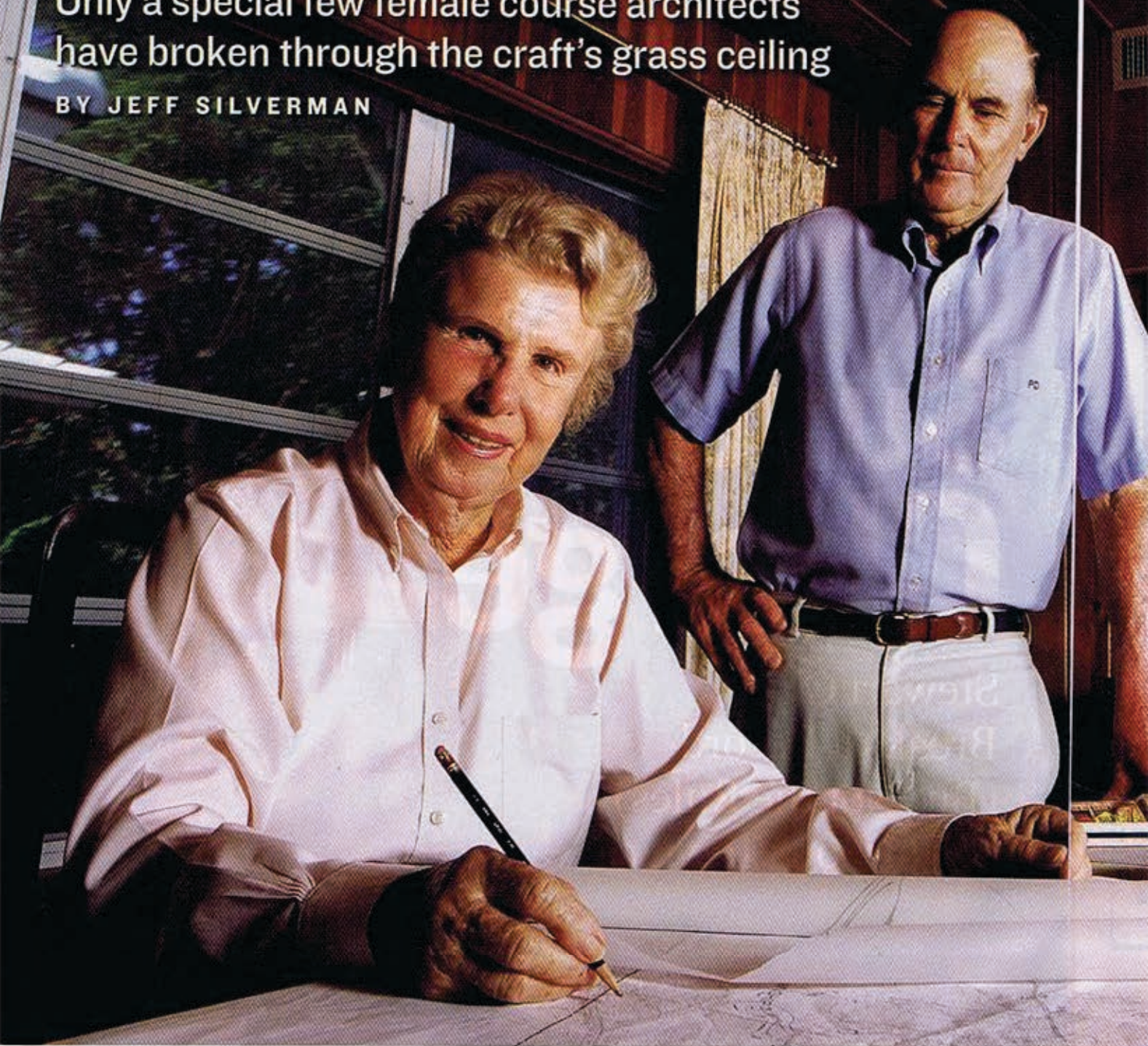


# DESIGNING WOMEN

Only a special few female course architects have broken through the craft's grass ceiling

