

# Viewpoint

## Public courses, unite!

In the news pages of this issue, there are several stories which may well signal the grass roots of an important movement in the golf business. I'm referring to the reports of the formation efforts of the Michigan Association of Public Golf Courses and the yet-to-be-named Ohio government golf course association — as well as to the article reporting the strife between the Alamance County, N.C., daily fee owners and the local municipal course.

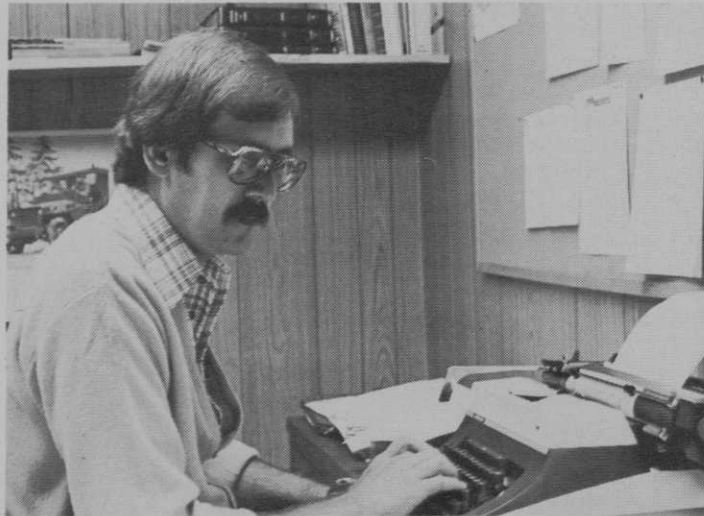
All of these recognize one crucial point: that the operators of private clubs, daily fee courses, and municipal golf facilities have their own unique sets of problems in addition to the shared experience of maintaining a golf course and, further, that members of each group can better overcome their unique problems by banding together to share knowledge and solutions and to fight for what they see as their rights and needs.

Private clubs have traditionally been the best organized and most well-represented of any of these groups of golf courses. The Club Managers Association of America has been partially dedicated to the furtherance of the private club concept since the association's founding 50 years ago, and more recently the National Club Association was formed with the avowed purpose of lobbying for the rights and needs of private clubs. Many have also accused the United States Golf Association with being overly prejudiced towards private courses — with some justification, though not as much as in the case of many local and regional golf associations.

The accusations mentioned above are not totally the fault of the golf associations, though. In many cases, public golf courses have been eligible to join and to participate, but have been reluctant to do so.

The day has come, however, when the operators of public golf courses — both publicly and privately owned — cannot afford to stand apart from their peers and keep to themselves. The issues of taxation, unionization, competitive greens fees, and similar problems now force public courses to band together.

Daily fee course owners have not been totally without representation in the recent past, due to the formation of the National Association of Public Golf Courses, but participation in the group has been poor in terms of the number of people involved. Organization efforts date back several years, but the NAPGC was officially founded in Chicago on March 3, 1976. Since then, membership has grown to about 200 — due primarily to the efforts of a handful of men like Bill Lyons, current NAPGC president. But taken as a percentage of the number of daily fee courses in the United States, the membership figure is mighty low.



Perhaps the difficulty lies in the sheer physical limitations of a handful of men trying to organize a group of people spread out, geographically and philosophically, across the nation. That is why we applaud and support the efforts of local organizations such as those in Oregon, Michigan, and Ohio, and we feel that they should not be looked upon as competing with the national association.

The possible future strength of public golf course operators lies in the formation of active local groups tied into a strong national association. We believe that and will do anything we can to help it become reality.

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