

Golf Course Architect

Yes, It Is a Real Job—A Dream Job!

“Huh,” Mary Ann paused. “I’ve never heard of that profession.”

That’s how my wife responded, back when we first dated and I was explaining what I did for a living. Actually, her response was much gentler than many others who were equally perplexed. I heard comments like:

“Is that a full-time job?”

“Did you make up that profession?”

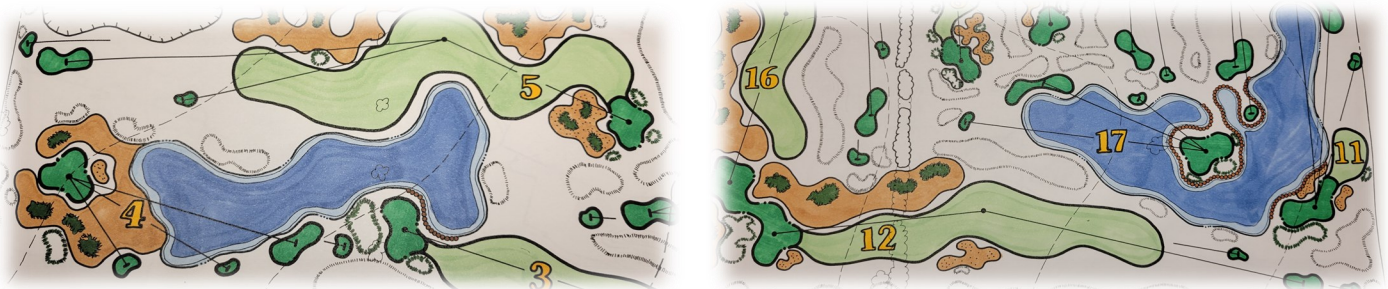
“I thought they just mowed the grass real low and dug a hole on the green.”

Not only is it a real, full-time, profession, but it was my dream job! Beginning in middle school, I told my guidance counselors that I wanted to be a golf course architect. My high school counselor could not find any information about the profession (long before the internet). So she steered me towards conventional architecture. She suggested, *“This way you have a standard occupation for the future.”* I took her advice, but the dream continued to drive me.

My college major was architecture with a minor in business. However, my undeclared major was golf course architecture. It became an independent study effort to learn all I could about golf courses around the world and architects. It took extra time in the days before the information superhighway, but the librarian felt fulfilled helping me find books and resources she did not know existed.

After graduation from college I contacted golf course architecture firms—there were only about 80 in the country and most were small offices. Yes, it is a profession, but the opportunities are very few. Living in northeast Ohio, I focused my search in the Midwest. God opened a door with Bob Lohmann who owned Lohmann Golf Designs in the Chicago area. While this meant a move about eight hours away, it also meant the fulfillment of the dream.

However, it was more than fulfilling the dream, it grew my skill set more than I could have imagined. If I had worked with a conventional architect, I would have continued as a draftsman, like my last year in college when I also worked for an architect. However, with this small golf course design firm, Bob allowed me to grow to a Senior Architect over the next three years. I was managing large budget projects from initial municipal



As a golf course architect, I worked on plans like these for The National at Fox Hills in Wisconsin

Verse for Today (vft)

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”

Philippians 4:5—NIV 84

approval through construction. I worked on a variety of courses and situations in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, and Arizona. It was a thrill to work on Medinah Country Club—Course #3 in preparation for the US Senior Open in 1988 (and US Open in 1990)! He also gave me the opportunity to begin writing articles about golf course design.

While it was an exciting time, it also meant moving to Illinois and finding a new life on my own. I plugged in to Woodstock Bible Church and soon taught Sunday school classes. Leadership opportunities emerged as I headed up the building committee while we were exploring future plans for the facility. The greatest blessing was meeting my future wife, Mary Ann, who was also actively involved at Woodstock Bible Church. Initially she was perplexed about my occupation, but supported me by learning all the courses and locations where I was working. I was living my dream!

However, God was also at work in changing my definition of the dream. I had first considered entering the ministry while in college. Those thoughts were returning as God was calling me. Mary Ann shared that commitment to ministry. For her, it started back when she was 12. In 1988 we got married, then answered the call to ministry.

Over the next 19 years I pastored local churches and earned masters and doctoral degrees at seminaries. Golf course architecture was a hobby. I cheered when two of Bob Lohmann’s courses appeared in Golf Digest’s list of best new courses. I also listened to Mary Ann as she kept me from getting rid of my architecture tools and books. She said, “I’m not sure God is done with your architecture.” She was right.

In 2007 I started another unusual profession: **Architectural Pastor**. This one is even more unique than golf course architect. In God’s providential plans, I utilized my golf course architect skills to manage church building projects, navigate zoning approvals, and easily read site plans. I’ve continued as a pastor focusing on the overall issues of church & pastoral health and leading churches through changes. Just like golf course architect is a special niche of architecture, architectural pastor is a special niche of pastoral ministry. Only God could have planned this course (pun intended)!



In 2012, Mary Ann and I attended the Ryder Cup at Medinah and she saw holes I had worked on

In 2018, NorthBridge Church planned a men’s golf outing to Fox Hills. That was a golf course I worked on back in 1985! I re-connected with Bob as he provided me with a routing plan of the course that I rendered and showed the men about my previous profession. When the men’s group returned to Fox Hills I got to play the course with my son, Timothy!



In 2020 and 2021, Timothy and I participated in NorthBridge Church’s men’s outing at Fox Hills.

Each of us has special plans that God is fulfilling (Ephesians 2:10). In my case, God’s plans have involved unusual job titles. But whatever the job or experience, each of us is on a providential journey to fulfill His work in us. It is great to pursue a dream—and a joy to fulfill it. But the greatest joy is a daily life submitted to God’s plans and providence. May we each enjoy the Journey with Jesus!