BY JEFF SILVERMAN





**B**LAME ALICE. That's what Pete Dye did last month during the Players Championship at the TPC at Sawgrass, last week at the MCI Heritage at Harbour Town and will do again in August at the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. It's not Pete's fault that there's no place to bail out on the island-green 17th at Sawgrass, that the 13th green at Har-



OPPOSITE PAGE: JOHN

**DYE CAST** Pete (opposite right) left it to his wife, Alice, to create the unique bunker that the pros loathe at the 13th hole at Harbour Town (above).

bour Town looks as if it's wearing a wooden collar, or that a slightly off-line tee shot at the 17th at Whistling Straits could wind up in Lake Michigan. "That's all Alice," Pete says, proclaiming his innocence with spousal affection. "I like to give her the credit for those holes because I sure do take hell for them."

Alice and Pete Dye have been married for 54 years, and for more than 40 of them they have reigned as the first couple of golf-course architecture, with Pete the principal author and Alice his challenging editor. Their design of the exasperating 13th at Harbour Town, a little (373 yards) par-4 that gives players big headaches, is typical of their collaboration.

During construction of the course in 1969 Pete was behind schedule and asked Alice to finish the hole, which had already been routed. An excellent player, Alice instinctively knew that a par-4 of this type called for an assortment of hole locations (hence the heart-shaped green) accessible only by





deft shotmaking (hence the front bunker with its steep face of cypress planking). "Had it been a sod bank, nobody would've given the bunker a thought," Alice says, "but the pros hated the planks. They made the hole more intimidating and, I think, very aesthetic. I thought the hole was absolutely perfect."

So did Pete. On the morning of the first round of the inaugural Heritage Classic, in the fall of '69, he was still smoothing the planked bunker when the first group of pros came into view. Slipping behind

lowed to design a course. Of the 158 members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, only three—Alice Dye; Jan Beljan, who works for Tom Fazio; and Victoria Martz, an associate of Arnold Palmer's—are women. Just four others—Lisa Maki, Bettina Schrickel and Lorrie Viola in the U.S. and Line Mortenson in Denmark—operate their own design companies.

"It's not that women don't want to come into this profession," says Martz, 56, whose courses include the TPC of the

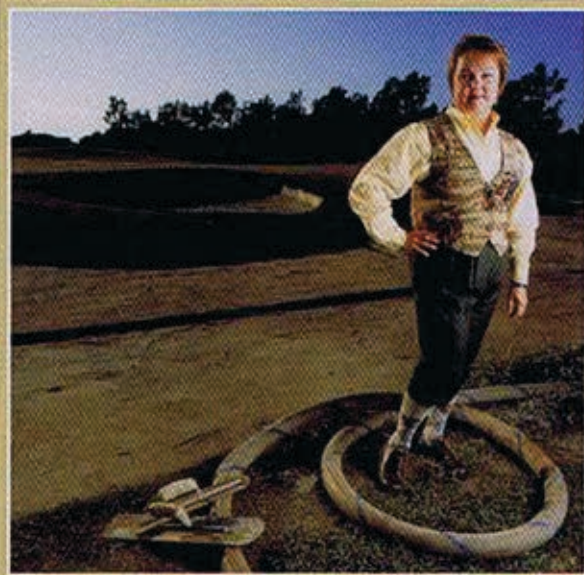
outside Seattle. "It's especially hard for a woman on her own to get a break."

"It's a macho thing, no doubt," says Ed Seay, Palmer's design partner and Martz's mentor. "I'd like to see this change, but it's going to take time. This part of golf has always been a man's game."

The first woman to design courses was May Dunn, the daughter of prolific 19th-century British golf architect Tom Dunn and the niece of Willie Dunn, who drew the original routing of Shinnecock Hills. When she married in 1920, her husband,



**DIRTY WORK** Beljan gave an LPGA player the chance to work with her, but after four hours the pro had had enough.



**TOUGH SELL** Maki, one of only four women with their own design firms, says the hardest part of the job is getting the job.

the gallery ropes, he heard a couple of guys say what a lovely hole Jack Nicklaus—a consultant on the project—had created. Indignant, Dye says he stepped forward and "told them that not only had Jack never seen this hole, but that a lovely young lady designed it. As I walked away, I heard one guy say, 'There goes an early-morning drunk for you.'"

