

Nick Hongisto -N- Schaumburg Golf Club

*Fred Behnke
Mount Prospect G.C.*



When Nick Hongisto finally got a lovely coed at Northern Illinois University named Diane to agree to go out with him, he knew the evening had to be special. So he got front row tickets to the local Demolition Derby, and they spent the evening dodging flying bumpers and mufflers. When he finally caught up with Diane again, he must have done some pretty fast talking, because today they're married and have two boys, Andy (age 9) and Peter (age 7).



No. 6 hole of the tournament course.

Concrete Acres to those of us who played the course years ago) and poured over \$5 million into renovating the golf course.

Nick is the golf course superintendent for the Schaumburg Park District and our host for the MAGCS first golf meeting of 1998 at the Schaumburg Golf Club. Nick also manages the turf for the park district's other fine golf course, Walnut Greens. Together with his assistants, Jim Roberts at Schaumburg and Bob Czajka at Walnut Greens, Nick provides 36 holes of quality golf for the residents of Schaumburg where green space is at a premium.

Nick spent some time at NIU and graduated from Kishwaukee College in 1983, where he currently serves on their Horticultural/Agricultural Advisory Board. He got his start in the golf business at the Kishwaukee Country Club working on the grounds from 1978 through 1983. In 1986, after a couple of years away from golf, Nick was hired by the Schaumburg Park District to take care of their new 9-hole golf course and has been there ever since.

In 1990, the Schaumburg Park District bought the financially strapped Golden Acres Country Club (known affectionately as

renovation was closer to a rebuilding because the master plan included some hole reroutings, a new maintenance center to the tune of \$800,000, and over \$3.5 million in "on course" improvements. The remaining \$1+ million went to build a new clubhouse. The renovation process was phased in over three years, one nine at a time. The entire project was bid out, each nine as a separate project, and resulted in four different contractors being involved in building the golf course and installing the irrigation system. Nick credits Bob Lohman and his staff with riding herd over this potentially troublesome situation and says you can't tell one nine from the other in terms of construction quality control. One of the distinguishing features of

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Performance Appraising

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the coaching period, give the employee your undivided attention. Encourage dialogue, especially from the employee. Ask open-ended questions and solicit information/examples during this time in order to better understand his or her feelings. Use silence as a means to get them to verbalize. More often than not, the employee will begin to talk during periods of silence because it is so intimidating. These are all examples of ways to encourage dialogue between the employee and yourself. Remember, the feedback your employee gives at this point will allow you to better understand, evaluate and reduce perceptions.

Performance appraisals, when utilized properly, can provide you with valuable information about yourself, your employee and your organization. They will provide you with a means by which communication lines are opened between you and the employee, establish some credible information by which to properly evaluate employees, provide documentation and a system by which raises and promotions may be given, and offer an opportunity to fairly establish goals and the criteria by which one may attain those goals.

Though following the information above will not reduce the amount of work involved in evaluating my department, I am hopeful that it will make it easier to do so. In addition, I feel it will hold my employees more accountable and responsible for their actions and behavior and give me an opportunity to resolve conflicts more quickly and more decisively. ■

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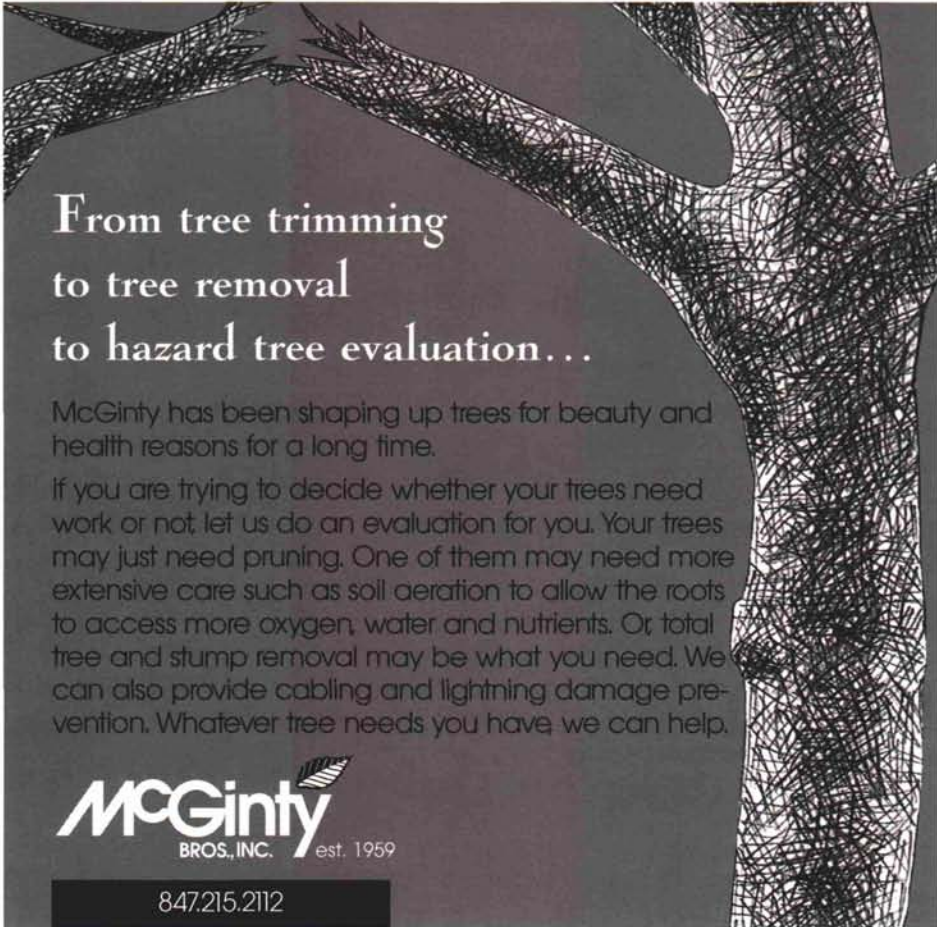
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the new layout is the fact that despite the wide-ranging changes, many of the mature trees were able to be saved giving the course an established feel with the benefit of fresh playing surfaces.

Nick's greatest challenge was in 1993-1994 when he was responsible for essentially four different 9-hole courses: Walnut Greens, the newly finished nine holes at SGC, the nine holes then under construction, and the nine yet to be improved. He says that getting new turf up and maturing it to the point where it becomes playable requires constant attention (especially when it turns out that a year like 1995 is looming on the horizon). Apparently, Nick has enjoyed some success in managing new turf since this year, for the second time,

Schaumburg will be hosting the local regional qualifier for the U.S. Open.

Nick, Diane and the boys live in La Fox, near St. Charles, where they are actively involved in their church (Nick is on the building committee, among other things). He led the prayer breakfast at the 1997 GCSAA National Convention in Las Vegas. Nick is one of the most computer-literate superintendents in the area. He spoke at the 1996 MAGCS Annual Meeting at Butterfield C.C. on using the Internet and has written articles for *On Course* on the subject. Nick enjoys his family and wishes he could spend more time with the boys, especially in the summer. By the way, with two boys in the house, Nick and Diane don't have to go out anymore to enjoy the demolition derby. ■



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