

ALGARVE NEWS

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF WHAT'S ON IN THE ALGARVE

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They said he was crazy...

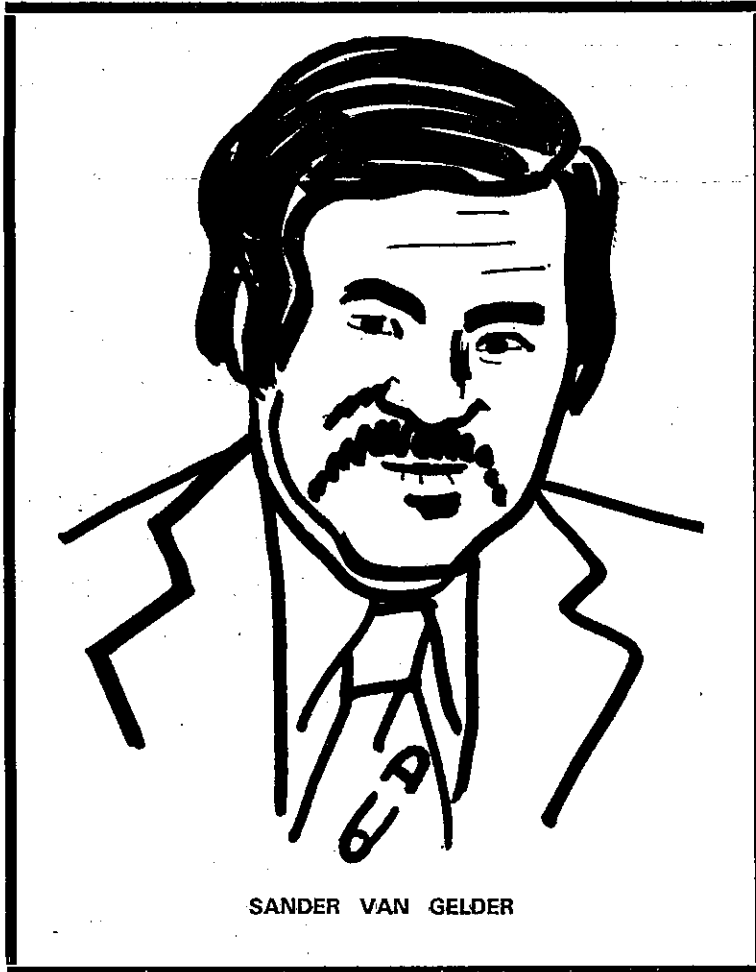
HE WANTED SO MUCH, SO FAST, THAT NO-ONE
COULD BELIEVE IN HIS VISION OF A NEW
VALE DO LOBO

but look what he's done!

If any man is entitled to say "I told you so", that man surely is Sander van Gelder. For when he bought Vale do Lobo Empresa Turística Lda 12 months ago and announced his ambitious plans, many of the Algarve's know-alls shook their heads. "He'll never make it," they said. "He's trying to do too much too soon."

But they hadn't reckoned with van Gelder's determination ("pig-headedness", some have called it). Now, even though he admits "it has been the most difficult year of my life", he can point with pride to some solid achievements.

He has built 12 all-weather tennis courts and is well advanced the construction of a Club House for the Roger Taylor Tennis Centre. With Henry Cotton as consultant, he has improved the golf course, and plans to enlarge the Club House. He has built a new school — the Prince Henry International College. He has greatly improved the "Restaurante Rotunda" and has built a new bar, "Le Bon Vivant", and a coffee shop, "O Favo". He has nearly



SANDER VAN GELDER

completed a large and luxurious new nightclub, the "Kasbah".

Van Gelder has introduced a security force — 14 armed, radio-equipped guards who regularly patrol the whole Vale do Lobo area. He has built a new Reception Centre, which is now staffed 24 hours a day. He has instituted a bus service to carry guests around the development and to transport his employees to and from work. He has his own print shop, his own carpentry shop, a maintenance corps and a repair

shop to service his fleet of 80 vehicles.

Three hundred new telephones have been installed in a system that will eventually have 2,000 connections.

He has reorganized his subsidiary construction company and is building roads and villas, as well as restaurants, bars and clubs. Realistically, van Gelder does not expect to sell all of his villas until the amenities on his magnificent 400 hectare

development have been completed to his exacting requirements.

One of the problems van Gelder had to face was the fact that, during the years Vale do Lobo was in liquidation, the number of employees was reduced, and wages were so low that many workers held other jobs on the side. There were not enough people to run the development properly. Employees grumbled. Property owners complained. Everything was being run at the lowest possible level.

Says van Gelder: "I knew that we had to regain the confidence of suppliers and employees, and that everyone had to believe in the Company and be re-motivated. In the first days, people could only see what was in the past. I was standing alone. I had to hit my fist on the table because nobody was willing to believe in what I was trying to achieve."

Some things disappointed van Gelder. For example, he felt that the authorities were slow to cooperate. He realizes now, however, that they wanted first to see what he was going to do. "I had to finance everything myself", he says. "I had no help from the banks or from government departments." He denies absolutely the rumour that he has received huge loans from the government at special rates.

Sander van Gelder is not an easy man to work for, and the Algarve is littered with his ex-executives. They complain about his tantrums and of his refusal ever to take "no" for an answer. He admits that "one of the most difficult things was for me to learn that things couldn't be done as quickly as I had been used to." And he still finds it hard to believe that it took over a year to have uniforms made for his employees, that golf carts (necessary to attract North American tourists) have been tied up in the Customs Department at Lisbon for eight months, and that he has been waiting a year for a license

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