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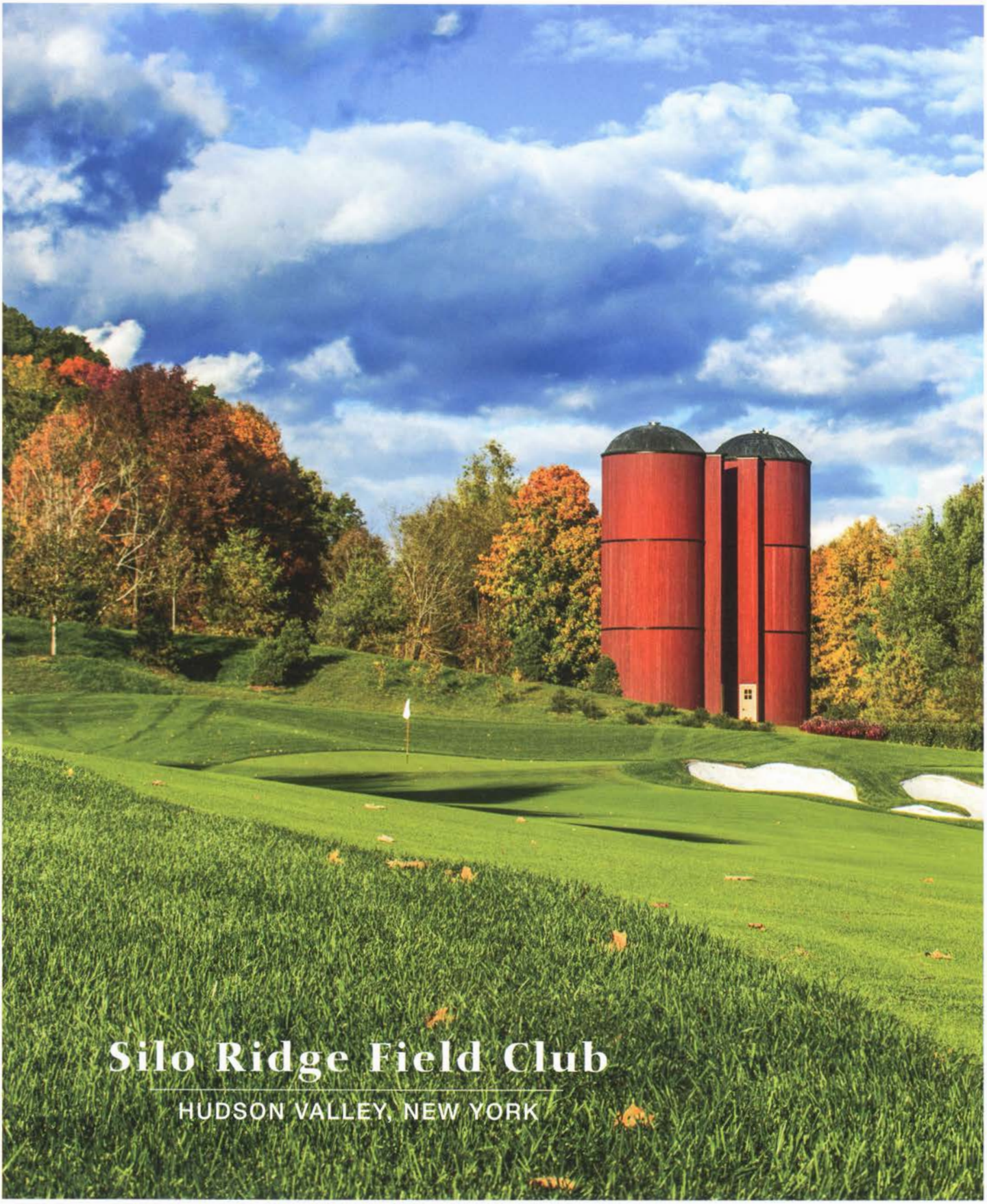


New York's New Playground

Silo Ridge Field Club evokes feelings of simplicity and idyllic charm.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

HUDSON VALLEY, NEW YORK (90 miles north of New York City): As president of the PGA MET Section, host of a weekly Sirius XM talk show, and member of the CBS Sports broadcast team for the Masters and PGA Championship, Brian Crowell certainly has the credentials to be director of golf and general manager at Silo Ridge Field Club, Discovery Land Company's first private community in the Northeast.

