

# The Grass Roots

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## About the Cover:

Jennifer Eberhardt has captured the tremendous change in golf course management over the 75 years since the birth of the USGA Green Section. In her excellent cover for this issue we see golf course grasses cut with house-drawn mowers in 1920 and greens cut with an electric greensmower in 1995. Look inside for a review of the new Ransomes E-Plex.

Thanks to Jen for, once again, providing such an inviting front piece for our chapter journal.

"Lord it is time. The summer was very grand. Lay Thy shadows on the sundials, O'er the fields loose the winds to blow."

*Rainer Maria Rilke  
"Autumn Day"*

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Front row (Left to Right): Mark Kienert, Mike Semler, Scott Schaller, Mike Handrich. Back row (Left to Right): Kris Pinkerton, Dave Smith, Joe Kuta, Dave Brandenburg, Bruce Worzella.

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# Where Do We Go From Here?

By Mike Semler



I was relaxing at home the other weekend, when a thought occurred to me about my tenure with the WGCSA; it related to the fact that it was coming to an end. It seems like there are still so many items that I want to accomplish, but, now they will have to be added to someone else's agenda, if added at all. Such is the nature of democracy.

If I made a list of all the things that I wanted to get done between now and the end of the year, it would be insurmountable. Likewise, I understand that group accomplishments are not all realized by one individual, and this certainly has been the case of our association. There has always been a group of members who did what needed to be done to make us what we are today.

Since this will be the second to last time the members will have to read these messages, I just wanted to impart some thoughts I felt were important to me and to the WGCSA members.

The first of these is to stand up for what you believe. This always sounds simple; however, in reality it is often more difficult to stand firm, express your opinions and quite possibly face the cruel scrutiny of others. I have always believed that more respect can be earned of one's peers if true thoughts and feelings are expressed, no matter how unpopular they may be. I have always tried to let my feelings be known, even though they may not have agreed with some of the ideas expressed by my fellow members. In the end, however, I always had a great respect for those individuals and hopefully they felt the same way about me.

And speaking of ideas, I still feel the WGCSA should concentrate more of its efforts on education and less on the social aspects, even though socializing is a part of what the

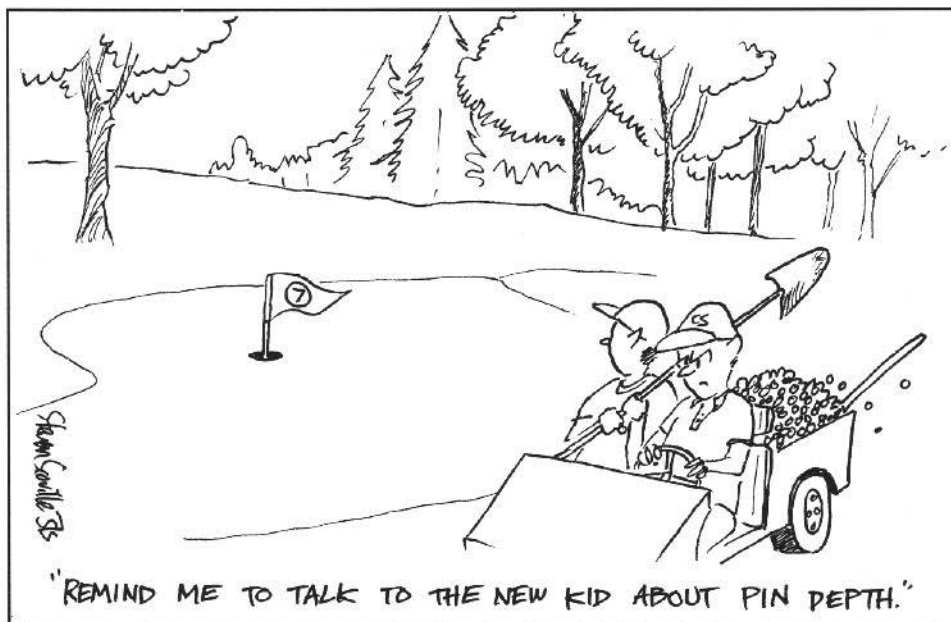
WGCSA is about. In fact, now that I think of it, I should have proposed that for every hour spent "educating" ourselves on the golf course we should have an equal amount of time in the classroom. I doubt whether this idea would pass through the members, but it does lead me into my second and third thoughts.

My second thought is to be relentless. Winston Churchill related this virtue to the British parliament on the eve of the outbreak of World War II and now I relate it to you in a form for golf course superintendents. We must be relentless in our goal to be professionals. We must be relentless in our goal to be recognized by the golfing community as professionals. And finally, we must be relentless in our drive to serve the golf community as best we can. We must never give up and never back down.

