

Designer's forum

By Dr. Michael J. Hurdzan



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Physiology and his Master of Science in Turfgrass Physiology from the University of Vermont. Dr. Hurdzan is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, and is on that association's Board of Governors. He is also a member of the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, USGA, NGF and the Golf Collectors' Society. Dr. Hurdzan has authored many articles on golf course design and maintenance and is currently writing a book on the history of golf course architecture.

Who is that guy in the Ross Plaid Blazer?

Is he a spectre of the famous Golf Architect Donald Ross, a golf futurist, or a proud traditionalist? Yes, he is all three for he is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Corny lead-in perhaps, but accurate. For few people in the world of golf would recognize the Ross Plaid Blazer as symbolic of a group almost as select as the Order of the Garter. And although many more may know of the existence of A.S.G.C.A., few know Who they are, What they stand for, and How they may shape the future of golf.

Although golf course architecture has been a recognized profession for over 100 years with many distinguished practitioners, no formal organization existed until 1947. In that year, 13 charter members met in New York City to elect Robert Bruce Harris as President, Donald Ross as Honorary President, Stanley Thompson as Vice President, and a young man by the name of Robert Trent Jones as Secretary-Treasurer. Then in December of 1948, Donald Ross, the Father of Golf Architecture in America who is credited with designing 600 courses over a 50 year career, hosted a meeting of the new organization at Pinehurst where a con-

sulting situation, by-laws and code of ethics were adopted. Their initial goals and concerns were to protect and up-grade their profession and to advance concepts and techniques of design consistent with the spirit of the game by collective thought. From that embryonic beginning the organization has grown steadily in stature and numbers, expanding their interest and influence in a most ordered fashion, while not compromising their initial goals. To examine the American Society of Golf Course Architects today would reveal the direction, scope and strength of the organization as well as to introduce its personality.

Currently the society has 58 active members, 10 associate members and 14 fellows. These 80 or so men represent about 75% of the more active practitioners of the art in the world. Like other professional societies, to be accepted as a member of A.S.G.C.A. involves a rather complex system of qualification. Not only must an applicant demonstrate an established ability to design representative golf courses, but also he is considered for his ethics and methods of professional practice. To be selected as an associate member is recognition by his peers of his personal and professional integrity and abilities that have been scrutinized by his member sponsors. Once he is made an associate member he is expected to support the society and its' programs by attendance to the meetings and to obtain a set number of credits from the professional development seminars over a 3 year period before being made a full member.

Although the backgrounds and skills of the members may vary as does their professional philosophies and practices, the common denominator is their interest in advancing the profession. Within the society there are about 20 committees that concern themselves with such subjects as Environmental Impact, Legal Considerations, Golf Terminology, History, Hall of Fame, and Professional Development. In fact, in recent years the Professional Development committee has been responsible for providing 6-8 seminars, given by experts within the society, on subjects directly impacting the profession. One

visitor to the program commented that to simply assemble the speakers with the stature and knowledge he witnessed, would have cost many thousands of dollars. The intent of the original founders of advancement by collective thought is alive and well.

Not all of the talents, efforts, and dollars of the society are directed to in-house use. Within the past few years the society has produced a white paper on golf course and the environment and has initiated a cooperative project with the U.S.G.A., G.C.S.A.A., and the University of Florida on sewage effluent for irrigation. Results from this project could have wide ranging effects all over the world and even outside the realm of golf. The A.S.G.C.A. executive committee actively participates with the Allied Association of Golf composed of representatives from the Club Manager Association, United States Golf Association, Professional Golfers Association, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and National Golf Foundation. This group represents the bulk of the golf industry and they try to forge policies and directions to protect the best interests of the game.

If this were not enough to do for so few people, they also nominate, select, and present the Donald Ross Award to some member of the golf industry who has made a significant contribution to golf in general and golf course architecture specifically.

This spring the Society will travel to Scotland to study and play the hallowed courses there and to attend educational sessions given by Great Britians best Golf Architects and Superintendents. Their goal is to learn about the British philosophies and concepts of design and maintenance. The members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects are proud of their history and have chosen to honor one of the great Golf Architects and founding members, Donald Ross, by using his family plaid for their blazers. So the next time you are asked "who is that man in the Ross Plaid Blazer?"; you can reply 'a spectre of Donald Ross, a golf futurist, and a proud traditionalist'. Corny perhaps, but accurate.