"There are 41 PGA Sections across America," said Crowell in his buttery smooth voice, "but the MET Section is the birthplace of the PGA of America and features dozens of the most revered private clubs and golf courses in the country.

"What lured me to join Discovery Land Company was its creativity and receptiveness to embrace a more relaxed philosophy. I'm a family guy with three children. I get it. To tell a teenage girl to find a collared shirt and appropriate length shorts is such a conflict with today's reality. Tradition is valuable, but our industry must be open to growth."

Crowell's introductory meeting with Mike Meldman, founder of Discovery Land Company, provided a peek into Discovery's culture.

"As a new recruit, I flew down to Baker's Bay in the Bahamas [one of 20 Discovery Land Company projects] to meet with Mike," recalled Crowell. "I'm a big believer in first impressions so I bought a new belt, crisply pressed my pants, and shined my shoes. I was the textbook picture of a MET PGA Professional. Mike looked at me from head to toe, ordered me down to the golf shop to change into board shorts, tee shirt, and flip-flops. As a Northern golf pro whose legs haven't seen daylight in 25 years, he also recommended a tube of sunscreen!"

"THE 17TH HOLE is a par-3 that plays over a deep quarry with a depth that is unknown. It best captures the drama of Silo Ridge. When you are standing on the tee box, the sky feels bigger and the valley seems wider. It seems impossible that the bustle of New York City and Wall Street is only 90 minutes away."
– BRIAN CROWELL, GENERAL MANAGER & DIRECTOR OF GOLF

Silo Ridge Field Club

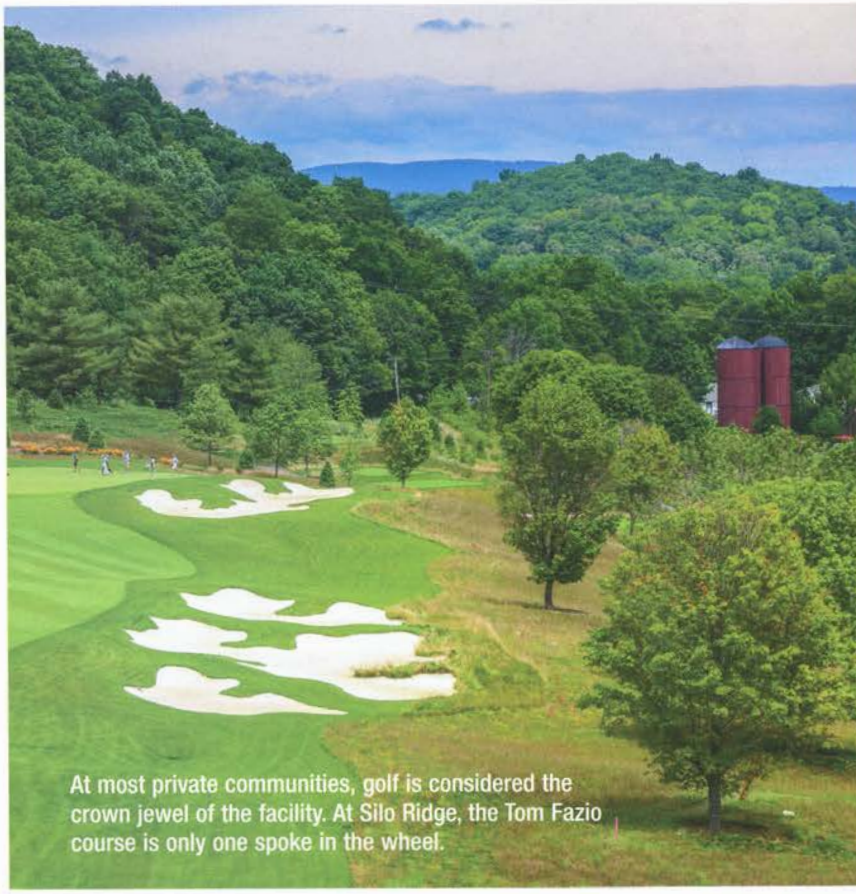
A signature Discovery Land Company amenity–the comfort station at Silo Ridge.

