

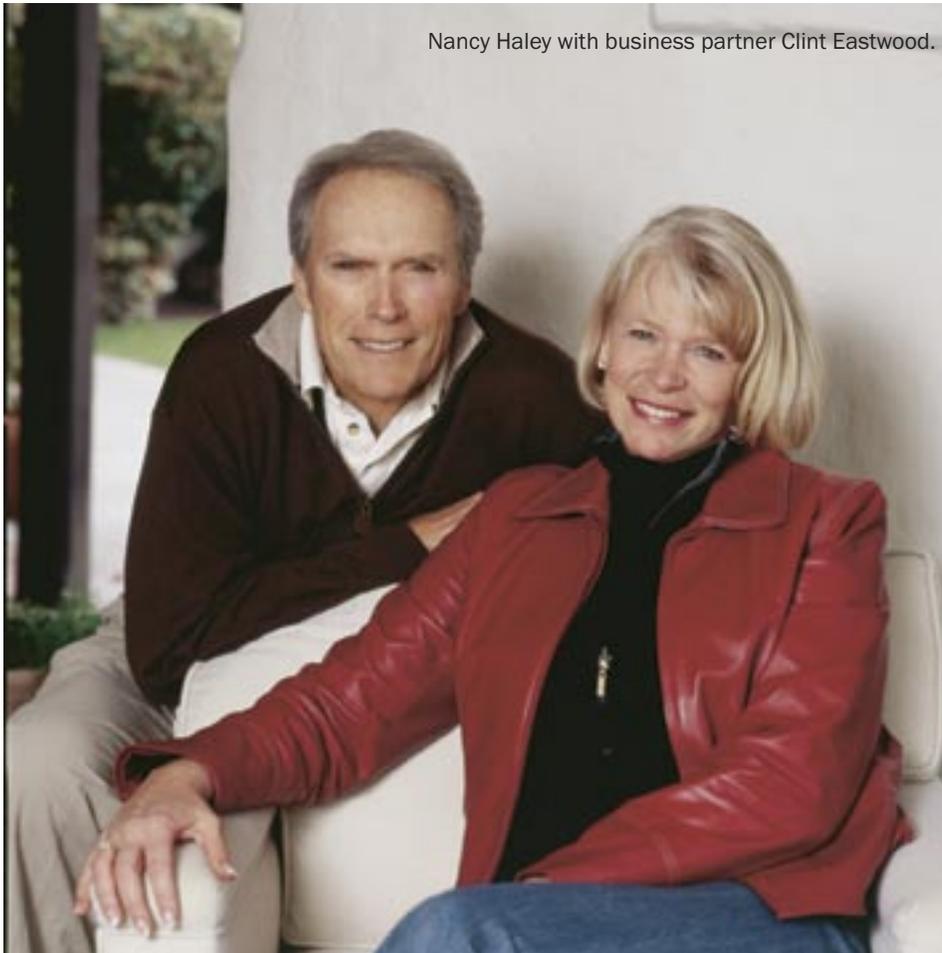
Nancy Haley

The Tehama founder's passion for design has led to deals with Clint Eastwood and Arnold Palmer

By Rebecca MacDonald

She was one of the first in the industry to design golf apparel for women, but Nancy Haley isn't one to rest on her laurels. The founder of the popular Sport Haley line, Haley established her name as a pioneer in the industry by creating sophisticated designs with feminine appeal. Now CEO of Tehama, the high-end contemporary sportswear company she owns with business partner Clint Eastwood, she has repeated that success.

Nancy Haley with business partner Clint Eastwood.



Haley wasn't always interested in golf. She remembers a time when she was 17 years old and her father tried to get her to play. "I said, Dad, only dorks play golf!" She adds, "Of course he still laughs about that, because now it's my life!"

Her husband, a passionate golfer, finally got her interested in the game. But when she started playing, Haley says she was horrified by what was—or more accurately, wasn't—available in terms of apparel for women. "The choices were either scaled down versions of men's shirts, or these really awful, theme-oriented clothes."

Haley, at the time an interior designer, started creating apparel designs in the evenings at home. Soon, her walls were covered with ideas. "It was just a dream at that point," says Haley. "We had kids, and I had no idea where I would get the money to fund it."

Launching Sport Haley

At the urging of her husband, Haley set to work creating a business plan, then took it to a bank to ask for \$125,000 business loan. The loan was approved, and a company was born.

The company, which started out as Sun-Daze by Nancy Haley, reached \$4.5 million in sales within the first three years. In 1990, she dropped the Sun-Daze brand in favor of two new brands, Sport Haley and the new menswear line, Haley Limited.

In 1992, Haley took the company public. The Sport Haley brand continued to grow, and in 1996, Haley decided it was time to move on. "I just said, life is too short. It's been awesome, the company is public, I own 20%—home run! I'm going to go play golf." She resigned at the company's next board meeting. "I felt bad leaving my baby, but it was almost like sending your kid to college. I kept thinking, she'll be fine."

"We'll call it Tehama"

Haley did try to relax and play golf, but says the friends she normally played with were all working. "After three months of that, I found myself one day just lying on my kitchen floor and crying. I was thinking, Oh my god, what am I going to do? It's like you've been on this train for so long, and then they just let you off at the station and go on without you."

It wasn't long before Haley caught another train. On a trip to Mission Ranch in California to play golf with her husband, she met the club's owner, Clint Eastwood. Haley had heard through her husband that Eastwood was in the process of realizing a long-held dream by building his own golf course, called Tehama, in the Carmel Valley. At the Mission Ranch bar one night, he approached and asked Haley

what she was going to do now that she was retired. She explained that she was trying to relax now and not work as hard. But Eastwood kept persisting, saying she wasn't the kind of person to just sit around and do nothing.

Finally, Haley asked "Why, are you interested in doing something in golf apparel with me?" She adds, "I figured he could always say no." Haley says Eastwood looked her in the eye, and said, "We could call it Tehama." She says she was so excited her ears were ringing, and she looked down for a moment to compose herself. When she looked up, Eastwood was walking away. "Now that I know him, it was so typical of him," laughs Haley. "I think he talked more that night than I've heard him talk since."

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The Tehama brand was launched at the 1997 PGA show in Las Vegas. The company generated \$7.5 million in sales the first year, and today has reached \$25 million.

Of course, Haley hasn't stopped there. In 2004, Tehama signed a deal with Phillips-Van Heusen to design



Nancy Haley visits Sticks at Covins in Dallas. The store carries the Tehama line.

and manufacture the new Izod Club sportswear line, which will retail for under \$50. "It's a really fashionable look, more fun, more colorful, and hipper than anything on the market for that price," says Haley. "No one else is doing it."

Tehama also signed a deal with Arnold Palmer to market a moderate priced line of sportswear under the golf legend's brand. According to Haley, Palmer told her, "I represent the average guy, so this has to be priced for the mainstream market."

The line will be sold in major department stores such as JC Penney's and Sears.

Act on your dreams

Looking back, Haley says she never dreamed her ideas would lead to such success. "When I speak to women's groups, I always tell them the same thing. I say, you all have cool ideas, but 99 percent of us don't act on them. The only difference between you and me is that I took action." 🐾