

Woman Manager of Exclusive Men's Club Tells Service Ideas

By WILLIAM MARION



Freda Jones Reynolds, one of the few women club managers in the U. S.

TEARs HAVE been wept about the passing of the golden age of American eating, and laments are being registered that some speakeasies are America's last outposts of superb commercial cooking. To that last wall many club managers will take exception, although they will admit that the growing popularity of the hit-and-run meal at the golf club is making it difficult to maintain distinction of golf club cuisine. Just what happy medium between speed and exceptional quality of the menu can be most satisfactorily supplied at the golf club has puzzled many managers.

One of the clubs where the answer seems to be happily supplied is at Old Elm, one of the world's real 18-karat gold coast clubs located in the Chicago district.

Old Elm has a membership of 125 men and although the initiation fee runs into the thousands of dollars it is easier for the camel to gallop through the needle's eye than for a man to get into Old Elm solely because he has currency in carloads. The good old line "a gentleman and a scholar" rate high in the club's membership qualifications. Naturally, this means those men know how to eat and are no strangers to viands that would make Lucullus marvel.

Old Elm is an Eveless Eden. No woman ever has played its course. A visiting Eng-

lish noblewoman once started to follow her husband on a round, having entered the club grounds in some undiscovered manner. Alex Pirie, who is pro and grounds supt., and the able Edward, who has been locker-room steward since the club opened, suffered untold agonies while tactfully easing the lady off the lot. Memory of that incident still makes them wince.

One of the merits of the intelligent rich is inconsistency and it shines forth brightly in the operation of Old Elm's clubhouse. The only woman around the place is the manager, Mrs. Freda Jones Reynolds. For many years prior to his death, Mrs. Jones' first husband was manager at Old Elm. As many managers recall, he was a master of club management and a premier steward. His wife learned well from him and when the club officials were confronted with the problem of selecting a successor they considered that no one else had her qualifications.

Simple and Select Menus.

Notwithstanding the affluence of its members, Old Elm is run on a strictly business basis of giving the members their money's worth. Food and food service at that club must be superior.

Mrs. Reynolds' policy of feeding her members has been signally successful. Let her tell about it.

"Men of big business probably play golf for their health's sake more than any other class. The strains to which they are subjected must be terrific and not the least of these strains is that of social affairs. Consequently, it has seemed to me that they want their golf club to be a place of relaxation and simplicity.

"We insist on quiet in service. Our

membership is small and on that account we often get rushed, and while the staff may be inadequate to keep a man at every member's and guest's immediate service, the waiters work deftly and quietly so there is no atmosphere of hurry around the dining room. The character of our members is such that they are not unreasonable like some of the members with whom many managers have to contend, but at the same time by maintaining silence in service and trying to anticipate the desires of each member in the simple little details of service we avoid the slightest appearance of ever being rushed. I believe that is an important element in the service of any first class club and must be especially emphasized in times when the club is working short-handed.

"We restrict our menus to two major items on the lunch, which is the only meal we serve. I do the shopping personally and I know that no better food can go into any home or restaurant. Our food is simply cooked and simply but elegantly served. We are especially proud of our salads. The combination of a selected, plain feature, good soup, excellent salad needs just one thing in the opinion of most of our members to top off a perfect lunch. That remaining item is ice cream. We make our own pies and they're good ones too, but pies seem to be favorites with guests while our members go for ice cream. Probably it is because the ice cream is lighter and the pie would be too much of a good thing.

Feature Ice Cream.

"Ice cream seems to be the popular favorite with all ages and classes and for that reason it appears to me that any club would do well to pay particular attention to its ice cream and make sure that it gets the best ice cream to be had in its vicinity, even if necessary going to the expense and trouble of making its own.

"The great peril of simplicity in a menu of course is monotony, but careful planning will avoid this. I find it advisable to make special features for certain days—something that our type of members are not likely to get at their other clubs, or even at home. Corn beef hash is an example. This has to be prepared so it is a masterpiece of plain cooking, otherwise it is just another dish of food.

Locker-Room All Important.

"Of course, in my position it is impos-

sible to attend to details of locker-room operation but this all-important part of the club is perfectly handled by a man that many of our members, and certainly I, consider the finest locker-room steward in the country. He has been with the club ever since it opened and knows exactly what every member wants even before the member wants it. This foresight I think is one of the main reasons for successful club operation, and we insist on it in dining room service.

"The way that our locker-room is run gets the members in the right mood to enjoy a meal or provides the pleasant finale to food. I probably can appreciate good locker-room management better than a man manager, although I must admit that the foremost men managers of my acquaintance are emphatic in their insistence on perfect locker-room service. To me, the way the locker-room is run is one of the surest indications of club character.

"I have been interested in reading and hearing about the discord between department heads that the various associations of club operating executives are striving to eliminate. It reminds me how fortunate I am at Old Elm. Alex Pirie and Ed and Alex Law have done everything in the world to help me in my work for the club and that's a very big reason why I believe I have been able to handle my duties to the satisfaction of our members. They extend this co-operation effectively and perhaps unconsciously because they are leading men in their respective fields of endeavor, because they are gentlemen, and certainly because they take intense pride in seeing that everything about our club meets with the members' requirements of the best."

IS AMERICAN home cooking superior to foreign recipes in attracting patronage? Apparently so, judging by the results of a study of 25 eating establishments in a New England city, as reported by *Restaurant Management*. The study showed that 70% of the successful outfits served American style foods, against 46% of the unsuccessful ones. Success was measured by the amount of gross business done in 1931, compared with 1929.

FOR REASONS not thoroughly understood, it is most difficult to grow grass under pine trees. Red fescue and sheep's-fescue seem to succeed when other grasses fail.