

Opening Up Is Simple if You Plan Ahead

An Interview with F. H. Murray, manager, Ravisloe Country club, Chicago

By JACK FULTON, Jr.

AT THIS time of year, managers, and house chairmen of clubs in the northern part of the country are concerned with the manifold duties of preparing the club for its formal opening. Not only must the entire clubhouse be spring-cleaned, but the whole machine must be put in such shape that it can start functioning with 100 per cent efficiency at once. Yesterday there were no members about; today the club has started its season and the members expect and must be given the same service they demand in mid-season.

How best to accomplish this with the minimum of wasted effort was told GOLFDOM recently by F. H. Murray, manager of the Ravisloe Country club, (Chicago district). Murray rates among the old-timers in the profession of managing clubs, although he is still in his thirties. He's young enough to be progressive and alert, with a substantial background of experience to inspire confidence in the minds of the club officials for whom he works.

The question put to Murray was this: "When do you start opening the clubhouse in the spring?"

"There's no definite date," he replied. "By that I mean that plans and preparations begin the day after the clubhouse closes in the fall."

"For instance, take a small matter as screens. Shortly after we hold our Harvest Home dinner, which closes our season each year, all our screens are taken down and stored away inside the clubhouse. But they are not just simply stacked away in a corner; they're sorted according to their condition—one stack for screens needing new wire, another for the ones whose frames are sprung, a third for screens in good condition. Sometime during the winter, my house-man—who together with my engineer I keep all year around—goes over these screens, makes all necessary repairs and oils the screening. I never paint them, oiling is better.

"That gives you an idea of what I mean—the mid-winter screen repairs are just as much a part of opening the clubhouse as

the work of fitting them back in the windows.

"So with many other items that keep the engineer and house-man busy all winter. They go over our entire water system, take apart every faucet, shower-head, valve and drain-pipe, clean them and re-assemble with new washers and packing. They clean the scale out of the boilers. Pumps, motors and other machines are gone over, put in good condition, even sent back to the manufacturer for attention if necessary. The plumbing is re-painted where needed.

"Then there's the club furniture. I have always made a practice of painting each piece in the clubhouse not less than once every three years. The porch and lawn furniture needs re-painting of course, each season. The balance, articles inside the clubhouse, need renovation less frequently. One winter I'll have the dining-room chairs and tables gone over, the next we brighten up the benches and other articles of the locker-rooms, the third year we take care of the furnishings of the lobby and main lounge.

"The kitchen is gone over. We dismantle, clean and re-assemble the dishwasher, the potato-peeler, the dough-mixer and all other machines. The coffee urns are sent out to be put in first class shape and re-nickled. The ice boxes are painted with a heavy lacquer-enamel, pure white. I have always felt that natural wood finish inside an ice box hides soiling. With pure white paint, just a glance as I pass tells me whether or not the cleaning girl is keeping these interiors in sanitary condition.

"All of this work mentioned so far is done during the winter. In the spring a number of other tasks must be attended to. The work falls under several headings.

"Take, first, cleaning the clubhouse. Ravisloe opens the season on Decoration Day. The actual spring cleaning starts at least six weeks before, April 15th. My housekeeper and her assistants report at

that time and begin with the lobby. They clean and scour the woodwork, the floor and the lighting fixtures, wash the windows, bring down and hang all the draperies. The lobby furniture is washed and put in place. Rugs and carpets are left rolled up against the wall. A lot of mud is tracked into the lobby during the rainy spring and we want our rugs, which of course were cleaned during the winter, to remain fresh-looking on opening day.

"Any painting or decorating to be done anywhere about the clubhouse is taken care of during the month of April. We don't do it earlier because we like the bills for the work to fall due after the club has opened again and there is a club income to take care of the expense. We can't do it later because the painters must finish before the housekeeper can get her work done and six weeks is little enough time to allow for all the many detailed, tedious little jobs that fall to her.

"From the lobby, the cleaning staff move to the auxiliary dining-room—in our case the dining-room porch—and thoroughly cleans it out and moves in the furniture. This porch is smaller than our regular dining-room, but by putting it in order I am able to take care of the relatively small crowds that will come out each warm week-end before the formal opening. The main dining-room will not be needed until the opening, so it is left until all the rest of the clubhouse is cleaned.

"From the porch, the cleaning squad next turns its attention to the women's locker-room. Not only is everything scrubbed and polished and cleaned, but each locker is opened, clothing taken out and brushed, any soiled articles sent to be laundered or dry-cleaned (and charged on the member's account), then replaced in order and Enoz sprayed in as protection against moths.

"Meanwhile, the men's locker-room is getting the same attention by the locker-man and his assistant. In addition, they clean the showers and the wash-room, do any odd jobs of painting and polishing, and put the men's card-room in order.

"After the housekeeper has the women's locker-room in order, she next turns her crew loose on the lounge and reception rooms, moves on to the dormitories, and finally straightens the main dining-room.

"Thus, the whole clubhouse is given its spring-cleaning in a definite order. First

the lobby (because that is the first thing a member sees) then a place for them to eat, next the lockers and so on.

