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To Whom It May Concern:

During the last decade-and-a-half, I have averaged roughly 100 days on the road per year, during which time I have been fortunate enough to visit literally hundreds of golf destinations throughout the country and around the world. These experiences have been distilled in articles for every major golf publication, including GOLF Magazine, T&L Golf, Golf Digest, LINKS, and others, and such consumer media as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Men's Journal, and Playboy. Among my favorite courses have been Ray Hearn's designs, just as Ray has proved a reliable and enlightening source during these collaborations.

Indeed, Ray's comments on golf course architecture provided me with insights into the nature and quality of his work that might not be immediately apparent to the average golfer, even as he or she has no difficulty appreciating the golf itself. Chief among these attributes is his expertise in, and devotion to, the game's nobler traditions, especially its appeal as a community-based activity; it's potential to enhance, rather than compromise, the natural environment; and the subtleties in both strategy and playability attainable through the ingenious use of a site's natural contours and other attributes.

This has been particularly refreshing in the context of having played many of the most expensive and lavishly maintained courses around, as Ray's designs have demonstrated the absence of any direct correlation between budget and creativity. In addition, I've noticed something else that would seldom be evident to the less-traveled golfer: Having made return visits to several of Ray's courses years after they opened, I have yet to encounter one that has not grown, often immensely, in popularity between visits, no small feat in the present golf-industry climate. The phenomenon speaks highly of management as well as design, of course, but is unlikely to have occurred without a combination of the two.

Finally, while I've never commissioned a golf course design, I have interviewed many golf course architects. Most are personable, knowledgeable, and articulate. A sense of compatibility, often difficult to define in objective terms, is absolutely valid in the selection process. However, clients get an architect, not just golf course architecture, and Ray's attentiveness to the whole spectrum of client concerns stands out among the many practitioners I've come to know.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Harack

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Golf Writer