And finally, all members must all be ACTIVE members. In my opinion, active members come to more than one meeting of this Association a

year. Summer golf outings do not count toward being an active member. Active members are involved in the proposals and exchange of ideas that will make this association work. Active members are more concerned about issues that affect the association, and not where their next game of golf is going to be. You do not have to be a board member to be an active member. Sometimes all it takes to be an active member is writing an article for the GRASS ROOTS, calling a board member with your ideas or, simply showing up at meetings and expressing concerns or opinions. It really does not take much to be an active member, but it will make this association so much stronger and so much better.

In the end, I have always believed that this association is a great one because of the multitude of members who are actively involved and who are willing to be relentless in their involvement. Hopefully in the years to come, the same can be said of all the members of the WGCSA. 🌿



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# SUMMER, WITH VENGEANCE

By Monroe S. Miller

"The summer from hell"—that's what I'll call it. Or how about "three months of misery" or maybe "a hundred days in St. Louis" or "the summer I wished I was an \_\_\_\_\_" (you fill in the blank—accountant, banker, professor, butcher, etc.)

A movie of this summer past in Wisconsin would be titled HOT! HOT! HOT!

What the summer of 1995 was not is fun. Not much fun, anyway. The cool, wet weather of spring collapsed into a season of heat, humidity, plant diseases and a lack of rainfall in many quarters. It was a summer we will talk about for a few years.

Those among us who maintained a cool outlook in the heat came out ahead. Concerns about plant survival outweighed green speed, cutting heights went up, cutting stopped entirely some days, plant growth regulators stayed on the shelf, fertilizer was sparingly used, crews went home early, and that eternal hope for better days was the inspiration to hang in there when the going was difficult.

We had the troubles everybody else had. Pumping stations nowadays depend on electronics. Electronics don't function well in heat, and despite the size of our air handling unit in the pumphouse, it was exchanging 95 degree humid air at midnight in mid-July outside for cooler temperatures inside! It was a disaster.

The massive domes of hot air that invaded our state and hung around three different periods in June and July made this the hottest summer in sixty years. That gives us license to gripe, although it seems hypocritical when we complain six months a year about the snow and cold of winter. "Gripe on," I say. It makes me feel better to gripe—venting and all that. Nevertheless, I will be glad when I am penning complaints about winter.

It seems anyone who liked this oppressive, clinging and inescapably hot weather had probably been in the sun too long, or else they were selling fungicides or were utility executives. Business was really good for them—more than a few college educations were paid for this summer through fungicide sales. Or insecticide sales. The bug crop was exceptional, too.

The first real relief of summer came on August 1st, the day Bob Vavrek made his USGA visit to our golf course and the temperatures were in the 70s for the first time in two months. He may be my good luck omen in more ways than one.

So, fall is here, at last. I am looking forward to leisurely trips to Lambeau Field and some Packer games and some fun Saturday afternoons in Camp Randall with my beloved Badgers. Oh, then there's the vacation I am taking to relax on Martha's Vineyard (off season prices!) and somewhere on the coast of Maine.

Such decadence—and so well deserved!

It was Mark Engman, green committee chairman at our club, who brought an article in the June 19, 1995 issue of TIME magazine to my attention. The piece, titled "Keeping Up Tribal Links", featured Shinnecock Hills Golf Club and the course superintendent, Peter Smith. Shinnecock was the site of the 100th U.S. Open, played earlier this year.

Every golf course superintendent who reads this will feel enormous pride, in Peter Smith and in our profession.

Pete is a 1975 graduate of Dartmouth College and the third generation of Smiths to work at Shinnecock Hills: his father Elmer was the superintendent before him and his grandfather George helped maintain the original golf course. Brian Smith, Peter's 20-year old son, works on the crew.

As Mark pointed out in his note to me, "Nice to get some national attention for the profession."

No amount of money could buy an ad campaign this good! And Pete will be in Milwaukee this fall to speak at our Symposium.

A lousy summer, coupled with the thoughts of a long and cold winter, gives little comfort from a report in the August issue of *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine*. Wisconsin is the WORST tax hell in America. Last. Dead last. Fifty-first. Last by a country mile.

Something has to be done about our overwhelming tax burden. The first is to ignore the constant, incessant cry of "wolf" from politicians and bureaucrats and the publicly employed sector. There is too much money in government coffers and it isn't, generally speaking, spent wisely enough. The other action is to vote in every single election, to select those with some sense of fiscal responsibility and sensitivity to the stifling tax burden. Change is coming slowly; we just need a lot more of it.

