How Short Hills Handles Its Members

Short Hills CC, located at East Moline, Ill., has developed a streamlined plan for handling member details which, all, or in part, might well serve as a model to many golf and country clubs.

The Short Hills' plan, as explained by their treasurer, H. G. Struck, not only eliminated considerable misunderstanding and office work but has facilitated each year's operating program by speeding up membership commitments, dues and locker payments, thus enabling the early, accurate planning of each season's budget.

Here's how the plan works:

About December 15 of each year a bill covering the next year's dues and locker rental is mailed to each member. Short Hills does not have house accounts. Attached to the bill is a letter, an agreement blank and statement which each member is asked to promptly fill out and return.

This does not obligate members to make immediate payment, but the pressure is kept on them for the return of the forms and very seldom is a response received without a payment enclosed.

Short Hills' most recent membership letter, which was short, to the point and effective, read as follows:

Dear Member:

Of all sad words of tongue or pen the saddest are these—"IT'S TIME TO PAY DUES AGAIN".

So said some poet, but we know it won't be any sad news for you because Short Hills is a fine club to belong to and besides we let you make practically any kind of arrangements you want in making payments.

There are 4 ways you can do it.
1. If you're flush you can pay the whole thing now and have it off your mind.
2. Or if you would rather make it in two doses, pay half now and the other 4 months from now, or May 1st.
3. A more gradual way is to make it in 4 equal payments or one payment every 2 months. Now, March 1, May 1 and July 1.
4. The easiest way we can let you do it is to pay every month for 8 consecutive months, starting January 1st. A little more work for us but we will be glad to send the necessary notices.

The most important thing though, is to fill out the attached form and send it back right away. We use this information in making up the budget.

Cordially yours,
H. G. STRUCK, Treasurer.

P. S.: Include your locker rent in your first remittance, because lockers are in great demand and we have a long waiting list. We must know soon if you want to
I HEREBY APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP IN SHORT HILLS COUNTRY CLUB UNDER THE CLASSIFICATION OF ___________________________. (See reverse side for list of classifications)

IF ELECTED AS A MEMBER, I AGREE TO PAY ANNUAL DUES IN THE SUM OF _____________________ DOLLARS, PLUS TAX, AND TO BE SUBJECT TO AND ABIDE BY ALL BY-LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE CLUB.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED, GENERALLY, THAT I SHALL HAVE THE PRIVILEGES ACCORDED OTHER MEMBERS OF LIKE CLASSIFICATION, AND THAT THE FRANCHISES OF THE CLUB AND THE INTERESTS IN THE PHYSICAL PROPERTIES THEREOF, ARE RESERVED EXCLUSIVELY FOR HOLDERS OF CERTIFICATE MEMBERSHIPS.

I ENCLOSE REMITTANCE FOR $ ___________________________ IN PAYMENT OF ___________________________. (Remittance for initiation fee and at least one-fourth of annual club dues must accompany application.)

DATE ___________________________ (Signature of Applicant)

HOME ADDRESS ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

BUSINESS ADDRESS ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

DATE OF BIRTH ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

MARRIED ☐ SINGLE ☐

NAME OF WIFE ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

NUMBER OF CHILDREN: ☐ BOYS ☐ GIRLS ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

OTHER QUAD-CITY GOLF CLUB AFFILIATION ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, ENDORSE THIS APPLICANT FOR MEMBERSHIP (One endorser must be a stockholder):

______________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

SIGNATURE SIGNATURE

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

APPLICATION POSTED 19

APPLICANT NOTIFIED OF ACCEPTANCE 19

APPROVED FOR MEMBERSHIP BY:

CHAIRMAN MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

SECRETARY ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

PRESIDENT ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

VICE-PRESIDENT ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

SECRETARY ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

TREASURER ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

DATE ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

SEE OTHER SIDE

keep your locker for 1945. H. G. S.

The membership agreement enclosed with the letter is shown at top of page 14. By insisting that these agreements are promptly returned it is possible to closely ascertain dues and locker receipts for the coming year and arrive at a safe basis for budgeting purposes. This also results in
Applications from new members must be accompanied by a check in full for the amount of the initiation fee and at least one quarter of their year's dues for their class of membership.

