

# EIGHT SUCCESSFUL WAYS TO

**J**UST as we instinctively duck the tax collector as a man to be avoided, so for the past few years have prospective club members turned the cold shoulder to invitations extended by membership committeemen. But no longer do committeemen feel they have the job of the damned, or must perform a Houdini trick to produce new members for their club. Recent reports from all parts of the country point to a healthy 1936 gain in club memberships, a return of waiting lists in many cases—something we have heard little of for the past few years—and indicate that these membership gains have been obtained without the use of side show ‘come-ons’ to obtain prospective new members.

This last point is significant and certainly encouraging when you think of the many schemes and methods used during the depression to entice doubting, unwilling prospects into the fold and in trying to retain the regular members.

Clubs are realizing the importance of holding the interest of their members and families throughout the entire year. Increased or full rosters at those clubs where swimming pools have been added, tennis courts built, or perhaps trapshooting and skeet facilities provided, attest the worth of providing a definite appeal to every member of the family.

At any rate, latest reports show that clubs have ‘rounded the corner’ regarding this very important matter of building membership.

## Dues Count; Fee to Join Helps Little

Clubs used widely varying means of securing new members this year, and GOLFDOM presents a few of these methods for possible use at your club. C. B. Willard, green chairman at the Hardscrabble Club, Fort Smith, Ark., has this to say of his club’s successful membership campaign:

“Originally the membership of the club was limited to 200 active members and the entrance fee was \$500, the stock non-transferable. We lost about 80 or 90 members during the depression, and realizing that it was the annual dues and not the membership fees which maintained a club

from year to year and that it would be impossible to get any new members at \$500, we adopted a new policy. For a fee of \$25, we transferred the stock in the treasury, which had been surrendered by those that had resigned, to new members acceptable to the membership committee.

“We were able to get a great many new members under this bargain proposition, and it is the firm conviction of the writer that had we maintained the original membership fee of \$500, we would not have secured a single new member.”

## Made Clubhouse “Easy on the Eyes”

On the assumption that making the place ‘easy on the eyes’ would be a good investment, the Wheeling Country Club credits its 38 new members mostly to the carrying out of this idea. According to Jack Grimes, green chairman: “Our board members agreed that the old green paint on the inside and outside dining-rooms had to go. We tore out a private dining-room and converted the main floor into one large room, increasing our seating and standing space, got a good decorator on the job, and made the place as attractive as home.

“Then we threw a real open house and asked our members to drop in on a Sunday afternoon last April for free lunch and a dipper of hard cider or something. We told them to bring all the friends they wanted, and they did. We obtained a good list of prospects, and on the following day all of these prospects had heard about our attractive membership proposition that would be open until May 1st. Initiation fees, at \$50 from \$250 since the depression days, would be raised to \$100 on May 1st. Our plan worked and diligent follow-up by our committee enabled us to get our new members.”

P. D. Berry, chairman of the membership committee of Wildwood Golf Club, Middletown, Ohio, comments:

“We have an excellent golf course to

# SELL CLUB MEMBERSHIPS

sell to prospective members, which had a great deal of bearing upon the excellent results we obtained. We didn't put on any particular selling stunts or ideas, although we did follow through a special inducement to prospects which produced excellent results.

"At the beginning of our campaign, we plotted the city not only with regard to business and professional districts, but, also, the industries. One or two committee members were appointed to take care of each district, depending upon size.

"All reports were followed up and if the applicant wasn't sold, we would shoot in a committee member from another district who might bring some pressure to bear or some influence which would help. So far as solicitation was concerned, it was merely a case of organizing and following through to a definite conclusion on all prospects contacted.

"We received a great deal of help from the club members furnishing prospects. Also, to stimulate interest, we issued a so-called guest card which permitted a prospect to play our course three times without payment of green-fees. The record of these cards was kept by our clubhouse manager and I am glad to say the privilege was never abused. The results obtained were more than we expected, as considerably over 50% of such prospects made application for membership."

## Selected the Men They Wanted

Spokesman for an old, prominent Eastern course who prefers that its name not be mentioned, says of its membership campaign:

"In securing 75 additional members in our club this past year, there were no special stunts or selling ideas used but we did make rather a systematic study of the proposition and tried to put over our ideas.

