



Plenty of windows are often the difference between a cheery, popular lounge and one that reminds you of a dungeon. The architect at La Jolla (Calif.) C. C. believed in plenty of glass, as the view above shows.

# Managers Discuss Ways of Handling Irate Members in the Dining-Room

By JACK FULTON, JR.

THIS business of giving top-notch table service in the dining-room is not a detail to be taken lightly. Every house-committee chairman, every club manager in the country finds it most necessary to be ever on the alert, ready to forestall, as much as possible, the almost daily complaints of the members. The official who manages to go through the season without having to placate a dozen or so irate members who fancy themselves discriminated against by some unavoidable and generally trivial incident, can consider himself the lucky possessor of an unbelievably efficient dining-room staff.

Some club members are a queer proposi-

tion anyway, as most officials discover shortly after taking office. Here, for example, is a common type. The golfer in question, an A-1 good sport in his contacts with his fellow members out on the course and in the locker-room, appears to have a breadth of vision that will cause him to overlook trivial inconveniences—yet this same man very often is the type who abuses his caddie, bawls out the locker-boys and insists on perfect service in the dining-room. He is ever ready to “kick up a ruckus” if things go wrong, whether avoidable or not.

One club manager, an old-timer in the profession, advances an interesting theory

to account for this type of member. "The diner who kicks," he says, "and kicks loudly where all can hear him, is generally a man who, in former years before he earned enough to join the club, was unaccustomed to the quality of service a club offers. As a rule he belongs to the *nouveau riche* and is trying hard to live up to his income. He wants to hide all traces of his former scale of living, is just a little ashamed of it, and as a consequence labors under the delusion that he must pretend he has always been used to the very best of everything. He is continually looking for some way to fortify his position in the eyes of his fellow members, and "bawling-out" defenseless employes for minor mistakes is, in his mind, made to order.

"He makes the dining-room his particular hunting ground, enters it with a chip on his shoulder, watches like a fox for the first slip-up in service (it may be anything from a mistake in the kind of salad dressing ordered to soup down the neck) and bingo!—the fireworks begin. *Where's the head-waiter! Where's the manager! Where's the house-chairman! Where's the president! Blankety-blank club! Going to resign! Terrible service! Mumble! mumble! mumble!*"

Now, that member by his outburst gets nowhere. He ruins his enjoyment of his meal, gives indigestion to his table-mates, incurs the hatred of the unfortunate employe who waited on him, and does not fool the manager a bit, for the manager has faced scores of incidents precisely similar and knows for a certainty that not once in a hundred times does the employe's mistake justify the member's howl.

The member who from childhood has been accustomed to the better things in life—including the best of service—expects, understands and forgives errors. When he has a real complaint, he makes it quietly and firmly to the proper official. If deliberate neglect of duty on the part of the waiter is the cause of the complaint, he may "call" the server for it, but he will do it quietly so as not to disturb his fellow diners.

This article is not concerned with this type of member; it is the chronic kicker we are interested in smothering. How best to go about this is debatable, but there are certain standard practices, found most successful in the past, that every experienced manager sooner or later adopts.

For obvious reasons of diplomacy, when a complaint reaches a manager he must

make it very clear that the member is right, just as in large mercantile establishments "the customer is always right." He must sympathize with the member for his employe's error, thank him for calling attention to the mistake, and promise to investigate immediately. And if he is a smart manager, he *will* trace the matter down, immediately and thoroughly, no matter how pressing other managerial duties may be.

The manager, having been given the member's side of the story, should not jump at conclusions until the employe's slant on the matter has been learned. The employe may or may not be directly at fault. A waiter cannot, and is not, responsible for poorly cooked food, although the thoughtless member may blame him for it. In such cases the chef concerned must be taken to task for his carelessness. Similarly a waiter can be pardoned if during the rush hours he fails to notice that a plate or silverware laid before the member is slightly soiled. The fault lies with the dishwasher, but in the member's eyes such errors are the waiter's alone. Such instances as those just given make clear the necessity of a complete and impartial investigation by the manager.

