

Why Must Membership Chairman Have a Lone-Wolf Job?

By JACK FULTON, JR.

THE MEMBERSHIP chairman is a lone wolf. His is the key job in the club, because there must be members or there can't be a club. If he falls down on his duties and fails to round up as large a mess of active enthusiastic new members as his predecessor in office did, he's a rotten chairman. And if he's successful in his efforts and through super salesmanship and much sacrifice of time from his own business manages to keep the roster at the level it boasted when he took office, well, what the heck was he elected for!

That's the attitude most chairmen discover to be the reward of their office. Club members take it as a matter of course that without any particular cooperation on their part, prospects will be dug up, followed up and signed up in more or less automatic fashion. It's a rare member who voluntarily bothers to look around among his friends for possible clubmates. And scarcer still is the man who, having recommended a friend for membership in the club, bothers to cooperate with the chairman in seeing that the prospect is sold into the organization. That's up to the membership committee, which by the way, is generally a one-man *working* body, alas! That's what the committee is, for, ain't it? Hand in a prospect's name, then forget it.

So the poor chairman pursues his lone-wolf ways, frequently spending his own good money entertaining prospects at the club, playing golf with them, introducing them to the fellows in the locker-room, making them feel so at home and welcome that they join the club. The chairman would much prefer to be out playing two-bit syndicates with his regular foursome, but—no-can-do—he's the membership chairman—just another way of saying he's the goat.

No Helpers Needed, Say Clubs

As a matter of fact, this prevailing belief that the chairmanship of the membership committee is a one-man, lone-wolf proposition is reflected in the way the committee is set up in most club's organization. Take other important jobs on the Board

of Governors. The secretary and the treasurer have the great bulk of their routine duties handled by the manager or some other *salaried* employee. The green-chairman, if he's smart, leaves the maintenance worries to his active *paid* assistant, the greenkeeper. The chairman of the house-committee leaves things pretty much to the manager's good judgment. And the golf committee falls back on the club pro when anything need be done in that department.

But the poor lone-wolf membership chairman . . . who can he call on for help? The answer, if you'll think a moment, is NOBODY. If a prospect should be phoned, the chairman does it. If a prospect must be interviewed, the chairman does it. And if there are letters to be written or investigations to be made, it's the chairman's job.

A Harder Job Than Formerly

It's all wrong, mates, it's all wrong! The custom of expecting the membership chairman to get along without a paid assistant was all right back in the good old days when all a membership committee had to do was pick the next name out of the waiting-list file, call the man on the phone and tell him the club had finally got around to him and if he would please send check, ho-hum, the Board of Governors at its next meeting would admit him to membership.

Things are very different today. Clubs have lost members in excess of the ten per cent which is considered normal turnover. Waiting lists are now classified as phenomena. Moreover, it's a whale of a lot harder to find prospects these days than it used to be. Then, is it fair to ask the membership chairman, alone and unaided, to work harder than ever was required before? Obviously not; and the only way these added demands on the membership chairman's time can be kept within reason is to hire for him some assistant who can take over all the added duties changed conditions have brought about.

What sort of a man should this assistant be? Well, first of all, in appearance, educa-

tion, breeding and what not, he should pass as a regular member of the club. He should be a fair golfer and a good mixer. As far as the general run of the membership need know and certainly as far as any prospect for membership need suspect his work should appear to be the voluntary effort of a member of the club who is on the membership committee. An ideal man for the job is some former member who has had to give up the club because of financial difficulties.

How should this man be paid? This is a matter to be worked out by the individual club, although general practice where such an employee has been hired is to give him his golf privileges without charge, grant him a small drawing account and absorb into membership expense any house-bills he may run up while entertaining prospects.

The drawing account is charged against a flat commission paid on each membership sold by the man. A good persuasive worker can sign up at least one to three memberships a week during the spring and early summer. If you want good results his commission should be not less than \$25 on the average metropolitan membership. This may seem like too much commission, but remember it takes a pretty smooth and experienced salesman to do the job justice and such men are not satisfied with bell-pushers' wages.

The duties of a membership solicitor are fairly definite. Operating as far as the members know as a straight and unpaid representative of the membership committee, he obtains from the members of the club names of friends who might be interested in joining. Some golfers are reluctant to cooperate in this respect, fearing they will be called upon to help sell the prospect, so it is a good idea for the solicitor to get across the thought, "Just give me his name, Bill. You won't have to do any work unless you want to; the committee will contact him."

Women an Important Aid

The experienced membership salesman is careful not to overlook the women; often they are more helpful in supplying names of Grade A-1 prospects than the men. Many a man has joined a club because his wife wanted the social contacts its activities offered. So the salesman talks frequently to the wives of the members, asks which of their friends have husbands who are golfers but do not belong to a club,

and enlists their cooperation in selling the club to this couple.

There are other sources of names. Large corporations with branch offices frequently shift important officials to other cities. These men are golfers with a keen desire to join a club in their new home-town, but they have no intimate acquaintances to invite them into the ranks. A live membership solicitor keeps posted on such transfers and makes a point of contacting these men. If they are golfers, they are particularly responsive to his interest.

The club's green-fee register is a fertile source of prospects. Many a member brings friends to the club for a day of golf but hesitates to ask them to join because it looks as though he has acted as host with that ulterior motive in mind. It sounds silly, but it is only too true. The membership salesman can drop around to see such men a few days after they were entertained at the club and, introducing himself as one of the membership committee, put considerable pressure on them to join up.

Chairman Still Has Duties

All this discussion about the advantages a club can reasonably expect from employing a membership solicitor doesn't mean that the chairman of the membership committee is relieved of all responsibility. On the contrary, it is still his duty to pass on the desirability of prospects, to O. K. any terms and time-payments the prospect may request on his investment, and to work closely with the salesman when final selling pressure is called for.

But the great mass of detail connected with securing new members is taken from the chairman's shoulders and placed upon a paid assistant's willing back, where it belongs—at least to the extent other committee heads are permitted to unload duties of office onto paid shoulders.

MUNICIPAL courses ten years ago rarely made a practice of charging for playing privileges. Today the opposite is true and it is the general feeling that municipal courses should be self-maintaining or nearly so. The Civic Development department of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce reports that, in 1920, thirty-four out of a total of 50 municipal courses reported their courses open to play by the public without charge, while today only nine of 276 municipal links permit free play.