Silo Ridge's practice facility features two vintage pickup trucks: a '54 Chevy 70 yards from the tee and a '47 Chevy parked at 160 yards.

"No matter your age, trying to fire a six-iron to knock out the windshield is great fun," smiled Crowell. "The vibe at Silo Ridge is singular to the area. In a region dedicated to tradition, we offer a lighter approach to the game and a new image for golf. I just shake my head at the current controversy swirling whether shorts should be permitted during PGA sanctioned practice rounds. Here we allow, even encourage, a more informal environment. As an example, we offer speakers that attach to your golf cart and plug into your iPhone so you can listen to your playlist."

Coming To Silo Ridge

"The smell of sawdust is in the air," said Eoghan O'Connell, sales associate at Silo Ridge and competitor in the 1989 Walker Cup. "The Clubhouse will serve as the central gathering place and include a movie theater, spa, and fitness center. The Family Barn



At most private communities, golf is considered the crown jewel of the facility. At Silo Ridge, the Tom Fazio course is only one spoke in the wheel.

Silo Ridge Field Club

"TO NEW YORKERS, the Hamptons is to Palm Beach as Silo Ridge is to the Rockies. When you think of a quaint New England small town, this is it. Our area is untouched by big box retailers and chain restaurants. It feels real here." – EOGHAN O'CONNELL, SALES ASSOCIATE

will feature a game room, resort-style pool, casual dining, and a lakeside pavilion for winter ice skating. The Field House will offer diverse recreation native to the region, including golf simulator, squash courts, indoor soccer field, rock wall, and juice bar.

"Service standards will complement our amenities," explained O'Connell. "The Outdoor Pursuits programming includes an unusual activity—antiquing. Our educated staff guides you through the fine nuances between surrounding towns for the perfect find."

Tom Fazio and Mike Meldman

The Midas Touch

"When you evaluate my portfolio of designs, all Discovery Land Company's courses represent my best work. Upon hearing Discovery was planning to enter the New York market, I immediately said, 'I'm all in.' I knew if the Discovery team was looking at a property, it must be special. The company, along with founder Mike Meldman, has been extremely successful, develops one-of-a-kind facilities, and caters to the top of the market," lauded Tom Fazio, golf course architect.

"I have known Mike and partners Joey Arenson and Steve Adelson for almost three decades. I haven't met a more talented and smart group of businessmen. They commit for the long term and understand you must structure a private community, no matter how high-end, to be able to thrive in any economy. My business relationship with Mike has turned into a friendship. I consider him to be understated [he always wears tee shirts], humble yet confident, methodical, and a kind person. He entered the development world as a numbers guy with a strong marketing background and has turned into a golf junkie. Even on suspect weather days, I have seen him looking out the window pondering a quick nine.

"Some have inquired why Discovery has the 'Midas touch.' There is no luck involved," stated Fazio. ➤

Silo Ridge Field Club

JONATHAN WRIGHT, CULINARY DIRECTOR AT SILO RIDGE, has worked and consulted for some of the most recognized resorts and restaurants in the world, including the famed Rainbow Room in New York City's Rockefeller Center.

"I've been involved with farming and gardening from a young age and as a professional chef, I've worked closely with farmers and developed kitchen gardens for luxury hotels.

"Silo Ridge has cultivated a fruit and vegetable garden, established an apiary, and built a wood-burning smokehouse and grill. Soon, we will add vineyards and livestock, such as goats and hens. The farm-to-table spirit will extend to classes in cooking with local foods, canning, and even foraging.

"We are blessed with land and fertile soil at Silo Ridge. Our menu is partially dictated by our use of heritage breed seeds, the growing season, and ultimately our organic garden's production. Summer begins with strawberry season, then blueberries, followed by the apple and pumpkin harvests in the early autumn. Many of New York City's best chefs would clamor over the opportunity to participate in our holistic approach to food. With restraint and technique, we create dishes wherein many of the ingredients have been in soil only a matter of hours earlier. Even our bread is baked in our wood-burning oven using wild red wheat, honey, and rainwater all produced on-site." – JONATHAN WRIGHT

Silo Ridge organic garden

Silo Ridge Field Club

"SILO RIDGE promises to be Discovery's most robust equestrian community. Our goal is to land The Gold Cup, one of North America's premier show jumping events."– DAN O'CALLAGHAN, EAST COAST SALES DIRECTOR

"Careful planning, attention to detail, evaluating the market, and timing all play into the success equation.