In extreme cases the manager may find himself forced to discharge the waiter and replace him with a more careful man. Impertinence to a member of course can not be countenanced around a country club and dismissal, irrespective of the value of the employe, is generally conceded to be the wise move, mainly for its salutary effect on the balance of the dining-room staff.

When all possible staff faults such as the above have been eliminated, and when the manager has definitely determined that the member's complaint was unjustified, there are two most necessary steps to take: first, he must tell the employe so, and tell him at the same time to forget the incident; and second, he must *not himself forget the matter*, but must add it in his mind to the sum-total of other complaints by that same member in the past. Before long, the alert manager will have definitely tabbed the chronic-kickers among the membership.

GOLFDOM recently asked a number of club managers how they went about this matter of chronic-kickers and surprisingly, the answers received fell quite definitely

in two distinct policies. The minority said: "They'll always be present in any club; listen to their stories, promise them sweeping and immediate reforms—and then do nothing."

The majority, however, believe in sterner measures. Here's how one manager, the pilot of a famous eastern club, handles the situation. "When I was new at my position," he writes, "I tried to handle all complaining members without the help of the club officials. Even stubborn ones, who made trouble and disorganized the help, got nothing but maybe attention and a request from me to be more considerate. Most of the time this proved to be all that was necessary, but after I had been with one club for several years and there was a certain member who would not change his ways, I went in desperation to my chairman and told him something had to be done about this man or my help would leave.

"My chairman sent this member a stiff letter to warn him not to complain so much, and threatened to suspend him for two weeks the next time he complained without reason. With a punishment hanging over him, that member was a changed man around the clubhouse and I had no more trouble with him that season.

"I handle all bad cases that way now. I let a member get away with a lot for awhile, but if he is a complainer, I tell my chairman and he takes any steps necessary to correct the deportment of the member. Maybe I am 'passing the buck, as the saying goes, but it is not only easier on me but usually more sure of results to let my chairman handle the trouble."

In nearly all replies received, the manager made one point most emphatic—that they did not like to run to their house-chairman with their member-relation troubles except in extreme cases, but that when they did, they "had the goods" on the member and were certain of co-operation.

## Golf Titles Don't Tell the Story Critic Says

LEONARD J. FOX, green-chairman of the Losantiville C. C. (Cincinnati district), has written *GOLFDOM* an interesting letter calling attention to the somewhat misleading vernacular in the golf field. The terminology is a matter of casual growth and acceptance rather than the



**H**OT WATER hazards are provided golfers on the nine hole layout at Lakeview, Oregon. It is believed to be the only private course in the world on which a geyser plays continuously. The geyser pool forms a hazard on the ninth fairway, the golfer being obliged to shoot nearly through the geyser and over the pool to the ninth green.

outgrowth of a careful study and probably is so well established that any alteration would be a hard and prolonged job, but at any rate Fox's communication is worth some study.

He writes:

"I note in the December *GOLFDOM* that you make reference to certain officers in golf clubs.

"I am making the following suggestions and giving these opinions merely as a player.

"You refer to the 'green-chairman,' and I claim that this is not proper, because if you will investigate you will find the title should be 'grounds chairman' and that in the majority of golf clubs this chairman has charge of the entire grounds, whether it be golf, tennis, swimming or polo—so why use an expression that merely applies to only a small part of a golf course?

"You then use the expression 'green-keeper,' and I, again, think this is inapplicable in that this title should be 'grounds keeper' or 'superintendent of grounds.'

"Am now going to make a suggestion that may not meet with favor, but I never could understand why they use the expression 'professional.' When we think of football or baseball we refer to coaches, or when we think of swimming or gymnasium work we think of instructors or coaches. Why should we use the word 'professional'?—because in most clubs this person is actually only the instructor, and in the larger organizations the upkeep of the grounds is no longer one of his duties. I really believe that if the professional were to be called the 'instructor' it would increase his business."