



TARMAC to TEE in 10 MINUTES

*The story behind the Neiman family development of
The Golf Club at Devils Tower*

HULETT, WYOMING: The Neiman family is an example of who makes America great. The privately owned sawmill has 480 employees, generates \$100 million in annual revenue, and is a major supplier to Anderson Windows and several big box retailers including Home Depot. When the company was founded four generations ago, approximately 60 percent of a log was viable in the manufacturing process. Today's use of sophisticated lasers and scanners—that measure up to 1,000th of an inch—allows the mill to purpose 99.9 percent of a log for various products.

The Neiman story is a lesson in the fruits of hard work with a little luck along the way. “My great granddad manufactured grain doors for railroads during the Great Depression,” recalled Jim Neiman Jr. “The natural progression of business required us to establish a sawmill. Business flourished and, in the 1950s, my dad had operations up and down the West Coast. One of our more profitable products was manufacturing ‘mine squares’ as support structures for the Hearst family silver mines.

“The early 1970s was a tough period. Competition and regulation shrunk our market and the economy was in recession,” painfully said Neiman. “We had no choice but to challenge ourselves to push into new markets and keep our head to the grindstone. We recovered by producing more *finished* product for venders versus *unfinished* components for other manufacturers.

“Those connected to the lumber industry categorize the 1980s as the decade of the Spotted Owl. Almost overnight millions of acres of forest were off limits for logging. With no supply source, 300 mills shuttered and there was an auction almost every week liquidating mill equipment.

“We took a gamble and bought almost new equipment on the cheap to double our production capacity. That allowed us to solicit big box retailers, with large order demands, who were starting to make significant market share inroads.

“Our family has had some luck along the way,” continued Neiman. “During the brutal recession earlier this decade, instead of laying off staff, we built inventory. We

The Value of a National Membership at The Golf Club at Devils Tower

This summer the club will introduce eight new member cabins available for nightly rental.

With reasonable annual dues of \$1,500, national members can enjoy the best of Wyoming, during the best time of year.



Jim Neiman Sr. is painstakingly restoring a 1901 cherry wood back-bar for the new clubhouse at The Club at Devils Tower, currently in design review. Jim discovered the antique at The Cowboy Bar in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. The ice box (electricity was not available) stored bottles of beer on their sides. Why? In the early 1900s, beer bottles were sealed with cork and a foil wrap. Laying a bottle on its side prevented the cork from drying out. Budweiser invented the first metal star cap to replace cork.

didn't expect the recession to be as deep or long lasting and our warehouse was packed with \$22 million of unsold product. Then, suddenly, when a massive earthquake hit Chile, hundreds of sawmills in South America were off line. We sold out our \$22 million in inventory, without offering much of a discount, within 48 hours.”

A STABLE FOUNDATION

When Jim was scouting the nation for mill equipment, he noticed commonalities in successful sawmill operations. Towns that had diversified job prospects and a laundry list

of everyday services were better able to manage the Spotted Owl crisis. “Our town of Hulett only has a couple of hundred full-time residents,” said Neiman. “I felt if we could create a reason to live here, both my company's employee recruitment and retention would be stronger.”

On a bluff overlooking Devils Tower, Jim carved out three holes from the rugged wilderness. “It was slow going at first. When we saw the potential, several of the best shapers in the golf design business were hired to create a course we would be proud of,” said Neiman.

“Our goal was threefold. First, provide employees of the mill a recreational outlet. Second, create an environment that would attract a doctor, dentist, and new entrepreneurs to Hulett. And finally, establish a golf experience so special that you would pick The Golf Club at Devils

“Our story behind the development of The Golf Club at Devils Tower was based on new thinking. We felt if we gave back to the community, they would respond in kind.

All small towns rely and thrive on people helping people.” – JIM NEIMAN JR.

Devils Tower, recognized as the first designated National Monument in the country, was the site for filming the major motion picture *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.



Tower as your summer destination. I think we succeeded on all accounts and, to boot, we carry no debt on the club,” said a pleased Neiman. “To ease the travel burden to the North Western Black Hills of Wyoming, we built a 5,500-foot-long runway just up the street from the clubhouse. We greet you in a concierge golf cart for your short ride to the first tee.”

NO FUN UNLESS WE ARE BURNING DIESEL

The Golf Club at Devils Tower offers three membership plans: Regional, National, and Corporate. The corporate membership plan has a unique benefit—you can assign unlimited designees as members.

“Our membership, currently 212 strong, places a premium on solitude and outdoor activities,” explained Todd Coover, general manager. “From Memorial Day to Labor Day you are almost guaranteed great weather. Usually we can add a month before and after as well. Life revolves around being outdoors during summer. We have a saying, ‘you are not having fun unless you are burning diesel.’”

This season, the club will be adding a skeet range. “Golf, fishing, and hunting are big draws for our members,” said Coover. “On the social calendar, our Turkey Shoot is a little different than what you would experience at a private club in Scottsdale. Our region offers an ideal setting for elk, whitetail, and mule deer hunting. Or enjoy fly-fishing or spin fish for trout, walleye, catfish, and bass.

“You may have heard of *towns* with no stop lights. In our *county*, we don’t have a stop light. The closest thing to a traffic jam in Hulett is a flock of wild turkeys blocking the road. If you live in a big city and tire of road rage, you will relish a friendly wave from a passerby and the romance of small town Americana,” said Coover.

PLAYING TO THE CANYON RIM

The golf course has all of today’s popular design trends. Bunkers are rough around the edges and fairways are

framed by native grasses.

“I am not quite sure why, but our area’s climatology is different than most of Wyoming,” continued Coover. “Hulett is in a ‘banana belt’ that keeps us a bit warmer and, more importantly, wind is much less of a factor.”

The front nine plays through an open prairie and the back nine has more trees and elevation changes.

“The trio of holes—11, 12, and 13—play to the canyon rim with clear views of Devils Tower in the distance,” said Coover. “If you have a bet against your partner, I suggest having a two-shot lead heading to No. 17. You hit out of a tree-lined shoot to a narrow fairway. The green is elevated with little bailout room. You really need to stripe it twice. The hole has been dubbed ‘where good rounds go to die.’” ■

To learn more about The Club at Devils Tower, please visit DevilsTowerGolf.com, or call (307) 467-5773.

For information on membership and real estate, please contact Russ Dawson at RussD@DevilsTowerGolf.com.



“Where the West never ends” is the slogan on the Interstate entry sign into Wyoming. Hulett celebrates the **Old West**. At Devils Tower the Country Grocery Store and Ponderosa Saloon are within walking distance of the clubhouse. Cards, karaoke, and darts are popular pastimes.