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ago Marion Hollins—also a superb player—showed Alister MacKenzie where to build the most beautiful par-3 hole in golf, the cliff-hanging 16th at Cypress Point. Yet today, when Annika Sorenstam can hold her own with the men and Michelle Wie can out-drive many of them, rarely is a woman al-

Twin Cities, in Blaine, Minn., and Bay Creek, in Cape Charles, Va. "They aren't really exposed to it, so they don't even know they can."

The problem, says Geoffrey Cornish, the 90-year-old dean of American course designers, "has so much to do with our male egos." Cornish is not referring to the egos of his fellow architects, outsized as they can be. He's talking about the egos of the men who hire designers. Men hire men to build and renovate their courses because men have always hired men for such work.

"That is the hardest part of the job, just getting the job," says Maki, 43, who designed the award-winning Stoneleigh Golf Club in Round Hill, Va., and Willow Run

Adolf Hupfel, asked her to quit because he thought work was unseemly for a woman. She gave up her career, and more than 80 years later the demands of family and relationships continue to work against women.

"This isn't simply a job," says Beljan, 50, who has courses such as the Old Collier Club in Naples, Fla., on her résumé and has spent half her life working with Fazio. "This is a lifestyle. I can be away for six months at a time. That's not appealing to many women. It's not conducive to a family situation." Mortenson, 32, kids her boyfriend—on the rare occasions when they're together—that, because of the long hours and tiresome travel, what she really needs is a wife.



What makes matters even more difficult is that the profession has few access ramps—for anyone. “I never gave it a thought until Pete asked me to join him,” says Alice Dye. “It wouldn’t have occurred to me to do it on my own. There weren’t any role models.”

Nor are there any professional schools or degree programs, at least in the U.S. The European Institute of Golf Course Architects, however, sponsors a one-year diploma course taught in Edinburgh, Scotland. Mortenson was the first

1985. “He told me, ‘You have to be tough. You can’t have thin skin. You’re going to get darts thrown at you.’”

Says Mortenson, “I don’t know how many male architects have to be as aware of their appearance as I’ve found I have to be. I’ve been in meetings where clients have let slip, ‘Oh, we thought you’d be butch.’ That wouldn’t happen to a man. If that’s the first comment you get, there’s a long way to go to get them from thinking about my femininity to the job that needs to be done.”

All of the women designers have been

became incapacitated and couldn’t complete the project. “Alice would finish it faster, cheaper and better,” the developer replied, and Alice’s application was accepted. In the mid-’90s she rose to the association’s presidency, though at first she was hesitant to take the position. “It was an all-male organization, and that concerned me,” says Alice, who actively encouraged Beljan and Martz to join as well, “but I thought this would give me exposure, and more women could see that they could do this.”



**DISCOURAGING WORDS** A longtime member of the Palmer team, Martz nonetheless expects to be routinely challenged.



**LOOKS CAN KILL** Mortenson learned early that, unlike a man, she would be judged on her appearance by potential clients.

woman to go through the program—Schrickel, a German, is also a graduate—and now helps administer it.

For most designers, though, the only way to get into the business is by serving an apprenticeship, a long and dusty path that usually begins with an internship. “There’s no established pipeline,” says Tom Doak, who apprenticed with the Dyes in the ’80s. Doak, who is now an established architect, had 77 people apply for internships with him this year, and he’ll take on three this summer—including his first woman.

“HE TOLD me I’d need an iron bra.” That was the counsel Martz says Seay gave her when she joined the Palmer company in

challenged by crews in the field. “You show them you can work with them,” says Beljan, “and they come around.”

