Designs on Golf

■ ARCHITECTURE

A few years ago I penned a column urging anyone undertaking a golf course project to document, document, document. But anecdotal evidence tells me that golf course superintendents, architects and club officials did not fully digest my scintillating treatise outlining the benefits of documentation.

Digital camera makers haven't reported any camera sales spikes since that column. And the big electronic manufacturers and online photo-hosting sites haven't offered me bribes to pen another life-changing column, either. Worse, every time I hear about a great project and ask to see photographs of what things looked like before, I feel like a detective at a 1930s Chicago crime scene. No one saw anything. No one knows anything. And for damn sure, there aren't any images to see.

I understand that documentation takes time and can be an annoyance when you are also juggling details that relate to actually getting a job done. Nonetheless, in just a few short years since I last wrote about this, technology has transformed how we take photos and how we share them. There are no more excuses for failing to document and show off what you do, whether it be a new green, tree removal or converting turfgrass to a native area.

So in interest of time and space, and without too much condescension, I'm going to whittle this down to the basics. Here's what you need to document:

1) A digital camera. In the past few years, Canon, Nikon and the other major manufacturers have been getting better with each product line, but the current point-and-shoot digital cameras take truly amazing photos. You should not have to spend more than $225 to get something outstanding that captures images in 8-million megapixels (all you'll ever need).

2) A plan. The entire point of documenting a project is to capture those great "before" photos because people tend to forget how things were prior to the work. Grab a legal

Make Sure to Get the Whole Picture

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD

JUST A FRIENDLY

REMINDER TO

DOCUMENT WHAT

YOU DO

pad, figure out where the best views are of the work at hand, and write down where you took the photos from. Map it with GPS if you want. Just don't lose your record. Tape it to the side of your computer if you must. And don't worry about dating and timing the shots since all of today's digital cameras store that information with each image.

3) A computer. Most computers come with easy-to-use photo editing software (if they don't, you can always download free software like Google's Picasa). These programs make editing and touching up images easy, while making your efforts to e-mail photos much easier than a few years ago.

4) An Internet connection. Since I last pleaded with you to document your work, sites like www.flickr.com and www.shutterbug.com have made it easy to upload a large number of images from vacations or, say, interesting golf course projects.

5) A video camera. Yes, as computer hard drives have gotten bigger, so has the potential to do video. Panasonic makes amazing high-def video cameras for reasonable prices ($1,000 or less). Not only are they great for capturing the family vacation in stunning clarity, but now it's possible to weave together fun little videos where you tell the story of a project. And if you use something like Apple's imovie '08, the video is easy to edit and graphics are easy to add. And then you can load it up to YouTube for anyone to see.

Documentation has never been easier. The tools to do so are available to you — and they are affordable. So don't make me write this column again in three years.

Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.