





GENESIS founders, from left, Skip Phillips, David Tisherman and Brian Van Bower

 Carolyn Koenig · Profile · Current Issue · March 4, 2024 · Last updated: February 28, 2024 · 5 min read

GENESIS: 26 Years and Onward

Going beyond individual growth to industry standard

Educate. Certify. Connect.

These are the three cornerstones of GENESIS, the acclaimed pool industry education program that's forging ahead into its 26th year. Now a part of the [Pool & Hot Tub Alliance](#), the program began as a way to elevate the careers of pool builders and designers and, as a result, helped change the face of the industry.

It took drive to create GENESIS, says co-founder [Skip Phillips](#) who, together with co-founder [Brian Van Bower](#), serves as an ambassador for the company.

The group was formed, along with then-partner [David Tisherman](#), in early 1998 because they believed pool construction and design professionals desired higher-level education opportunities and certifications that mattered – the bar was so low in the industry, it was easy to step over it, Van Bower says.



The three builders were already teaching at the then National Swimming Pool Institute when Phillips made his pitch at a committee meeting. He proposed the organization offer more advanced-level instruction and include experts such as architects, landscape architects and engineers in the curriculum. According to Van Bower, an institute executive denied the proposal, claiming there was no market for higher education.

So, Phillips said, “If you won’t do it, GENESIS will.” Van Bower quickly backed up his colleague: “He won’t do it alone. We’ll do it together.”

To prove the perceived lack of interest, the executive offered them \$100 for each person beyond the initial 20 who attended their proposed school. “You know what?” Phillips responded. “You’re on, and I’m out.”

Passionate about their mission — and contrarian by nature — Phillips says, “In 90 days, we had the location, we had the curriculum, we had the instructors and we had it sold out.”

They’d chosen the Inn at Morro Bay, along the California coast, as their venue and arranged dinners, wine tastings and a side trip to [Hearst Castle](#) to see two Julia Morgan-designed pools.

The program’s 22 students were motivated to learn more about their craft but also enthusiastic about the experience. Eager for a repeat, the group demanded a second course with the same lifestyle components, an element that has become part of the GENESIS credo.



Two schools became six, six became a dozen, and after they'd cleared 200 students, Van Bower sent a bill to settle the bet (which went unpaid).

In the meantime, word-of-mouth from satisfied attendees propelled the group onward. It was a tough juggling act for the founders, who had their own businesses to run, but their commitment didn't waver. Requests for GENESIS classes poured in from Australia, Germany, France, Italy and other locations.

Eventually, Phillips and Van Bower realized they needed to up their organization's professional game. To grow beyond the two of them (Tisherman was no longer involved) and a small, core group of helpers, they sold GENESIS to the National Swimming Pool Foundation in 2015. The decision generated some controversy, but as risk-takers, they knew it was the right move at the right time.

Four years later, the NSPF merged with the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals, which then became the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance. "After all the years of us being contrary, GENESIS is now part of the biggest pool association — their leadership is top-notch, and we get along wonderfully with them," Van Bower says.

"GENESIS plays an absolutely vital role in PHTA being able to fulfill its mission," says [Sabeena Hickman](#), PHTA president and CEO. "PHTA is here to educate and elevate the industry, and our GENESIS courses do exactly that. In the last 25 years, GENESIS has grown to be the most respected source for construction and design education and also a supportive community for those committed to perfecting their craft."

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As an education arm of PHTA, GENESIS has set the standard as a career pathway for industry professionals. It offers more than 100 courses in business, construction, design and engineering, plus four major certifications: Certified Builder Professional, Certified Advanced Pool Builder Professional, Certified Expert Pool Builder & Design Professional and Certified Master Pool Builder & Design Professional.

Some classes are held in conjunction with U.S. and international trade shows, and some are stand-alone. Others, thanks to COVID, are virtual, but people are still hungry for the camaraderie and networking opportunities GENESIS provides at its in-person courses, Van Bower says.



As often happens with long-standing enterprises, competition is appearing, but GENESIS is holding strong

as a 26-year-old, international program backed by PHTA that includes a roster of world-renowned educators like [Terry Brannon](#), [Kate Wiseman](#) and [Kirk Bianchi](#), Phillips says.

“Our instructors are dedicated and passionate professionals who have been working in the industry for decades,” says Jeanne Mendelson, PHTA vice president of education and events. “Because they are out in the field doing this work every day, they have their fingers on the pulse of the industry and are always learning about the newest technologies and latest trends that they can incorporate into their curriculum.”

Heading into 2024, Van Bower and Phillips are anticipating more success. In their role as ambassadors, their mission is to keep up the momentum they have generated over the years, Phillips says.

“Seeing the industry evolve is something that makes us both very happy,” Van Bower says.



The Pros Behind GENESIS

Skip Phillips and Brian Van Bower are two of the foremost pool builders/designers in the world, with accolades and awards that attest to their talents and legacies.

Skip Phillips, international vanishing edge education program instructor, has decades of expertise in the field. He founded Questar Pools and is currently active in Pi Tape, a tool business he owns that has been in his family since 1944.

Brian Van Bower is the founder of [Aquatic Consultants](#) and now serves as CEO. He is also president of BVB Consulting, a general consulting firm in the recreational water industry.

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