



Designing Golf Courses Isn't Work to Him

By Lori Ward Bocher

When Dick Nugent first went to work as a golf course architect in 1959, he said, "Hey, you get paid for this?" Now, 36 years later, he's still able to say, "You find something you like to do and you never have to go to work again the rest of your life."

At 63 years of age, the principal architect at Dick Nugent Associates, Long Grove, Ill., is slowly turning the reins over to his son, Tim. But he's making no firm plans for retirement. "I see myself doing a little less," Dick admits. "But not being involved? Having a business is like a marriage or having children. You don't just walk away from it."

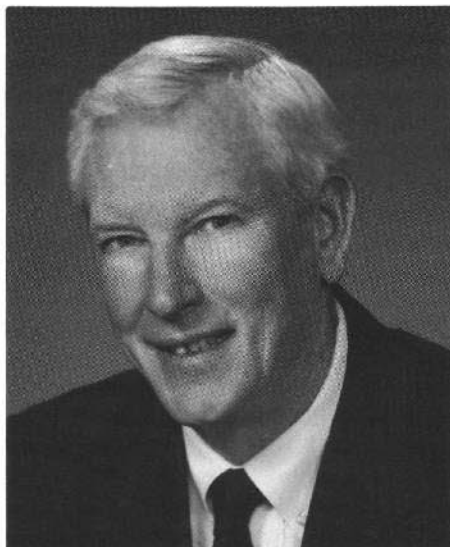
Dick has experienced a lot of changes since 1959—changes in his business arrangements, and changes in golf and the environment that have affected golf course architecture. But through all of those changes, he has always loved his role in the game of golf.

"I grew up around golf courses," says this native of Highland Park, Ill. "Everyone I grew up with played golf. I caddied. My brother was an Evans Scholar."

At the University of Illinois, Dick majored in Landscape Architecture with an engineering option. His schooling was interrupted with 31/2 years in the military during the Korean War. After graduating from college in 1958, he went to work in the construction industry for a West Coast firm for a short time.

"Because of family, we opted to come back to the good old Midwest," Dick says. They moved to the Chicago area where Dick worked as a road construction engineer.

"Some fellows I went to school with were working for Robert Bruce Harris," he says of his introduction to the world of golf course architecture. "They were looking for somebody to oversee the construction supervision of some of their projects, so they called me about it."



Dick Nugent

"I was quite familiar with the golf business, but I wasn't familiar with golf course architecture because there were hardly any architects in those days," he continues. "It sounded like a neat job. I said, 'Hey, you get paid for this?' I talked to Mr. Harris. He offered me a job and I never looked back."

That was in 1959. For the next five years, while working for Robert Bruce Harris, Dick would help plan projects in the office and then go to the field during construction. "I'd oversee a project from the beginning concepts to the ribbon cutting," he points out.

In 1964, he and fellow worker Ken Killian decided to form their own firm, Killian and Nugent, Inc. "There was only one job left (at Harris'), and that was Bob's. And he wasn't giving it up!" Dick recalls. "So it was the next logical step."

He and Killian also had known each other as students at the University of Illinois. Their partnership lasted until 1983 when they parted and Dick formed his own firm, Dick Nugent Associates.

They're going to change the name to Nugent and Associates. Dick points out, to include his son, Tim, who has been in business with him for six years now. "He's been taking over more and more of the business. He basically runs all the operations," Dick says. In addition to growing up in the business, Tim is a construction management engineer with an MBA degree.

Dick is the principal architect at his golf course architecture and construction management firm. "But my real role is coach," he laughs. "I meddle around, muddy up the water." On a more serious note, he adds that he works all areas—soliciting business, designing, visiting projects, working closely with clients.

Working with Dick and Tim are Tim's wife, Andrea (also an engineer), Cameron Masterson, Tom Soileau, and Colleen McArthur.

AMETEK

**TURF
BOXES**

Manufactured in
Sheboygan, Wisconsin
Specify AMETEK —
A Wisconsin Product!

"We're working on about 20 projects of varying degrees right now," Dick points out. These projects range from minor remodeling jobs at existing courses to a new 36-hole course, Harborside International, for the Illinois International Port District in Chicago. The first 27 holes have opened, and the remaining are still under construction and scheduled to open the summer of 1996.