"Silo Ridge is a standout and representative of the quality that goes into creating a Discovery Land Company community," said Fazio. "The views and setting are special and, in some ways, reminds me of Ireland. While many consider The Hamptons to be high society's gathering spot, I think Silo Ridge is going to become the new 'playground of New York.'"

Tomorrows Are Never Guaranteed

"I learned early on in my career just how important it is to take time for family," said Dan O'Callaghan, director of East Coast sales at Discovery Land Company. "Before joining Discovery, I worked at Golf Channel as senior producer of *Golf Central*. It was only my fourth or fifth show into *Golf Central* when the Payne Stewart in-flight tragedy occurred. I turned white as a ghost having to document second by second updates. It was taxing and horrifying. That evening, when I slumped into my couch at home, I realized how fleeting life could be.

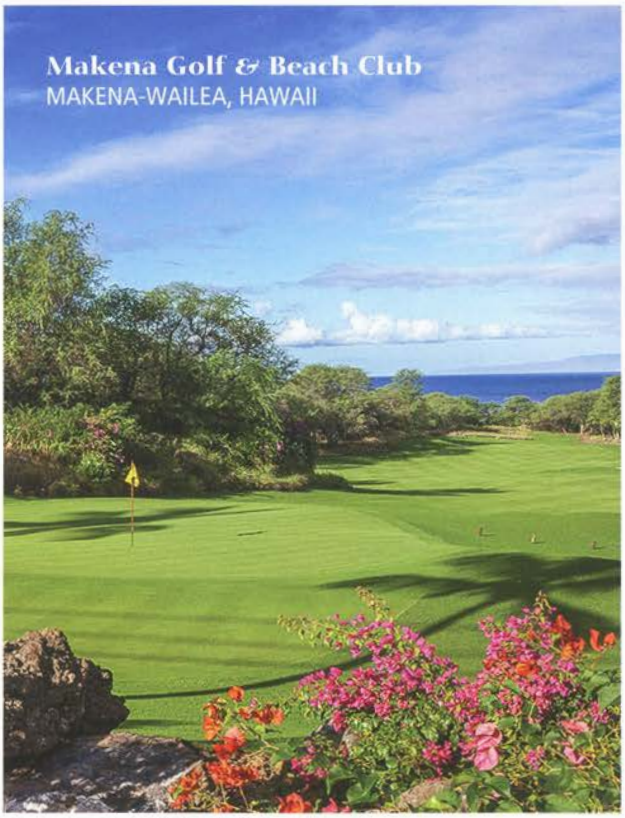
"Discovery believes in creating experiential memories for your family," said O'Callaghan. "Their model is proven and as a result, Discovery has more private clubs in development in America than all other developers combined!"

Rockin' The Ridge

The Hudson Valley is known for its shooting clubs, equestrian facilities, and prep schools. "There's a lot of deep rooted wealth in the area," said O'Callaghan. "With only 245 front doors and 15 million residents within a reasonable commuting distance, we have no reason to create a false sense of urgency to look at Silo Ridge."

The last depot on the Metro Line North (that originates from Grand Central Station in New York City) is only one mile from the club. "Each October, for our 'Rockin' the Ridge' food and music festival, we arrange for a private train from New York," explained O'Callaghan. "Last fall, it proved so popular with our members and guests that we are in negotiations with the MTA [Metropolitan Transit Authority] to provide regularly scheduled *private* service in our *own* rail car—something that hasn't been offered since the early 80s." ■

***For more information,** please visit SiloRidge.com and/or DiscoveryLandCo.com.*



BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA: Mike Meldman, founder of Discovery Land Company, has been a standout in a stagnant industry. His portfolio of almost two dozen highly amenitized, extremely private golf communities stretches from Kona, Hawaii, to Great Guana Cay, Bahamas.

