

THE DOCTOR IS IN

Rees Jones, renown for redesigning seven U.S. Open courses, discusses his army KP duty, his greatest compliment, and his golf design philosophy.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

KAMAS, UTAH: Rees Jones, known as "The Open Doctor," was born into the game of golf. His first exposure to golf course design came at an early age when he would accompany his father, Robert Trent Jones, on scouting trips surveying potential golf course sites.

Rees grew up in Montclair, New Jersey. "I had an idyllic childhood," recalled Jones. "It was a positive environment. I could ride my bike everywhere and had no fear of strangers. My mom was my hero. While dad was on business trips, she taught me right from wrong and gave me a fairly long leash."

As a budding athlete, Rees excelled at baseball. At the age of 10, he contracted polio. "It was a hard time," remembered Jones. "I questioned why this could happen to me. Looking back, it taught me an important lesson—to work hard and overcome setbacks in life."

After a full recovery, Rees became an all-star left fielder on his high school baseball team. "My dad pressured me to quit and take up golf," winced Jones. "I think he was trying to groom me for the family business."

After college at Yale and graduate studies at Harvard, Rees entered the army. "The Vietnam War was raging and I lost my college deferment because I wasn't taking enough credit hours," said Jones. "I was a private stationed at Fort Dix and because I was a pretty good golfer, I often played in military golf tournaments. I was treated like a decorated officer on the golf course, but when I got back to the barracks, my miffed sergeant would double up my KP duties."

HANGING OUT HIS OWN SHINGLE

"There isn't a college course to teach you golf course design," quipped Jones. "You learn by doing, not studying...and you become better over time. It's an active, not passive process."

After working in the family's golf design business, Rees set out on his own in 1974 at age 33.



Rees Jones

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The Publisher's Page

"VICTORY RANCH IS A COMMUNITY of continuing pleasure.

I consider its course to be one of the more spectacular in the West. Its rugged topography created an opportunity for me to design a golf course that is dramatic in every respect. It fits beautifully with the flow of the land and it is not surprising that Golf Digest ranks it No. 2 in the state. Several holes are set high on a ridge. Whether you look up or down, the scenery is stunning. From the picturesque views of Deer Valley to the calming waters of the Jordanelle Reservoir in the valley below, you know you are in a special place." – REES JONES



The 1st hole at Victory Ranch

"The economy was terrible. But, I was eager to create a name for myself," said Jones. "I finished a project in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, worked my contacts, and waited for the phone to ring. By the '80s, it was ringing off the hook."

Some of his notable original designs include Atlantic Golf Club in New York, Ocean Forest in Georgia, and his latest debut, Victory Ranch in Utah.

His renovation skills have also been applied to seven U.S. Opens, eight PGA Championships, five Ryder Cups, and two Walker Cup venues. In total, he has designed or redesigned over 170 courses during his storied, four-decade career. "The greatest compliment I can receive is when media reports they can't tell what was touched," commented Jones.

"My job has required extensive travel," stated Jones. "One of my biggest disappointments is missing family time with my wife Susan and our two daughters. It's not easy to be the wife of a golf course architect. She is an understanding, caring person who has been a great partner." *(continued)*

REES'S DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

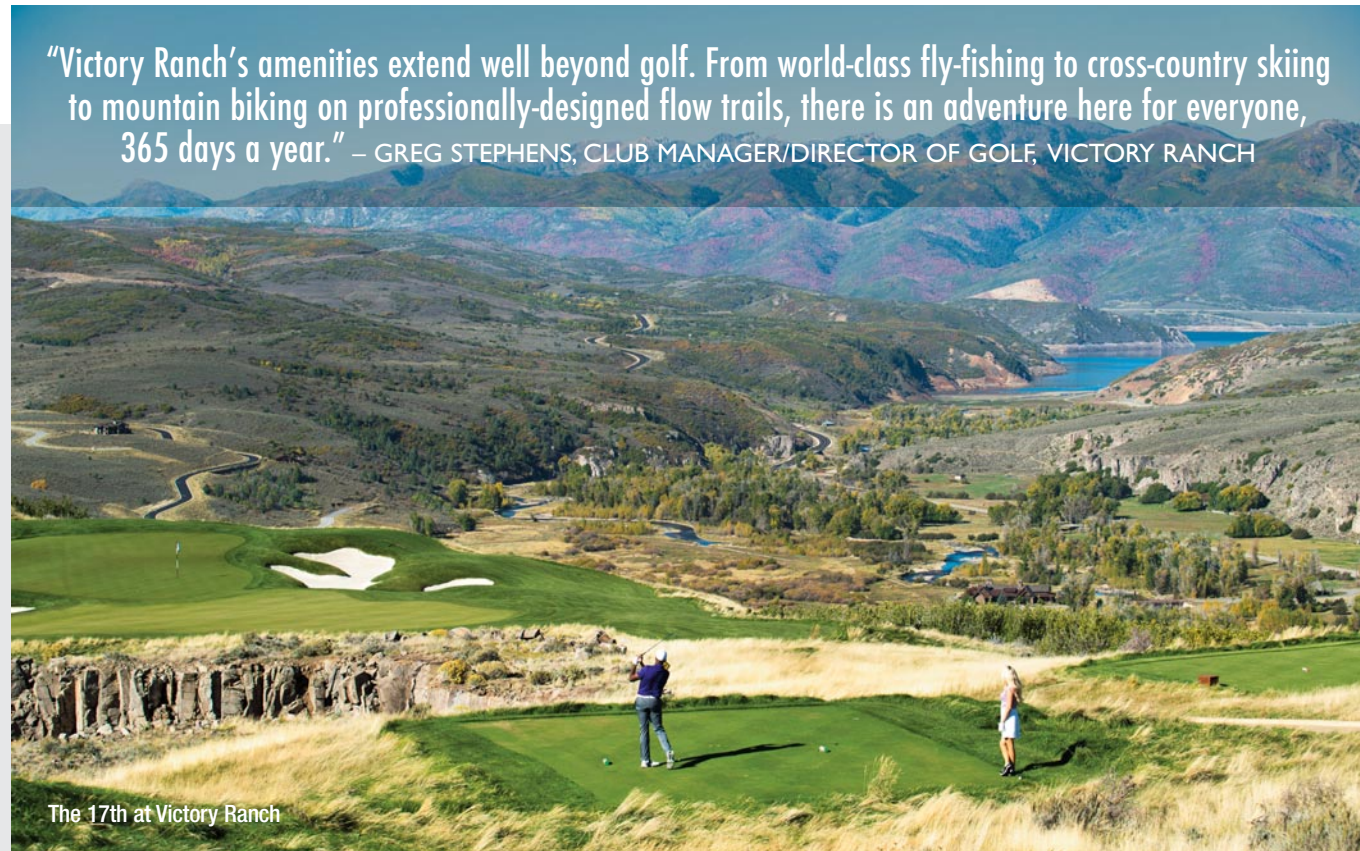
"Borrowing my favorite expression from humorist Will Rogers," said Jones, "I never met a course that I didn't like."