The site previously had been used as a landfill. "The Port District reorganized the operation and decided to close the landfill," Dick explains. "They had to seal it, they had to grow grass on it, and they had to maintain it. So the board elected to go the next step, which has to build a golf course on it."

Dick encourages THE GRASS ROOTS readers to visit Harborside, which is located on Lake Calumet at the Port of Chicago about 20 minutes south of the Loop (at 111th Street and Interstate 94). "It's one of the best courses in the Lake Michigan area. It's a Scottish links type of course because there can be no penetration of the landfill cap," he explains, adding that they can't dig holes to plant trees. "So it's designed with mounding and bunkers and grasses. You can stand up on some of the holes and see the whole golf course. Yet the holes are built in such a way, with the grasses and mounds, that you don't realize you're playing next to an adjacent hole."

As a golf course architect, the challenges Dick and Tim faced at Harborside are indicative of many of the changes he's seen in the business in the past 36 years. "The sites that you get to work with are more of a challenge," he maintains. "There are more problems involved with them. And there's more concern about providing a 'habitat.'"

"Permitting has become a very long, drawn-out process in the last 15 years," he adds, referring to the many permits that are needed from agencies such as the DNR, EPA, Army Corp of Engineers and local planning commissions.

"The earth work design has become much more complex because most of the golf courses we design now have storm water considerations," Dick points out. "The golf course is used to store water from a lot of adjacent real estate and then to release it slowly to cut down on the amount of water discharged into the rivers during potential flood times."

Irrigation design also has changed.

"When I first started, if the fairway was watered, that was a big deal," Dick recalls. "Now they're all automatically watered. Today a night water man is rare."

"Golf course maintenance has become much more high tech," he continues. "The grasses used to be bluegrass or bentgrass. Now it's what kind of bluegrass, what kind of bentgrass. Everyone is trying to maintain just absolutely superb playing conditions, and they're taking the plants to the limit to achieve that. We're taking care of fairways like we used to take care of tees. The tees are like the greens used to be, and the greens are like the parking lot used to be, he laughs.

Changes with golfers have prompted other transformation in golf course design. "Golf carts didn't exist in the beginning. It was a walking game," Dick says, adding that cart paths are in every design now.

With high-tech golf equipment and better teaching, golfers are hitting the ball farther now. "A lot of the old courses are deemed to be too short," Dick points out. "So you have to design longer courses to keep up with the player's ability."

"And because golf has become so popular," he continues, "there's a wide range of players, from beginners to the highly skilled. You try to design so that each of these players can play on the course, enjoy it, and be within their skill level."

Dick enjoys meeting the challenges of a golf course architect. "The whole game of golf is really the player versus the course, which is the wonderful thing about golf," he says. "Designing a course allows for the imagination. You're designing a game more than anything. It's not like building basketball courts which all have exactly the same dimensions."

The golf course site adds to the challenge. "We want to create the very best golf course we can," Dick says. "But we have to work with the site. That won't go away. We have to find the good points of the site and work to enhance them. If there are problems, we have to find ways to deal with those problems. The end result we want is an environmentally sound recreational space that can be enjoyed by everybody."

Dick Nugent Associates considers its primary business territory to be the Great Lakes area, especially around Chicago. Dick regards the Kemper

Lakes Golf Course in Long Grove, Ill., to be one of his outstanding designs. This course was site of the 1989 PGA Championship and the 1992 Women's Amateur, and it has been selected to host the Ameritech Senior Open in 1996.

"Over the years we've always had work in Wisconsin," Dick says. "The Green Bay Country Club is a new course that we've just finished. We're very excited about it. It's what Wisconsin golf is all about. It's trees, it's elevation changes. There's a creek that runs through it."

Dick Nugent (along with Ken Killian) also designed Lake Arrowhead and Tuckaway. And Dick has done remodeling work at Tripoli, Bluemound, Blackhawk, Big Foot, Lake Lawn Lodge, Maple Bluff, Nakoma, and Brynwood. Additionally, Dick Nugent Associates provided construction management services for Geneva National and will be doing some master planning for the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1995.

