

CLOSING A CHAPTER

by Bill Neus

A funny thing happened on the way to my career. It came to an end! Wasn't it just yesterday that I got out of the IAA, '76', and thought I knew everything? But it was only after several years as an assistant at the Naval Academy that I realized, now I definitely know everything. Only to find out during my first superintendent's job at Fauquier Springs CC, that I didn't know 'jack...', and would spend the rest of my career, just like the rest of us, searching for that holy grail of, providing the perfect golf course. Mike Larson put it best when he said, "There are only two types of superintendents, those who have lost grass and those who will.....". I can admit with great pride that I filled both roles admirably.

I've been more blessed than I deserve. During my twenty six years at Hobbits Glen, I've had the opportunity to build a new golf course, (Fairway Hills), essentially rebuild another and spend several years hosting a Champions Tour event on ESPN. But it's all the people that I've been around in this crazy business that have made it all such a wonderful memory. Working with Angelo Cammarota was like being with the 'Wizard of Oz'. Mike McKenzie taught me the importance of giving back to the MAAGCS. My long friendship with Chip McDonald showed me the combination of course design/construction and art. And to grow up in this business with mentors like, Orazi, Stagg, Thompson,



Watson, Shields, Hall, Kessel, Emerson, Fairbank, Barefoot, Drew, Miller, McClanahan, Dieter, Braun as well as many others, helped shape and guide me to any success I may have had and supported me when times were tough. I had my trusted circle, Potter, Montross, Renault, Larson, Cohoon, Wagner, Dietrich, Arther, Evans, Gilmore, who I could call to get the brutally honest truth about turf issues (or anything else for that matter). They all have eased my burden of uncertainty many times in the past. And speaking of easing burdens, what about our right arms (assistants), Chapman, Haber, Raley, Mooneyhan all made life so much easier.

The person that I owe a special debt of gratitude to is Lou Rudinski, who I worked for at Bonnieview CC and Baltimore CC starting in 1969. He is the reason that I started in this business, so without him I may have never known these wonderful people or derived such enjoyment.

Words just aren't adequate to describe how thankful I am to him.

I'm really only closing a chapter in an ongoing book. My two sons are in the business and my daughter married a superintendent. So I can live vicariously through my kids, at least in a golf course sense. How many professions can you bring your kids to work on a regular basis and they actually have fun? Not too many surgeons or lawyers can say that.

This is a brutally tough and fickle business. But the rewards can be immense. It never seemed like work. To me it was a great lifestyle. Like I said earlier, I'm luckier than I deserve, being associated with such an incredible group of professionals and to be able to honestly say that there was never a day that I couldn't wait to get to the golf course. So what does the future hold? How about a nice long summer vacation to start with and then...