

No cloak and dagger, says CMAA head

BY MARK LESLIE

The misconception that private clubs are "clandestine operations" must be clarified to the general public and in legislative chambers, according to the new executive vice president of the Club Managers Association of America.

"For some reason, legislators in particular tend to focus on the private club as negative instead of positive," said James B. Singerling, adding that the challenge for the CMAA is to educate legislators and the public about the "positives" of clubs.

Singerling, who on May 1 succeeded James A. Schuping at CMAA, said: "For club managers, the challenge ahead is to ensure that the proper information on clubs and what they actually are, is disseminated. Mainly, instead of a club being perceived as some clandestine negative private entity, we must highlight the positive parts the clubs play in a community."

He said those include:

- Taxes and payroll.
- Most private clubs draw considerable money from outside the community and that money stays in the community.
- Job security is higher in clubs than any other part of the hospitality industry because there are no seasonal layoffs ... since clubs have dues income to supplement them during the off-season.

• The number of local vendors supported by the clubs, from produce, meat and flower companies to linen services, plumbers, electricians, and many others.

"All money is brought in by members, not the general public. Yet members also tend to be the people who support other restaurants because they are the ones who tend to dine out more often," Singerling said.

U.S. clubs now 'benchmark' for world, Singerling says

James B. Singerling, the new executive vice president of the Club Managers Association of America, said American clubs are now viewed as "the benchmark" of operation around the world.

Singerling said European clubs are now seeking American expertise.

"We see a tremendous reversal now of tradition. Golf clubs and golf courses over the years have thrived on tradition here in the United States, pulling from Scotland. We now see a wonderful trend that golf has taken off in Europe itself — particularly Spain and France — and they were crying for me (while working with Robert Trent Jones Sr.) to spend time with their managers.

"We are getting those same requests right here with the CMAA — requests to share how American clubs are run. We've always

Development director named

James E. Petzing, chairman for the Club Management Institute Foundation, has announced the appointment of Susan McCaslin as director of development.

McCaslin is a graduate of George Mason University, where she received a bachelor's degree in sociology and MPA in public administration.

Prior to this appointment, McCaslin served as assistant director of development for the Women's Center of Northern Virginia. She brings with her experience in development, formulation and writing of proposals; researching foundations and prospective corporate and individual donors and analyzing and preparing organizational budgets. In her previous position she developed strategic goals and policies that raised \$170,000 in funding and increased



CMAA President Kenneth Brown, left, welcomes aboard James Singerling.

Singerling's knowledge of the industry is first-hand. Before joining CMAA, he was vice president and general manager of Coral Ridge Country Club in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and a corporate official in the Robert Trent Jones Sr. golf course design, construction and management companies.

He was responsible for administering and coordinating all international operations and reorganizing Jones' European offices.

The major danger ahead, Singerling said, is that "many legislators have accepted the perception of cloak and dagger stuff" regarding private clubs. "This misconception has overshadowed the tremendous value of clubs."

Singerling said the CMAA, National Restau-

rant Association, Professional Golfers Association and National Club Association are working together "to show this misconception for what it is."

"I think the revolution of the 1960s and '70s created some feelings that anything traditional and American had to be attacked and challenged, from the flower-child approach to rebellion and revolution. If it had been around for a long time, you had to challenge and change it," Singerling said. "And now ... the yuppies are standing in line to join private country clubs. They, in fact, have changed their perceptions

of clubs as a whole, seeing that there are all-women's clubs, there are all-Cuban clubs, and all-ethnic clubs as well as all-men's clubs. But there are also clubs, the vast majority, that do, in fact, have open membership for anyone who would like to enjoy the environment they create."

Singerling said legislators, in particular, "tend to focus on the private club as a negative instead of a positive. And it may be that this (positive) information just hasn't gotten to them."

"We at CMAA have tried to get across to these legislators that by closing a club they are putting 60 to 100 entry-level, hourly employees out on the street.

"I think they're creating a much bigger problem by attacking what is perceived as a problem. But there's no problem there to begin with," he said.

CMAA intends to continue providing its 4,000 members, including the 2,400 at golf and country clubs, with "adequate information so they can intelligently respond to media and legislative inquiries," Singerling said.

Personally, Singerling said the move to the CMAA post is "a very easy transition for me."

In addition to the challenge within the United States, he looks forward to continuing his work abroad.

"I did a lot of work overseas with Mr. (Robert Trent Sr.) Jones," he said, "and now I'm able to put the jewel in that crown by being able to run the association with the international contacts it has and its many members from Canada, the Caribbean, the Far East... I can continue that work as Mr. Jones winds up his career."

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