They've done work in states outside of the Great Lakes area, and even outside of the U.S. "Right now we have a project in Croatia, if they ever stop fighting," Dick says. "And we looked at some things in Sweden. The King wants to encourage more public golf there. Being located in Chicago, near O'Hare International Airport, we can go nearly anywhere with a non-stop flight."

No matter where he's working, Dick likes to have the golf course superintendent closely involved with any project
(Continued on page 11)



for Gray and Pink Snow Mold

Turfcide 400
Turfcide 10G
Terraclor 75WP

Distributed by:

 **SPRING VALLEY.**
Turf Products
1-800-635-2123

(Continued from page 9)

"The superintendent has to be kept aware of what's going on because he's going to inherit the course," he says. "If we're going to have a smooth transition from construction to play, the superintendent is going to be the link. We're all part of the same team."

"A lot of the decisions that we make are joint decisions," Dick continues. "I like to have the superintendent look at something and ask him, 'If we build it this way, can you take care of it? Do you have any special problems with this?'"

He also thinks it's beneficial if the superintendent can see the irrigation and drainage systems being put into place. "When they're walking on top of the course, it's nice if they can have a picture in the back of their mind of what's under there," Dick says. "If they have to dig up something for repairs, they can almost picture in their mind what it's going to look like."

Dick is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, and he served as its president from 1981 to 1982. "Right now it has around 100

members," he points out. "When I started there were maybe 20 to 30 members."

He's also a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and he currently serves on the Green Section of the USGA.

Dick's wife, Cindy, is a retired school teacher. They have three grown children. Tim is in business with his father. Another son, Dan, is a mechanical engineer in plant operations for the Mars Candy Company in Chicago. And their daughter, Kathleen, is an attorney in Texas; she received her bachelor's degree from the UW-Madison and was named Outstanding Senior Woman there.

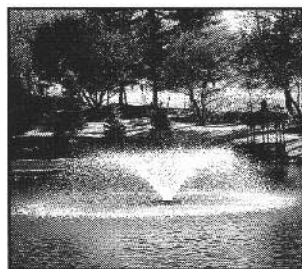
Now that Cindy is retired, the Nugents go to Arizona in the winter. This gives Dick more time to play golf. "Back in the Midwest, in the summer when everybody else is out golfing, we're busy building the courses," he says.

And, with his love for his work and no immediate plans for retirement, he plans to go right on building them. ♣

Happy
Birthday 
to the
USGA
Green Section!

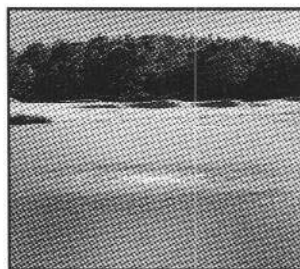
This great service
for golf course
superintendents
and golf courses
is a youthful
75 years old!

OTTERBINE®....
Your Water Quality Management Specialists



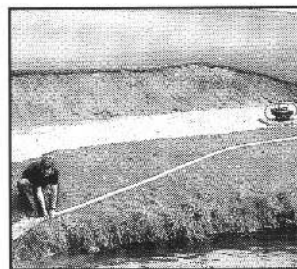
Surface Aerators

- Reduce the problem of algae, aquatic weeds and odor.
- Introduce O₂ into the pond.
- Available in a variety of spray patterns and sizes.



Sub-Surface Aerators

- Introduce O₂ into the pond bottom via Sub-Surface or Diffused Air.
- Perfect for shallow ponds.
- No visible spray pattern.



Bunker Pumper

- Removing water from bunkers, excavation sites or swimming pools.
- 280 GPM pumping rate.
- Floating, self priming portable - only 85 lbs!



Ottershield Lake Dye

- Transforms muddy water into **healthy blue water**.
- No stained clothes or hands - you never touch Ottershield.
- Neat, clean, packets.

Reinders

1 800 785-3306

Replace your old Otterbine with a new one and receive a discount of up to \$600.00!!

Elm Grove
13400 Watertown Plank Rd
(414) 786-3306.

Madison
4618 A Tompkins Dr.
(608) 223-0200

Appleton
900 Randolph Dr.
(414) 788-0200.