



WHO PAYS ?

One Club Studied Members' Accounts and Then Weeded Out All But the Live Ones

By "SLICER"

OUR CLUB, in common with many of the better class golf clubs, has the problem of the inactive member. Probably it would be better to refer to the general trouble as that with the non-supporting member. It is true enough that the private golf club is not organized for profit, but is equally true that it is not organized to incur a deficit that often may be traced to the failure of an appreciable portion of the membership to accept the responsibility of private club attachment in building up the necessary volume of business.

One of the usual identifying performances of the man who does not do his share in supporting the club is the violence of his protest when announcement is made of the deficit for which he and his associate laggards are to a major extent responsible.

When I was appointed to my position as chairman of the house committee, I was told by our president that his policy was all for a business administration. As it has been my observation that one of the unavoidable and essential details of a business administration is connected with getting the business, I began to study our situation. What I hoped for was to get volume that would enable us to operate profitably, for with the uncertainties of weather especially hazardous to the financial success of a golf club, the good days must yield a substantial amount of business.

Even a casual survey of the situation revealed that too many wanted to dance without paying the piper. I hold no brief for the pleasure or for the business aspects of snobbery. It seems self-evident to me that if a man is set upon belonging to one of the better class country clubs he may as well reconcile himself to the fact that the implied high social standing is going to cost him something. It certainly is no disgrace for a man to limit his expenses to what he can afford, but it's at least the square thing for him to line up with what is accepted as the standard at his club for if he's not carrying his part of the load he is doing his fellow members an injustice.

The matter gets deeper into ethics and character study than I care to go. We have the fellow who is in over his head in financial requirements, we have the fellow who doesn't realize the club's business situation and we have the nickle-nurser, often affluent, but so tight that he will haunt the department stores looking for cut-priced items in golf goods, subject himself to considerable inconvenience rather than patronize his club restaurants and in general make of thrift a "slave-driver" rather than an ally.

Analyze Situation

Now for the way in which we handled our own problem.

What I did was this: I had the book-keeper make up a statement on July 1st,

last year, showing the amount of money each member spent during the first half of the year. This was made up on a sheet like a voucher journal and so divided that it showed so much for house account, so much spent in the pro shop, so much for caddie fees, and so much for guest fees, and then a total of all the accounts he had contracted. When making this distribution we learned whether or not this man used the clubhouse, that is, we knew just how much he had spent for meals; the second column told us whether or not he was patronizing his club pro shop, the third column told whether or not he used caddies or lugged the bag around himself; the fourth column showed whether or not he brought any guests to the club. We had the fifth column show how much he spent in the locker room but we threw this in with the house account.

The first statement told us something about the character, the spending ability, the natural tendency of the individual in so far as the interest of his club was concerned. In other words, if we found, as we did in some cases, that the man did not spend over \$2.00 in three months for caddies and had not spent more than \$5.00 or \$10.00 in the shop, and his meals at the club consisted of a sandwich or two a week, he was placed in a certain class by this distinction. If we found he spent a considerable sum in the house, because his family entertained there and then noticed that he did not spend money for caddies or in the shop or locker room, we checked the activities of the pro shop to show whether or not the man was playing golf. We have a record in the shop showing how many times each man's clubs are used which now tells whether or not the member is using the course.

Pass Word Around

When this first record was made we called the Directors' attention to approximately 100 men who, it appeared, should have been playing on a daily fee course because they were not able to play any day except Sunday. They very seldom ate any meals at the house and very few of them used caddies. We did not tell the Directors the names of these men, but asked the Directors and the House Committee to circulate the information among the membership that a check was being made to ascertain who were the real-honest-to-goodness golf players who should belong to a private club and also the names of those men who

should not belong to a private club because of their inability or because of their failure to utilize the facilities there.