Alice Dye felt the burn of bias when she applied for membership in the ASGCA in 1982. Pete had been a member for a decade and she figured that she was equally qualified. In addition, she says, “I thought I needed to do this because it might open the door for other women in the profession.”

When she applied, “there was a great deal of discussion about whether they would take a woman,” she says. At the time the Dyes were building Long Cove, on Hilton Head Island, so the president of the society called the Long Cove developer and asked what would happen if Pete

NANCY LOPEZ’S NAME is attached to a course in Florida, as is Jan Stephenson’s. Sorenstam’s name is about to join the marquee at Mission Hills, the 10-course resort in Shenzhen, China. But what about Beth Daniel, Carol Mann, Patty Sheehan and Kathy Whitworth, who have all expressed interest in at least partnering with an established designer but have never been given the opportunity? “If a club is going to put a name on a course, they’d rather it be one of the guys,” says architect Richard Mandell, who has been approached about teaming with a prominent LPGA player. “It’s still that sexist.”

There’s also a flip side. Says Beljan, “There is an allure to designing a course,



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## Golf Plus

but you have to have the desire to match that." Not everybody who dreams of cajoling the next Pine Valley from the earth really wants to play in the dirt.

Beljan remembers working on a project in Florida several years ago when an LPGA player asked to come on-site and learn about the business. "Put on your boots," I told her," says Beljan. "After four hours in the dust she decided that she didn't want to design courses anymore. It had lost its glamour. But for me, I was simply doing my job. Too many people—men and women—think that designing a course is simply standing in one place, pointing and saying, 'Oh, let's put a bunker there.'"

Tom Fazio says the job is "all about being creative, and neither sex has a corner on that." But there are certain sensitivities, aesthetic as well as strategic, that each designer has. As creative as Pete

up on the course. She has a broader view of what's happening out there."

Martz says that there is no gender signature to her work, but she admits that she's easier than most on forced carries, and she believes there's a different balance and harmony in her layouts. "I'm not saying men don't have it too," she says, "but I think it's the left brain-right brain thing, and that men come at it less from the direction of harmony and art than from competitively challenging golfers."

But at Whistling Straits, where the 17th will undoubtedly command the most attention during this year's PGA, it was Alice who wanted to stiffen the challenge to the players on the psychosis-inducing par-3. She thought that Pete, the guy, was too forgiving in his design of the 223-yard hole, so cavernous bunkers were added between the green, which

**"If a club is going to put a name on a course, they'd rather it be one of the guys," says Mandell. "IT'S STILL THAT SEXIST."**

Dye is—and Alice is the first to affirm that he's the one with the imagination in their partnership—he missed the key aesthetic, the ocean, in his original plan for the Ocean course on Kiawah Island. She was walking the site one morning during construction and wondered why the only place the Atlantic came into view was from the elevated tees. She proposed that the fairways be raised. "How could I argue with her logic?" says Pete. "I couldn't say, 'Who wants to look at the ocean?' Who doesn't?"

Alice has also been credited with turning forward tees from afterthought into an integral part of a course's design. Pete also believes she's more attuned to the problems facing women and high-handicap golfers because she has played with them.

"I've never teed it up with three ladies who couldn't break 130, and neither has Jack Nicklaus," says Pete, "but Alice has. She has a great eye for where they wind

sits on a cliff, and Lake Michigan. If a player hits anything left, he'll either be in bunker hell or worse. "The hole didn't have that fear factor," says Alice. "Now it does."

If only the bigger problem of ensuring equal opportunity in her profession were so easily fixed. "Discrimination in golf isn't going to be broken down by women," Alice says. "It's going to be broken down by the fathers of daughters who see that their female child doesn't have the same opportunity as their son."

If Pete and Alice had had a daughter, would she have been a course designer, like their sons, Perry and P.D.? "She would have had the opportunity to join us and we'd have encouraged her," says Alice. "It's so rewarding to be part of creating something and leaving a mark. This is a wonderful career. A dirty and hard career, but a satisfying and wonderful one too." □