A unique breed: supers-turneds-designers

By MARK LESLIE

Their number is so small they do not even constitute a fraternity — those superintendents-turned-architects. But their perspective is unique in the world of golf course design, construction and maintenance.

"I waited two golf holes when I was a superintendent," admitted Keith Foster, the architect. "I know what it's like," he added of the superintendent's job. "It's a job that involves maintenance and growth, but the superintendent has to think like an owner, a manager and a designer all at the same time."

The few super-turns-architects "are not dealing with an ivory-tower approach, but with grunt-level determinations," declared Dr. Michael Hurtzen, who not only was a superintendent at one time but holds master's and doctoral degrees relating to turfgrass. He is also past president of the ASGCA.

"Golf Course Designer." The group also numbers Bobby Weed of Ponte Vedra, Fla., Craig Schreiner of Kansas City and Brian Silva of Uxbridge, Mass.

Dick Nugent at the site of one of his projects.

Dick Nugent: An anchor in heartland

Dick Nugent, 63, has been around golf courses his entire life. He was a caddy in 1940 and later worked on the maintenance crew at Bob-O-Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill. Robert Bruce Hughes hired Nugent after the aspiring young architect graduated from the University of Illinois in 1958. Six years later, Nugent and Ken Killian opened their own firm. The pair designed dozens of courses together, including Kemper Lakes in Long Grove, Ill., before parting professionally in 1983. Nugent formed his own company, which includes son Tim and daughter-in-law Andrea. While widely known for his Chicago golf layouts, Nugent has expanded his reach worldwide, designing courses in Hawaii, Europe and elsewhere.

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Golf Course News: What differentiates your company from other architectural firms?

Dick Nugent: I guess you'd have to look at our long-term record. We've been in the business 36 years and hopefully we've learned something along the way. We are also one of the few firms that practice true construction management. We make sure the project stays on schedule, remains within budget and that moneys are spent toward a full partnership. I have a house in Phoenix. I'm there a lot of the time.

We put an on-site construction manager on every job. Dan Cunningham and Eric Wadsworth [Brent Wadsworth's son] are our project managers. Tim and Andrea oversee their work.

GCN: How involved is Tim in the business?

DN: Tim is in the process of taking over the company. I'd like to always be around to meddle a bit, but we're moving toward a full partnership. I have a house in Phoenix. I'm there half the time and here [Long Grove] the other half.

GCN: You're considered one of the dominant architects in the Chicago market. Would you consider that your area?

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