During his three-decade career in the development world, Discovery's real estate sales have been measured in the tens of billions of dollars. Mike credits his success to three principals: (1) carrying little or no debt, (2) working with different partners at each project, and (3) catering to the highest end of the market.

"I am disciplined," said Meldman. "I stick to our knitting to deliver the greatest of everything in good times or bad. Like a major motion picture, private communities are capital intensive with lots of upfront costs. Land is highly illiquid. If you are leveraged, trouble looms. By working with different equity partners on projects, I diversify my risk and don't place all my eggs in one basket."

A history major at Stanford University, Mike searched for the right career fit.

"I 'bombed' the LSAT test and even did a stint as a casino blackjack dealer," recalled Meldman. "My first foray in the real estate business involved brokering land transactions between farmers and technology corporations in Fremont, California, to expand their campuses. I soon learned I had a knack for making deals."

During development of a plot of land in Portola Valley, California, he learned the importance of entitlements.

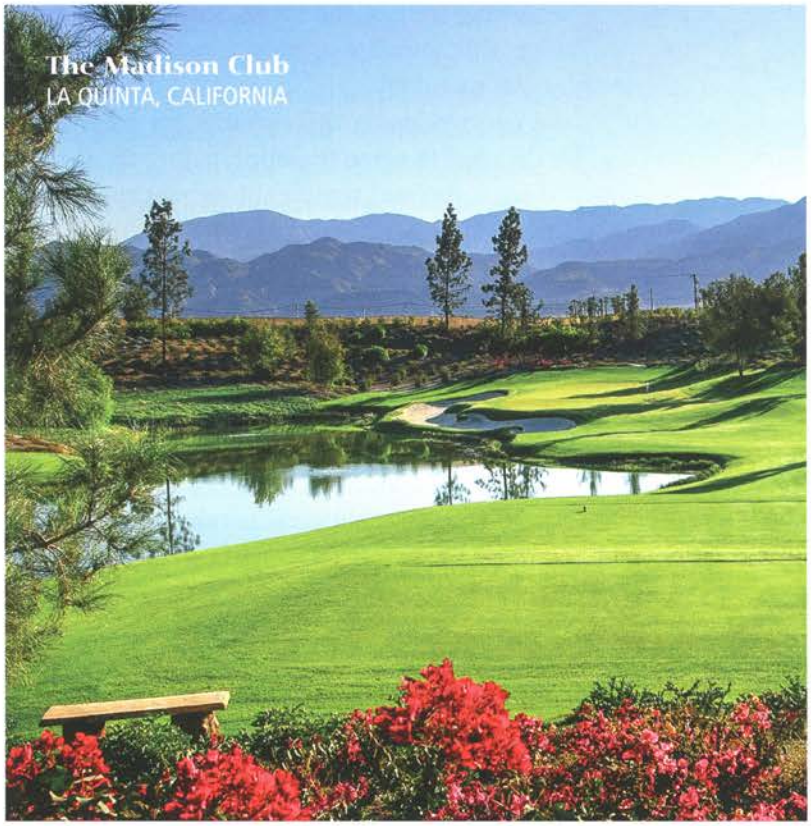
"It's an extremely environmentally sensitive area that took me 18 years to receive final approval!" frowned Meldman. "It taught me two valuable lessons: first, to have all boxes checked and approved before starting construction and the premium placed on low density. The experience was a contributing factor in changing the land plan for our Kukio project in Hawaii from a 3,000 room resort to a 180 resident private club."

Mike has two grown sons, Hunter and Will, and a 3½ year-old son, Maxwell Smart (named after the lead character in the popular 1960's comedy *Get Smart*).

"I like to say I've gone full circle from nursery school to beer pong, back to nursery school," grinned Meldman. "Max has reinvigorated my interest in children's amenities. The kids programming is critical to our success."

Early sales results at Silo Ridge have Mike encouraged.

"There are great golf clubs in New York, but no facility matches our level of amenities. The region around Silo Ridge is an Outdoor Pursuits haven with so many year-round activities.

"I think Discovery Land Company offers what today's buyer craves. Our projects are selling better than ever," said Meldman.

"The average age of our member is getting younger, and this year we will have well in excess of $2 billion in real estate transactions."