"I never criticize other designer's work. Each course has its own distinctive look and playability."

When asked what benchmarks he uses to evaluate if a course is championship worthy, Rees gladly gave his important points of review. "My basic criteria is adequate length to counteract today's fit athletes, number of holes that require strategy with risk-reward options, an ebb and flow of easy and hard holes, a series of holes on the back nine that allow a player to charge the field, and the contour of greens. They all factor into my assessment," explained Jones. "The contour of greens can greatly influence scores. Proper contouring allows for pin placements that can dramatically alter the difficulty of the hole."



(Top left) Rees Jones with his three grandchildren.
(Above) Rees Jones receives the 2013 Donald Ross Award.
(Left) Rees and Susan Jones.



The 17th at Victory Ranch

Victory Ranch is located on 6,700 acres of pristine land, just minutes from the ski gondola at Deer Valley and 25 minutes from downtown Park City. The members-only residential community offers an array of ownership opportunities, from cabin-style golf homes to grand mountain estates, each with commanding views of the surrounding nature. As a private community, Victory Ranch is committed to the member experience. Its year-round concierge service ensures that homeowners enjoy every amenity imaginable. FOR INFORMATION, visit VictoryRanchUtah.com, or call (435) 785-5020.



(Above) Army Private Rees Jones.
(Top right) A young Candice Bergen and Rees Jones.
(Right) Rees Jones with singer/actress Bette Midler.



STATE OF THE GAME

"The golf media has picked up on trends that may or may not be true," said Jones. "Interest in golf hasn't waned. Millions of golfers love the game. One look at the gallery at the U.S. Open at Pinehurst gives you confidence in the vitality of our sport."

"The number of rounds played this year are down. But, I think the terrible weather across the country had a lot to do with it."

"The challenge for golf today is dealing with confluence of several powerful demographic changes: Two working parents, the increasingly electronic lives we live, the demands on our time for other activities...then throw in a challenging economic environment. No one should be surprised at how the golf industry has struggled during the last few years."

"Golf is a wonderful pastime that lasts a lifetime. It's a great game with a long history, strong traditions, and we need to be careful to preserve what makes it such a great sport," expressed Jones. ■

"ALL SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE NEED TO BE MINDFUL OF WHAT GOT THEM THERE." – REES JONES

THE ESSENCE OF WHY WE CHOSE VICTORY RANCH

"I KNOW MY OPINION IS SUBJECTIVE and there are many fine private golf clubs in the greater Park City area. But, Victory Ranch is hog heaven to me. If outdoor life is your thing, this will be the community of your choice. Our fly-fishing habitat includes four miles of private water along the Upper Provo River. The water flows from the Uinta National Forest. With 2.5 million acres of protected land, the Uintas are the largest east to west running mountain range in North America. Water flow in this freestone river is controlled by Mother Nature, not by mankind. As a result, trout are healthy and powerful."

"VICTORY RANCH IS DEBT FREE and our developer, Sterling Bay, is willing to listen to our needs."

"IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND why Victory Ranch is one of Utah's most celebrated courses. When you stand on the 17th hole's championship tee box, you have a 360-degree panoramic view of the Jordanelle Reservoir, Woodland Valley, and Deer Valley Ski Resort. As a 14 handicap, I enjoy the challenge of our Rees Jones course. I'm a social golfer and get acid-indigestion only when I am trying to beat my sons."

"OUR MOMENTUM OF GROWTH is striking. Twenty-two golf cabins are being built and seven were pre-sold before ground was broken. Later this summer, the club's wellness and spa facilities will start construction on the far south side of the property. The amenities will include special touches including a family activities barn, a deck for sporting clays, and a pond with a rope swing." – ERIC WILLIS, MEMBER, VICTORY RANCH