

August 10, 2006

GREG DARVIN

Working

BY AURRICE DUKE

Greg Darvin made a splash 15 years ago when he started Pristine Pools of East Hampton after apprenticing with other such companies during his college years. In the last five years, Mr. Darvin has expanded the business beyond pool maintenance to include pool construction and landscape design.

"We're one of the few companies that actually does the construction themselves rather than subcontract," he said on Saturday afternoon. "We take pride in our jobs and go the extra mile. Subcontractors usually won't," he said, and then explained what he meant. "Any job I've subcontracted, I've been disappointed by the work."

"A strong part of the business is our reputation," Mr. Darvin said. "I have deep roots in the community and I never want to pass anyone in town I don't want to see. So many people in the business duck into alleyways to avoid unhappy customers." Mr. Darvin lives less than a mile from where he grew up. He attended the Springs School and graduated from East Hampton High School.

Summers at East Hampton's Main Beach left him with fond memories, but his strongest recollections are of the time he spent dabbling in construction. "I was always at work with Dad," he said. The senior Mr. Darvin, who now lives in New York City, is a builder. "I grew up banging nails, digging holes, cleaning up — I've done every bad job there is to do on a construction site."

Mr. Darvin left the East End to attend the State University at Albany and earned a degree in economics and finance. During the summers he maintained pools and after completing his studies he worked in the pool business as time allowed.

"Back when I first started, the job was very seasonal," he said. The months off during the slow season enabled him to travel. "I would save all my money." Mr. Darvin has visited every continent, traveled extensively in Asia, backpacked and hiked through South America, and toured Antarctica aboard a Russian ship delivering science supplies to crews stationed there.

With the 1990s came an upsurge in real estate and construction, which ate into his time away from eastern Long Island. "My focus changed," he said. "The business grew so much, it curbed my appetite for travel."

"I love East Hampton. I love to work outside, except for rainy springs or like the hot stretch we just experienced. I can eat lunch looking at the ocean; I'm so lucky. So many of my peers have not been able to stay here because of real estate prices."

While basic pool installation and maintenance can be a repetitive process, it is the deviations that keep his perspective fresh. "What gets me excited?"



Morgan McGivern

he asked. "The different and challenging projects."

Such as the one he and Scott Lowy, the owner of Tensui Water Perfection Systems of Smithtown, continue to refine. It is a filtration system that has been adapted to provide chlorine-free purification. Water passes through a complex filtration system and later through ultraviolet light tubes to kill bacteria. "The water is of drinking quality," said Mr. Darvin. "Because the price point is quite high, the system is normally used for indoor pools."

Besides improving pool filtration, Mr. Darvin's business goals have included instilling a level of professionalism that he said he lacked previously. "I have an office at 84 Park Place. The phones are always answered and calls are returned quickly. I employ a crew of five guys for the pool business who are able to do a job from excavation to installation. There is no one better prepared to take care of a pool than the people who put it in."

About two years ago, he added a landscape division, with the help of a partner. "In that way we have total control over a job. It's the best situation for a client, to deal with one vendor. We don't have to service as many clients, but we work more efficiently for the ones we do have."

And what does the future hold for Pristine Pools? "Continuing to grow at a healthy pace and build beautiful pools," Mr. Darvin said.