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## **A Story of Recovery: Mike Strantz and Monterey Peninsula Country Club**

In January of 2002, Mike Strantz, named 1998 Golf Architect of the Year by Golf World, received the best and worst news of his life. The good news: he and his Maverick Golf Course Design team were awarded the redesign on 17 Mile Drive's Monterey Peninsula Country Club Shore Course. The bad news: he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of tongue cancer. Being the young, creative and energetic artist he is, he did not let the cancer command his life. In January of 2003, he and his team moved to Monterey to begin what admirers claim is "the design of his life."

On a grey winter morning, Mike walked the course and, as he listened to the seals bark, studied the contours of the forty year old fairways, and breathed in the rich, salty Pacific, he began to envision the future of MPCC. He also began to draw. At noon, Mike was joined by long-time friend and Maverick President Forrest Fezler. As the two compared notes at the base of an old-growth Cypress tree on the eighth tee, Mike's vision began to take form. He began to see the possibilities, to ask the questions begging to be answered. Why—on a course teetering at the edge of the world's greatest ocean—would only eleven holes peek at the crisp Pacific? Why, in a sport so unrelentingly rooted in the traditions of a glorious past, should a links course ensconce itself in nonnative vegetation? Why offer a simple course renovation when the land suggests a complete transformation? Why not innovate? Why not inspire?

With echoes of these questions ringing in his ears, Mike set out to craft a work of art from the existing Shore Course.

As they do with every project, Mike, Forrest and the Maverick team relocated to Monterey, living onsite while construction was in progress. Despite visits to chemotherapy, various head and neck specialists, and his diminishing frame—now 80 pounds lighter—Mike spent countless hours designing, drawing, marking and scouting each hole, for what will be the most talked about redesign of the year, and best course in the Pebble Beach area. "Seeing Mike preserver every day, determined to create something as outstanding as the Shore course, was mind-blowing" said Fezler, "I believe it's our best work yet. Not only because of what Mike and our team had to overcome to create it, but because it symbolizes life, and its golf in its purest sense. Our other work can't compare to what we've done at MPCC. You just have to see it and you'll know what I mean".

Design and construction of all eighteen holes ended in March 2004, and while grass grows on the par 72 course, Mike is recovering from an intricate and demanding surgery: the removal of cancer in his tongue. He was in surgery for sixteen hours while the tumor was removed and replaced with muscle from his back. Doctors cautioned that recovery would be slow, speech might be years away, and eating an impossible dream. Yet, eight weeks after

surgery, Mike is speaking, swallowing, designing his new home, riding his horses, and drawing. He is always dreaming and drawing.

All said and done, Mike's team rerouted all eighteen holes, engaged in the West Coast's largest removal of non-native vegetation by removing forty-five acres of non-indigenous ice plant, and used the first full-course sand capping in America. This process of laying drainage every fifteen feet (a total of forty-two miles of pipe lie below the grass surface at MPCC) and applying PermOPore™ is so innovative, so new, that superintendents throughout the Pebble Beach area flocked to MPCC to understand its construction and implementation. The sand capping process was tedious, but the 6,853yard long course is now playable twelve months of the year and maintenance problems are significantly decreased.

The road Mike traveled in the last twelve months was brutal and demanding yet, what motivated him to keep working was not only his loving family, Forrest and his team, but his vision for the Shore course. The course he created has become the symbol of his resurgence; it is the therapy we all need but few have the fortune to experience. Perhaps Mike says it best: "It makes me feel good to be out here. The location is inspiring. I couldn't be in a much better place, and more excited about a design. It makes you feel alive. It makes you feel it's worth the battle. It's the best medicine there is." And the battle has been won: Mike and his Maverick team have created a course that stimulates every golfer who glances its way; no towering hills or massive cuts are on this property: the Shores course, with its fluid rolling fairways, tremendous natural beauty, and harmonious blend of nature and imagination, is a throwback to how golf courses are supposed to be. As you stand on the tee of each hole you feel as though you are watching the rolling waves of the Pacific, a beautiful blend of contours, grass, and golf.

The design of his life? More than most know.