The GCSAA has changed the schedule of events for the conference and show in Orlando next February. It will start on Monday and end on Sunday. These are welcome changes, in my mind. Seminars are on the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th (M,T,W,Th), the opening session is on the 7th, the environmental session is on the 8th, educational sessions occupy the 9th, 10th and 11th. The show runs on the 9th, 10th and 11th. The banquet is Saturday night.

Watch for news about the environmental session—there is a surprise that you'll enjoy.

I received the following note and graphs from Rod Johnson on July 6th. Things only got worse after that. He's right—everything is relative. And relatively speaking, in our town we were in better shape, rainfall speaking, than he was in Sheboygan.

(Continued on page 7)

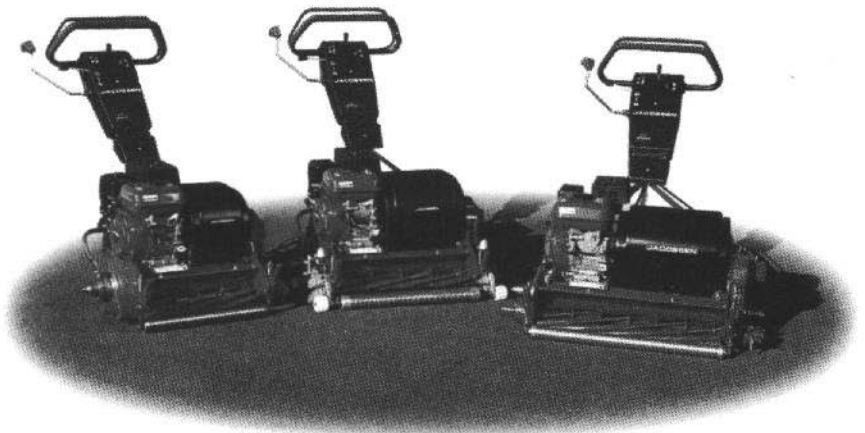


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(Continued from page 5)

