

BACKGROUND

Became interested in golf as a youngster by working on the maintenance crew at Meadowbrook Country Club near Detroit. Later studied agronomy at Michigan State University, where he played on the golf team. After service in the Army, earned a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture at Michigan.

Practiced landscape architecture for several years in his hometown of Toledo. A client asked him to lay out a golf course in 1966, and the following year the city of Toledo hired him to build a public course. Was soon working in the field of golf architecture.

Later established offices in Florida and Arizona, and by the 1990s was one of the most active golf architects in the nation, with a team that included Michael Dasher, Steven Forrest, Keith Foster, Jodie Kinney and Brian Huntley. Designed courses nationwide, but his extensive work in Naples, FL (over 18 courses) led to fellow architect Pete Dye dubbing him, "the Mayor of Naples."

A soft-spoken man, he pursued many jobs but courted little publicity. But in 1991, was the principal subject of John Strawn's DRIVING THE GREEN, a non-fiction work on golf course design and construction. Served a term as President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects the following year.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Hills once said he wanted his courses to be "practical, challenging and visually exciting." To accomplish that, he prescribed superior engineering, offered a variety of risk-and-reward shots and incorporated native features at every site to create a natural look on each course.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Green contours that flow off into surrounding terrain. Deep bunkers with flat bottoms and rather steep sides of turf. Many grasstraps, depressions shaped like sand bunkers but without sand.