## Mike Strantz and Maverick Golf Course Design Fact Sheet

### MONTEREY PENINSULA CC Shore Course- Grand Opening June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Original Design: 1962 by Bob Baldock

Redesign: 2004 by Michael Strantz

Awards: "Golf Digest" rated it as the 13th "Best in State" course for 1997-98

#### **Yardage Prior to 2004 renovation**

<i>Men</i>	<i>Par</i>	<i>Yardage</i>
Blue	71	6,343

#### **New Yardage (2004)**

<i>Men</i>	<i>Par</i>	<i>Yardage</i>
Blue	72	6,853

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### Mikes Strantz Design and Course Awards

Course and Awards	Media Annotations
<p><b>Mike Strantz Design Awards</b></p> <p>1998 Architect of the Year – Golf World</p> <p>1999 Number One Golf Architect Highest in Demand – Golf World</p> <p>2000 Top 10 Greatest Golf Architects of All Time-Golfweek</p>	
<p><b>Caledonia Golf &amp; Fish club – established 1994</b></p> <p>1994 Ranked 5th Best New Public Course~ GD Top 10 New Courses in America~ GM</p> <p>1996 Top 31 Best Upscale Course~ GD</p> <p>95-00 America’s Top 100 Modern Courses~ Golfweek</p> <p>2000 "America's Best Modern Courses"~Golfweek</p> <p>2001 "America's Best Modern Courses"~ Golfweek "Top 25 Courses in South Carolina"~ GD</p> <p>2003 "America's 100 Greatest Public Courses"~ GD "America's Best Modern Courses" ~ Golfweek</p> <p>2004 "America's Top 50 Courses" ~ Zagat "America's Most Popular Course" ~ Zagat "Top Course in Southeast" ~ Zagat</p>	<p><i>“With a small body of impressive work, Strantz has already become a visionary -- perhaps even a force -- to be taken seriously.” Golf World</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stonehouse- established 1996</b></p> <p>1996 1st New Upscale Course in the US" ~ GD "Top Ten You Can Play" ~ GM "Best Modern Course" ~ Golf and Travel</p> <p>Other Best in State: Virginia ~ GD Top 40 Best Public Courses ~ Golf &amp; Travel Top 100 Best Modern Courses ~ Golf &amp; Travel</p>	<p><i>"Not since Alister Mackenzie sketched diagrams of par 4's that were as wide as they were long, has any architect shown the chutzpah to let his imagination run wherever the land would take it." - Golf Digest</i></p>
<p><b>Royal New Kent- established 1996</b></p>	

<p>1997 Upscale Course in the U.S." ~ GD  1998 Top 10 New Courses in America ~ GM  Top 100 Best Modern Courses ~ Golf &amp; Travel  Top Course "You Can Play" in U.S.~ GM  Top 100 Best Modern Courses ~ Golf &amp; Travel  97-00 Top 3 Courses in Virginia~ GD  America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses ~ GD  2003 Best in the state "Public Golf Courses" ~ GM  Other Top 40 Best Public Courses ~ Golf &amp; Travel  Modern Classics ~ Links Magazine</p>	<p><i>"Royal New Kent, a succession of you've never-seen-this-before holes with strong suggestions at every turn of you-ain't-seen-anything-yet. Actually, we have seen bits and pieces if this before. But never on this spectacular scale. Royal New Kent is Alister Mackenzie-meets- Pete Dye."</i> - Golf Digest</p>
<p><b>True Blue- established 1997</b></p> <p>1998 "Best New Public Upscale Course" ~ GD  1999 "Best Course in South Carolina" ~ GD  "#1 Course in the Myrtle Beach Area" ~ GD  2000 #2 "Top 25 Golf Courses in the South" ~ GM  03-04 America's Top 100 Greatest Public Courses ~ GD</p>	<p><i>"Many course historians compare True Blue to Pine Valley, citing the former's demand for target-awareness and a smooth blending between course and the habitat that surrounds."</i> - Golf Week</p>
<p><b>Tobacco Road- established 1998</b></p> <p>1999 Voted "Best New Course in North Carolina"  "Top 10 You Can Play ~ GM  Top 10 Best New Course Upscale Division" ~ GD  Voted 4.5 Stars Places to Play ~ GD</p>	<p><i>"Tobacco Road has been described as 'Pine Valley on steroids.' We've seen it. It is."</i> - Golf World</p>
<p><b>Tot Hill Farm- established 2000</b></p> <p>2000 Nominated for "Best New Course of the Year"</p>	<p><i>"Every Strantz design is a special effects production that's like a small independent film. He doesn't mass produce. He moves to a location and chisels away at the land until he's satisfied."</i> -Golf Digest</p>
<p><b>Bulls Bay- established 2002</b></p> <p>Not available for awards until 2004</p>	<p><i>"Mike Strantz poured his soul into Bulls Bay, as he does most every project, and the result is a Pop Art canvas...Strantz's color palette - grasses, sand, ground cover - is hands-down the most vivid in golf."</i> Links</p>

GD= Golf Digest  
GM= Golf Magazine