

Junior C. of C. Puts Over Macon's First Municipal Course

THE LAST glow of twilight sifted through the tall pines on the triumphantly gay group seated around a rough board table, heavily laden with all the delicious indigestibles that make up a Southern barbecue supper. The Junior Chamber of Commerce of Macon, Georgia, was celebrating the completion of the city's first public golf course, a project for which they had been planning three years.

An exhibition match by four of the city's best golfers, a blind bogey tournament, and the official gift of the course to the mayor for the city had been the day's program. It was most appropriate that the speech of presentation be made by the president of the group, for he had also served as chairman of the golf committee since the plan had first been suggested by him several years before.

He had been a one-man committee until the foundation work had been finished six months before this date; for he was the dreamer who had first visualized the need of a municipal golf course in this city of 50,000 and had "set his hand to the plough" to make this vision a reality. He had seen every acre of cleared land as a potential fairway and every creek and thicket as a hazard. He had negotiated with private individuals, trustees and corporations, owning 17 different locations, before he finally found an 85-acre plot which could be leased for a certain length of time for one dollar a year, with the provision that it should remain a public course after it reverted to the owner.

This spot is ideally located, only nine minutes from the center of town, and just across a paved highway from a popular recreation lake. In addition, the topography of the land forms a natural course.

By feeling the public pulse it was decided that \$10,000 was all that could possibly be raised in Macon for golf. The problem was to hold the cost of the proposed links within this amount, in spite of the estimates which showed that it would take at least \$20,000 to construct the simplest course.

But these figures did not take into account the sales ability of the Golf Com-

mittee chairman. He started work on the theory that all that could not be bought must be given; but it finally evolved so that all that someone could not possibly be prevailed upon to donate was bought.

It was surprising the available talent found within the promoting organization itself—a construction engineer, a golf pro, an architect, and visiting aviators. All of these gave their services not only freely but enthusiastically.

On the basis of the fact that it was a civic project the young salesman did not hesitate to request the use of tractors, scraping machines and men from both the city engineering department and the county road board.

Fertilizer was given by a circus manager who winters his animals in a Macon park. In fact, each additional thing that was needed in the construction, such as tile, brick, sand, and even benches, was referred to "the Chairman" and in a few days he appeared with the necessary material donated. Of course, each gift was acknowledged through the newspapers, which was good advertising for the donor.

How Fund Was Raised

Thus on a re-estimate it was found that \$10,000 would easily cover the cost of those things which had to be paid for.

This amount was raised by the sale of charter memberships at \$10 each, entitling the holders to play for a 25c green-fee over a period of two years; the non-member fee being 50c. The owner of the lake front across the road offered, as an additional inducement, free admission to his park to the holders of these membership cards.

The Junior Chamber of Commerce put on a three-day campaign which rivaled in enthusiasm the Liberty Loan drives of the World War. Employers allowed them a holiday from their various jobs and they went out by teams to put over this, the biggest project they had ever undertaken. At the end of the time they had more than the amount needed. A newspaper editorial lauded them for having put on the only financial campaign in recent years

that had been fully subscribed in the allotted time. One of the rules of the drive had been that if the \$10,000 was not obtained in the three days, all money would be refunded and the plan dropped.

Sales Drive Pushed Through

The drive was organized with the president of the Junior Chamber as general chairman. Two division chairmen led seven teams in a friendly competition for the largest number of subscriptions, even betting their pants on the outcome. Every member of the group was on a team and sold at least one membership.

There were executive, publicity, and finance committees that contributed to the success of the undertaking. The executive committee was made up of some of the older men who were to solicit contributions from individuals and firms able and interested enough to put more than a membership fee into the project. It might be said that only \$2,500 was pledged in this way.

The finance committee was, as usual, to hold the money bags and issue the membership cards.

Publicity Heats Town Interest

The publicity committee did some of the most effective work of the campaign. Two weeks before the drive started, five thousand stickers were placed on as many automobiles. They read, "LET'S PLAY GOLF." The night that the first "pep" meeting was held there was ready a moving picture of some of the members playing around the course-to-be, where tractors were already pulling stumps and convicts clearing underbrush. This in itself was a publicity stunt showing that the committee had faith enough in the success of the drive to begin work before the first membership card was filled out.

No civic club luncheon was without its golf speaker and the newspapers were full of information. On Sunday before the drive started, a double page of pictures and stories appeared in both local papers, as well as a special edition of advertising. A golf match was played on a downtown street; and merchants had special golf window displays. All of the attendance prizes at Junior Chamber luncheons were golf equipment.

Construction Done Rapidly

Immediately after the money was raised actual construction was begun. This was

to be a 9-hole course with ample provision for another 9 holes in the future. Aerial views, snapped by the visiting aviators, and a topographic map, drawn by two Eagle Scouts doing their good turn, made it easy for the construction engineer to draft his plans. Then he and the golf professional superintended the work of the city road gang who dug trees, uprooted stumps and cleared away weeds and grass. When this part of the work was finished the county chain gang was put at their disposal to turn up the soil, dig in the fertilizer, sod the fairways, and construct the greens. The weather was kind in that during a greater part of the time a dry spell set the road men free and the work moved rapidly.

The clubhouse was also being built. Its construction had come within the \$10,000 estimate. It would have been out of place, nestled in its grove of virgin pine, if it had been anything but a log cabin, simple in design but complete in its equipment of lockers, showers, and lounging room. The broad, low-roofed porch on three sides gave a delightful view of the course, and foretold bridge games and tea parties while golfing husbands played. The plans for this had been contributed by the young architect and the engineer was superintending the building of it.

The drive had been held the first of October, 1932, and on April 26, 1933, the course was ready to be formally presented to the city, although many enthusiasts had been trying it out for several weeks and had pronounced it in splendid condition for a new course. Large crowds attended the golfing events and festivities of the opening day.

Golf Sales Boom

The completion of this course made a number of changes in the recreational life of the city. A survey, to find if the course were needed, showed that there were only 150 people in Macon who played the game at all. The Junior Chamber of Commerce was humiliated when they were obliged to turn down a challenge from a brother organization in a neighboring city because there were only two members in the entire Macon body who played golf.

Two months after the municipal course was opened, over 1,000 sets of clubs had been sold—in fact golf became so popular that within six months another public 18-hole course was built on the opposite side of the city.