

□ PEOPLE

A Hall of Fame

kind of guy

NASCAR Hall of Fame was a reality. Two years ago, it won a THEA Award as Best New Attraction in the U.S.

That job finished, Denyes next moved to Atlanta to tackle another NASCAR assignment. Then, last spring, he received a phone call from Canadian mover and shaker Trevor Eaton asking him if he'd be interested in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame project.

"How many people have a chance to do three of these things?" says Denyes.

Now Denyes commutes from Atlanta to Ottawa, often waking up in the middle of the night — wherever he is — to jot down sketches, ideas and possibilities for the new Canadian athletic museum.

"I go through a lot of orange juice," he says.

Through Eaton's connections,

Denyes has interviews scheduled with most of the major corporations in the country. He's already inked four major sponsors — Royal Bank, Lucent Technologies, Canada Post and TSN-RDS.

"You basically have 30 minutes with these guys and they'll sit and listen," says Denyes. "Everybody agrees this a great thing for Canada. But, by the end of the day, they want to know if it will help them sell their product."

By attracting 500,000 visitors a year to a facility like the Sports Hall of Fame, Denyes says, "Yes."

Getting people to visit isn't difficult, he says. It's keeping them there that's the trick.

"If you remember the old Hockey Hall of Fame at the CNE, people might run through it in half an hour," he says. "Now, at the new hall, people spend two to three hours there. Even those

reluctant moms who end up enjoying it. It's so interactive."

Denyes will incorporate many ideas from both the hockey and NASCAR shrines at the Canadian Hall. And, he'll add some new wrinkles too.

"We'll do major interactive programs, virtual reality," he says. "I want people to be able to relive great moments in Canadian sports history. I was talking to Nancy Greene the other day and I said I want visitors to be able to relive the gold medal she won at the Winter Olympics in Grenoble in 1968. I want them to be able to go down the ice, one-on-one with Patrick Roy in goal.

"Or, pick your own sport and be your own broadcaster."

And Denyes is off and running. Looking for a pencil to scribble down another new idea.

Look for them in 2002.