However, we did not say anything to the members until three months had passed, at which time we took off a second record from the ledgers. It was practically the duplicate of the first but of course the figures were a little larger; however, tight-wads, and the financially cramped fellows, and the men who did not use the club all appeared in the same columns and amounts as was shown by the first statement. When this second statement was finished, we were surprised to learn that we had about 50 men who had spent less than \$50.00 for a full season's golf; that is, for meals, caddies, guests, pro shop supplies, drinks, and everything. In other words, they and their families had spent less than \$50.00 during the entire year. We found an additional 125 men who had not spent \$100.00, and we found that 50 men had spent more than \$350.00.

The tabulation we made showed we had six classes in the membership, and the bookkeeper listed the names of those men according to expenditures in classes. For instance, the first class was from nothing to \$50.00; the second class from \$50.00 to \$99.00; the third class from \$100.00 to \$149.00; the fourth from \$150.00 to \$199.00; the fifth from \$200.00 to \$300.00; and the sixth class more than \$300.00.

Averages Uniform

In analyzing the work sheet of the bookkeeper, we found that the men who spent money in any one department spent the average proportion in each of the other departments. In other words, if a man used caddies consistently, he spent money in the locker room and in the clubhouse, and if he spent money in the clubhouse he patronized the club pro shop. It showed, then, that if he was a real golf player, a real fellow, and a real club member, his expenditures were not lopsided and among the poor spenders practically all the accounts were listed in the grill and nothing was spent in the pro shop, practically nothing for caddies and nothing for guests.

You will understand, now, that we are not studying personalities or character, but the tabulation and the true facts revealed by this tabulation told us more about character, disposition and inclination than half a dozen books on the subject or stories which might have been told of the individuals. After this second tabulation

was made, we had a meeting of the members, which was not held for the purpose of complaining or giving them any data, but when I saw them in the meeting assembled I could not resist giving them the information I had on the six classes or types of members they had in their club.

Getting Live Ones

The outcome of the discussion, had after my talk, was that a general survey of the club was made by the Directors and while I did not give them the figures at that time, these figures had a great deal to do with the rejection of many applications for membership the following spring and the Board of Directors made it a point to call up those men who did not use the club facilities and ask them whether or not they cared to relinquish their membership, inasmuch as they were not using the club. The Directors went further, they sent out a letter to the membership stating the average expenditure in support of the club facilities the previous year. They sent out this classification showing how many men had spent less than \$5.00 and the number in each class and they asked each member to check his own record to see what class he expected his name would appear in. They were rather cold about it but they felt that the man who was above the average would be pleased to know it and the fellow who was considered a cheap-skate might as well recognize the fact and get out of the club or get into the swim. This letter stated that they did not wish to coerce anyone into spending additional money but if they were not able or not so inclined to spend an amount equal to the average, or enough to support the club, and obtain the conveniences desired by the rest of the members they would not enjoy the good feeling of the other members toward them. They went further and stated it was proposed that the Club post the names of those men who were not able to do their share to support the Club that the membership might know these individuals.

Naturally this caused a little hard feeling at the beginning but no one was feeling badly except those men who were not doing their share and no one cared whether or not their feelings were hurt. As a result, some 65 to 70 men were dropped from the membership, and the membership was filled with more suitable, and I believe, a higher type of men.

It is my contention that every club, large

or small, wealthy or poor, should tabulate each month or at least twice each year the expenditures of every member to ascertain whether or not that member is above or below the average in giving support to the club and my point is this, if a man owns a home he must support that home; if he travels in certain society he must live up to the caliber of that society; if he joins any association he is either an asset or a liability and it is nonsensical for any club to be burdened with liabilities in the form of members when there are three good men standing outside waiting for an opportunity to take the space or room or position now occupied by this liability person. It stands to reason that a golf club cannot give Ritz service at cafeteria prices and a golf club is no place to expect to house a lot of charity subjects who would classify themselves with the upper strata and attempt to get by without giving financial support to their own institution.