"While the housekeeper is busy with her annual spring duties, the force in the kitchen is not idle. The chef and as much help as he needs reports April 15th. Their work is to get the kitchen equipment in order, hand-scour all pots, pans, kettles, and grills, sharpen all knives, fill the sugar, salt, flour and other staple containers (which have previously been scoured, of course)—in other words get the kitchen in just as spick-and-span shape as the rest of the clubhouse. And while in the midst of this work, they are interrupted almost every day cooking meals for casual groups of members who steal out for a few rounds of golf before the formal opening of the season. That is why it takes them so long to clean up the kitchen; they must stop to cook meals several times a day.

"Meanwhile, I, as manager have my hands full. In addition to supervising the work of the housekeeper, locker-room man and the chef, I have my spring buying to do. All winter I have been taking notes on what supplies are low, and purchase orders are sent out on them or given to salesman who call to see me. I try to buy intelligently. Of some things, I can effect quite a saving by ordering a season's supply.

"As an example, I stock enough playing cards to meet the season's needs; by doing so I am granted the same discount by the manufacturer as a jobber would be given. If I ordered only enough for the first month or so, I would have to deal with a local jobber at a higher price because he must make a profit and yet he pays the same as I do under my full-season buying policy. On the other hand, it is physically impractical for me to order bulky items such as ginger-ale in quantities equivalent to "jobber lots"—I couldn't find storage room for it all. So I buy ginger-ale 10 cases at a time. I pay a little more for it, but it can't be helped.

"In addition to my duties as buyer, I am always busy, like any other manager, attending to the installation of such innovations and improvements as I have persuaded the house committee are needed. As an example, we are this spring changing our method of storing ice-cream. We have a freezer of course and formerly after the cream was made, we preserved it until needed by storing the cans in tubs of

cracked ice and salt. This was always messy business and the ice consumption was tremendous.

"We are changing all that over. I am having a large box built with ammonia pipes installed and a tight-fitting lid. By hooking up with our refrigerating machine, we'll have a place to store the ice-cream without messy tubs of ice.

"As opening day approaches, I line up the additional help, I take them on as they are needed. If there is an early spring I may have practically my entire force at work the middle of May. If we have a cold, unpleasant spring, the last of the employees may not begin work until opening day.

"My housekeeper has been with me five years, my chef seven, my chief clerk six, some of the waitresses almost as long. I keep them because I pay them a nominal salary all winter even though they are not working at the club. The chef, for example, gets \$50.00 a month from November until May, the housekeeper \$25.00, the locker-room man the same. While these salaries are not enough to meet living expenses, they furnish pin-money and are an insurance that my important helpers will not be forced into winter work that they will find hard to break away from when spring comes. It is comforting to know that the same trusted helpers, familiar with my way of doing things, will be with me when I want them.

"The members like it, too—you know that song about "the old familiar faces?" When a member comes out for the first time in the spring and is met at the door by an employee who was there the year before and can call the member by name, it's like a home-coming after a long journey. If the member is met by a stranger, his thoughts are "Who is this fellow—what's he doing here?" Members are funny that way.

"That's about all there is worth mentioning on opening the clubhouse. Of course, there are some other routine matters—having the opening announcements printed, planning the opening dinner, receiving and assigning reservations and the like, but every manager knows how those duties go—they're all in a day's work."

This year's business in women's clubs is certain to be far greater than ever before. What are you going to do about it?

Knapp's Program for Spring

By CLAUDE D. KNAPP

Greenkeeper, Cedar Rapids (Ia.) Country Club

WE START trimming the trees about the 20th of February; next we put the tractors in good repair by grinding the valves and adjusting the bearings. We never allow any tractor part to become badly worn before replacing it. We keep all machines in the best of adjustment. We have had one tractor since the spring of 1920 and the other one since the summer of 1921. Our mowers are kept sharp and adjusted.

When the ground gets good and firm we start the rollers and roll steadily until time to start our mowers while the grass is very short. We always brush our greens first and then roll them thoroughly. Then we give them a good top dressing of composite, ammonia sulphate and some arsenate of lead. We find that by mixing it all together it saves time and gives the same results. We mow the greens as early as the grass starts growing.

While some of the men are dressing and rolling the greens I have two other men repair and do all the plumbing needed on the grounds. We do all of our own mechanical, plumbing and carpenter work with our regular help.

I find it pays for a greenkeeper to be familiar with these different lines of work as well as with grass and construction, in order to save money on each operation. Our equipment is always ready to go.

Fairway Watering

IS FAIRWAY watering coming fast? Guy Peters, green-chairman of Olympia Fields Country Club, Chicago, where the 1928 National Open will be held, says: "We get bigger dividends from fairway watering of our fourth course than any other course money we have spent in recent years."

THE new green-chairman who thinks he will be doing the greenkeeper a good turn by letting the greenkeeper play a solo on the course, is wrong. What the greenkeeper wants is someone who takes at least enough interest in the course maintenance to acquaint him with the desires and comments of the members