July 2, 1995

Dear Monroe,

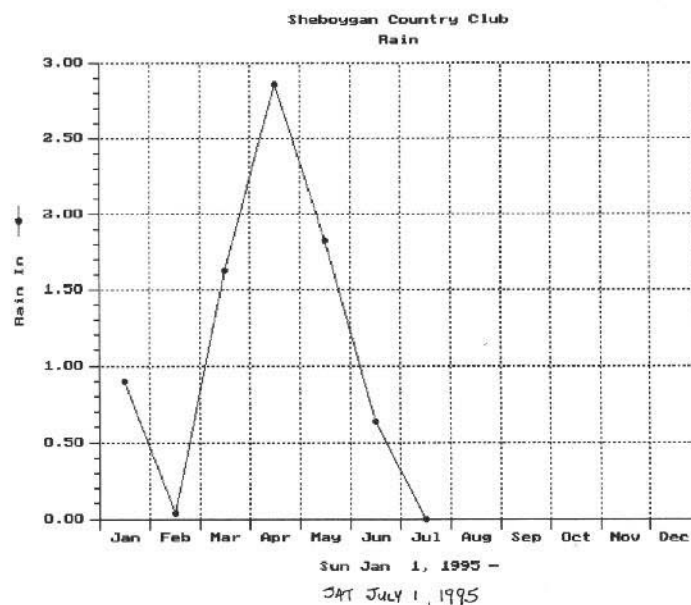
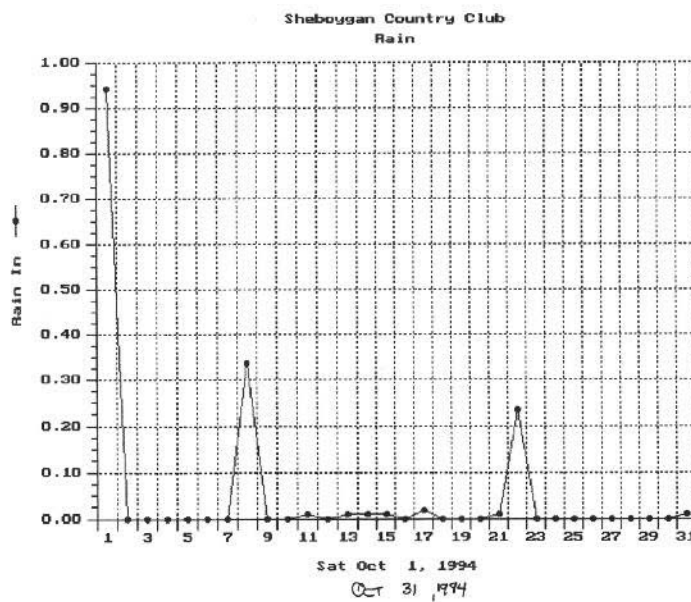
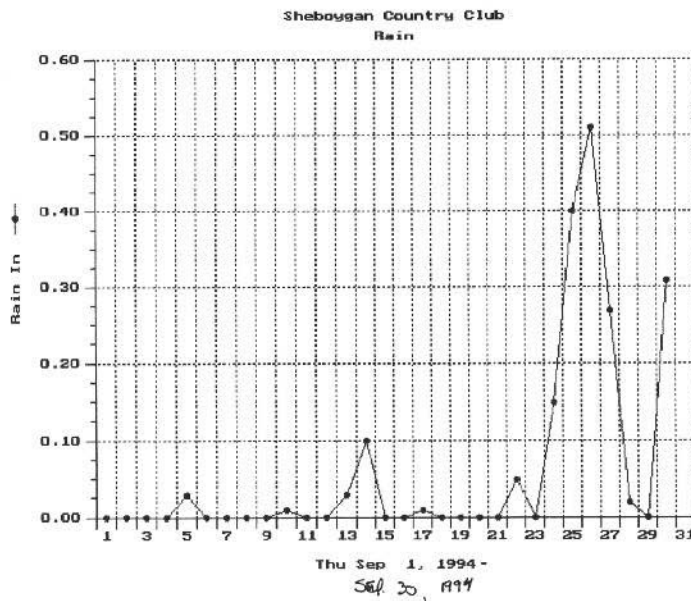
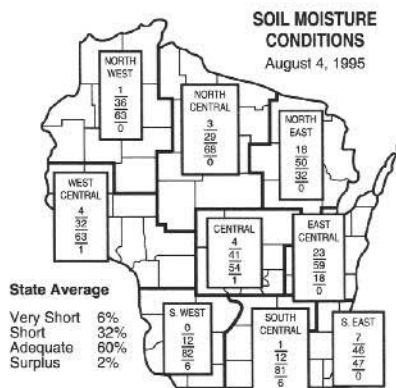
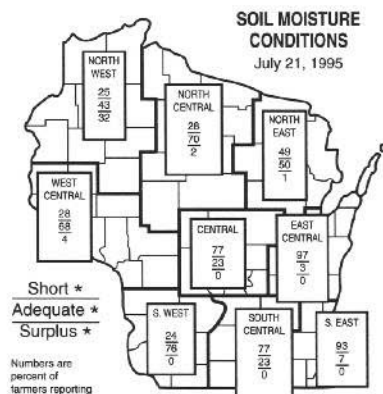
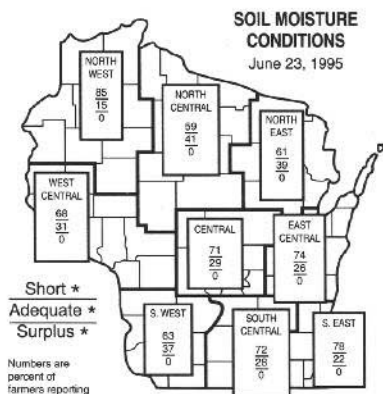
Wayne Horman said you were complaining about being dry. Let me show you what dry is! Check out my rainfall since last September 1. We've had 5.2 inches since April 1, 1995. My last inch rain event was April 18, 1995. Largest rain event since then was 0.37 inches on April 27. So far this year, we have used 11.2 million gallons of irrigation water.

It's enough to make a man lose his sense of humor!

Regards, with a tear in my beer,

Rod

Per usual, I am including the soil moisture status reports from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. They will confirm your misery. 🍷





# 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."

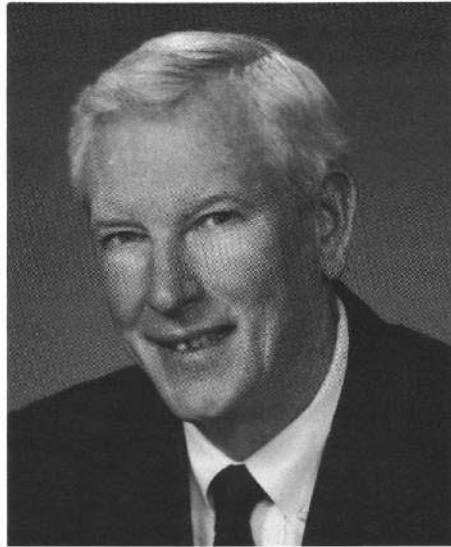
Dick has experienced a lot of changes since 1959—changes in his business arrangements, and changes in golf and the environment that have affected golf course architecture. But through all of those changes, he has always loved his role in the game of golf.

"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.

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"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)*



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