Load Unfair

In most clubs we find a deficit every year and with the deficit comes an assessment and who pays this assessment? The man who spent \$300, \$400, or \$500 in the house is required to pay just as much assessment as the individual who caused the assessment—the man who did not support his club—so that the good fellow pays to support a charitable institution, as it were, for the tightwad, or the cheap-skate, or the group of men who have no business belonging to that club. A great many men join these clubs for the prestige or to extract business through members, and if an analysis is made of the membership through the bookkeeping records any club can very readily ascertain who should and who should not belong to that club. In addition, they can furnish much better facilities, conveniences, or whatever you want to call them, for the same price or for less money, providing they get rid of those leeches, social climbers, and such and build their membership of men who do their share in the support of the club.

Eliminate Juggling

Every year without fail, the House Manager is forced to juggle the accounts or give credit to the dining room for questionable sales or work with the bookkeeper to make the dining room or house balance look better than the true condition rather than be called up on the car-

pet by the Directors and seven times out of ten it is caused by non-spending members.

Practically every club board of Directors will tell you that "we expect to lose anywhere from five to fifteen thousand dollars in our dining room and the members are willing to pay the deficit." This situation should not be, and would not be if the members and the Board were to analyze the situation and get rid of those members who do not patronize the house. If the entire membership patronized the house the price of the meals could be reduced and the books would show a profit and there is no reason why the members should not patronize their golf club dining room except that their heart and soul is not with the club and they think the prices of the food are too high, or they can buy a sandwich a few miles away and it will not be necessary to eat in the clubhouse.

I am thinking now of one of the so-called best clubs in the District. This is a true condition. A person driving to the club passes a sandwich shop just before he reaches the club. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays you will find this sandwich shop crowded with golf players going to this exclusive club but never patronizing their dining room and the meals at this club are known throughout the District as being on a par with the best in the district. It cost each one of those members more than \$2,000 to join the club and yet, because they do not support the club, they have received an assessment averaging \$50.00 each and every year. There are about forty men in this same club who spend from eight to fifteen hundred dollars at their club but the piking aristocracy in the club make necessary yearly assessments. Assessments have gotten so common here that the Board of Directors have been given the authority to levy up to \$50.00 each and every year without consulting the membership.

MANY times it is difficult for the newly appointed green-chairman to get the greenkeeper's viewpoint. The green-chairman, often a highly successful business man, is accustomed to dealing with men who are experts in "selling" themselves and their ideas. Back through the years the greenkeeper and others who work the soil have felt the humbling force of nature. It takes the salesmanship out of them—but sometimes reconciles them too much to letting nature run its course.

Architect Important in Club Meal Business

ONE of the details of clubhouse architecture that frequently does not get proper attention is the location of the restaurants with business attraction in mind. O. E. Broyer, secretary and manager of Sunset Hill Country club, Sappington, Mo., brings out this point in saying that beautiful surroundings and a cool spot are major factors in attracting the big restaurant business to country clubs.

Broyer says:

"At Sunset we have a lower veranda with a tile floor that seats about 300 persons. From this veranda you have a western view of about 30 miles to the foot of the Ozarks. We serve our lunches during the day on this veranda. For the evening we use the upper veranda where 850 can be accommodated for dinner after sundown, as there is no roof over the upper veranda. On Wednesday and Saturday evenings we have dinner dances, and every Sunday, concerts.

"Our attendance Sunday, June 10, was 256; Wednesday, June 13, 349; and Saturday, June 16, 642.

On other days we average from 80 to 150. I have come to the conclusion that it is not attractive hot weather food and summer dishes that attracts, but the beautiful outdoors and a variety of good food and pleasant surroundings."

Just what sort of a summer menu to present to women always has been a problem for club managers, and although the consensus is for the lighter dishes in view of the heat and the general rage for weight reduction, Broyer has some interesting evidence to submit. He comments:

"Here is an incident that knocks the light-food-in-summer theory into a cocked hat. Every Tuesday is ladies' day at Sunset. On that day we serve a \$1.25 Bridge Luncheon and have a selection of one light summer dish and a small beef tenderloin. On Tuesday, June 12th, you would naturally presume that the ladies would not select a beef tenderloin in mid summer, but here is what happened: We served 210 people—185 tenderloin and 25 summer dishes.

DID YOU ever realize how few good golfers there are? The low percentage of players under 15 handicap means a tremendous market for lessons.