The Villa area consists of five, four-unit buildings with one or two bedrooms in each. The Villas have a central courtyard and patio jacuzzi/spa area. They are serviced by the main hotel.

The Grand Champions Club is a private club and restaurant facility.

The club has one celebrity tennis court surrounded by a dining area. Members can play on seven concrete tennis courts, two clay courts, or two grass courts. "We wanted to provide variety for our members," Price says. "The lawn courts will be a pleasant surface in the desert heat."

Grand Champions Club uses a formal European design. Mature grapefruit trees, trunks painted white to protect them from sunburn, are planted in matched pairs. Hedges—including boxwood, myrtle, and privet—and flowers—primarily vibrantly-colored petunias—round out the landscape. Price travelled to Mexico for paving materials.

The fourth area of the resort is the 10,000-seat sunken tennis stadium, which will be home to the



## LANDSCAPE PROFILE



Rae Price travelled to Spain to research resorts before beginning work on the Grand Champions in Palm Springs.

Pilot Pen Classic in February.

A 36-hole championship golf course, being built by the city of Indian Wells, will be nestled into the resort. The course is a Ted Robinson design.

The suffocating heat last summer forced Price's crew of six to start work at 4:30 a.m. Record-breaking temperatures of up to 117 degrees also placed a lot of stress on plant materials, making transplants difficult.

Because of the heat, about 12 of the 15 acres are irrigated. Still, to further protect the trees, Price's staff placed "bubblers" at the base of each tree.

"We got about 25 percent of our plant materials from southern California nurseries so we wouldn't have a problem with their acclimation to the heat," Price says.

But by the time Grand Champions opens, the mercury should have fallen to normal levels. The resort is intended to be a luxurious escape for people fending off the approaching winter blues.

**WT&T**

## TURBULENT SEA PINES

From lawsuits to hurricanes, the landscape at Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island has nonetheless withstood the test of time.

The headline in the *Savannah Morning News* reads: **Charles Fraser Files 3 Lawsuits Against Sea Pines' Owners.** Those who live on Hilton Head Island aren't surprised.

It's not the first time Fraser, founder and developer of Sea Pines resort area, has sued. The battle began in 1983 when Sea Pines area merged with the Hilton Head Co. and was sold the next year to Rolyat, a south Florida lending institution.

During the Governors' Conference in August, the island tried to cover up \$100 million in lawsuit claims filed during an eight-month period.

The suits involve property sales and corporate decisions affecting almost half of the island's 25,000 acres.

Sea Pines, the island's oldest resort, (planning began in 1950) has 5,280 acres of developed property. But Gale Smyly, Sea Pines' landscaping director, hasn't seen his million-dollar budget suffer because of the debates.

The resort has, however, admittedly suffered from this summer's drought and three hard winters in a row. But only a true expert could pick out any flaws in Sea Pines' picturesque setting at the tip of Hilton Head Island.



Perhaps the most recognized part of Hilton Head Island is "Liberty Oak," with Harbour Town's candy-striped lighthouse in the background.