This results in getting new members educated to the financial details of the club right at the beginning.

Full family participation is included in all classes of memberships. Dues for the various classes are: Senior (35 years or older) $75; intermediate (30 to 35 years) $40; junior (up to 30 years) $30; service (military) $25. Locker rentals—$5; $3 for juniors and those in the service.

None of the new membership applications are turned over to the membership committee for investigation until their initiation fee and at least one quarter of their annual dues are received. All applicants accepted between January 1 and June 30 are required to pay the full year's dues; those accepted between July 1 and December 30, pay one-half year's dues.

The agreement sheets are hole-punched and upon return are filed with the members' accounts receivable ledger sheets.

When dues payments are received they are acknowledged by sending the membership card (illustration below). This card provides for a series of small boxes, one for each month. Before the card is sent to the member the months for which the member still owes are punched out. This serves as the member a constant reminder of the standing of his account and also when his next payment is due. On his agreement blank the member is asked whether or not he wants to be notified of the dates on which any succeeding payments are due, so that there will be complete harmony on that score. If payment is received for the full year, there are no punch marks on the card and on the face of it is marked "Paid in full". When payments are received from members who have indicated their preference of a partial payment plan, a new membership card is issued with the months punched out in accordance with the amount received.

One of the most effective ideas, in Short Hills' plan, for spurring prompt payments and eliminating delinquencies is the "Golden Circle", see illustration. This is a round gold frame under the glass of which is a Kardex visual file arranged in alphabetical order with a slip provided for each member's name. When the member pays his dues his name is typed on a strip and inserted in its alphabetical place in the "Golden Circle". The front of these slips, on which the members' names are typed are yellow and the back is red and left blank. When a member is in arrears his slip is reversed so that the red blank, instead of his name, shows up in the "Golden Circle".

This psychology is the reverse of that of posting the names of delinquent members. However, it has proved to be every bit as effective if not more so. When a member is in a delinquent status he, of course, is denied all club facilities. No notice is sent out to delinquents but they, and all of the other members, know about it.

As Mr. Struck says: "We know this works because we have had members telephone the afternoon of some party, advis-
ing that they had mailed their checks that day and asking if I wouldn't please instruct the office secretary to turn their names around so that their wives would not see there was a red blank instead of their names. And, not alone would their wives be able to see it, because the 'Golden Circle' is in the main lobby."

When a member becomes delinquent over thirty days he is formally notified and given a fifteen day grace period. At the end of this time, if no payment is received he is given final notice, which is sent out by registered mail with return receipt requested. This is attached to his ledger sheet. If no payment is received at the end of that period he is reported to the Board of Directors with a request that the member be dropped. We dropped four members last year out of a total membership of 290.

Short Hills issues a monthly bulletin entitled "Short Hills’ Shots" which, in addition to a brief but lively serving of news about club and member activities, manages to carry an item to "tickles" those who might be inclined towards tardiness in meeting their dues payments.

This year, Short Hills had received 65% of their entire annual dues before February 10 and approximately 75% of their locker rental receipts. The current plan of handling memberships was adopted in 1941 after having previously used the quarterly plan of dues collection which invariably resulted in trouble with fourth quarter dues collections and other difficulties. As Mr. Struck so aptly comments, "It's the chiselers who keep so many golf clubs on the brink of ruin, upset the budgets with resultant operating disturbances and create unrest among the members. The 'put-it-offers' cause almost as much general disturbance to operations."

Short Hills has worked out a plan that works; any club having difficulties in handling their members might well study its details for a possible solution to their own problems.

Incidentally, another feature that has contributed to the efficiency of their operations is that of making their manager "house chairman", their professional "sports chairman" and their greenkeeper "green-chairman". Each month they attend the Directors' meeting and make their reports, suggestions, etc. This serves to eliminate coloring or magnification of complaints, petty or unreasonable demands from the members, it being understood by all members that any action taken is not up to these three but depends entirely on the action of the Board. And, this has worked out very well.