"In the first place, I think that we have the outstanding golf course in this district. We stressed that fact and we made sure that the local newspapers had every possible opportunity to mention it (we gave honorary memberships to the sporting editors of each of them).

"Probably the most important thing we did was to put the campaign in the hands

of a "live wire" and gave him complete charge of it. We did not make a drive for new members in the customary sense of the word because we felt from observations at other clubs that such drives, as usually carried on, were of little benefit except for one year and that members secured in such a drive turned out in many instances to be unsatisfactory and lasted only a few months or a year.

"We picked out the men we wanted in the club and went about securing them. We made it a hard and fast rule that we would not reduce standards in any way and we did not. Nor did we reduce the dues, which I think are the highest, or just about the highest of any club in the district.

"The only concession we did make was in connection with a limited supply of membership certificates which had been turned back to the club on account of resignations and deaths. These were gathering dust in the files and we decided, so long as they lasted, to present them to new members free. We didn't advertise this generally and, as I say, we picked and chose the men we wanted to have them.

## Talk Up Club As Community Asset

"We set out to maintain the standards of the club and not lower them simply for the sake of getting a new member, and that is just what we accomplished. We think that is going to pay us dividends in the long run."

The Nashua Country Club, (N.H.) substantially increased its membership by talking up the club as a community asset and by making former members realize that with improved business conditions they should rejoin the club. Says Paul Sadler, grounds committee chairman:

"We had a special meeting of our members, and each member in attendance was given names of prospective members he was to canvass personally. The prospective members were influenced by the members to value the club as a community asset. We were quite successful in securing a number of younger men, which of course is a healthy condition.

"We have been very fortunate here, hardly realizing the depression. During the years when we lost considerable mem-



Clothing, shoes and golf equipment from the surplus stock of members of the Pine Lake (Mich.) CC are gathered near the end of each season and passed on to the caddies. The affair, tactfully and pleasantly handled, is a timely and helpful expression of sportmen's consideration for the kids.

bers, particularly non-resident members, we still maintained our high standards, such as not lowering the green fees, and maintaining the same excellent service and quality in our dining room."

#### Price Raise Threat Brings Prospect Action

The Meadowbrook Country Club (Detroit district) used several methods in adding 65 new members to its roster this year. E. E. Prine, secy., reports:

"The first method we tried was dividing the locker-room—the east side against the west. We appointed a chairman for both sides, and then a captain for each row of lockers. This made about 10 men to a team, and about 20 teams all working for new members.

"Memberships which sold for \$1,000 prior to the depression came down as low as \$50. In 1935 we raised the membership fee to \$100, and after we had our membership campaign well organized this year, without making a lot of noise about it, we notified all of our members that on July 1st the membership would go to \$300 without any exceptions. This caused a rush of applications for membership in order to get in on the \$100 basis, and brought us in short time to our 300 closed membership figure."

A new swimming pool, plus diligent work by the membership committee, was responsible for a gain of 105 new members at the Lehigh (Pa.) Country Club. A full account of this club's progress is found elsewhere in this issue.

The Fox Chapel Golf Club, (Pittsburgh district) increased its membership by taking in a group of players who pay dues but pay no initiation fee and have no vote in club affairs. Included in this list of

new members, are a few former members of the club who were forced to drop out during the depression.

All of the ideas and methods of obtaining new members presented above have proved effective and successful in building up club memberships. Increase in golf play, golf interest, revival of country club atmosphere, and the generally improved business conditions everywhere, point to sustained building up of club memberships for next year. Certainly no sound club should have to rely hereafter on trick offers to increase its roster.

**Open Cup Is Safe**—The National Open Cup, reported in an Associated Press dispatch from Greensboro, N. C., as having been lost in the ruins of a jewelry store fire, was recovered and fortunately needed only minor repairs.

**Managers Meeting** — Eleventh annual convention of the Club Managers' Association will be held at Brown Hotel, Louisville, Ky., February 16, 17 and 18. Preliminary plans call for emphasis on clubhouse rehabilitation in keeping with the pronounced revival in house activities during 1936. Modernization details that effect old clubhouses and a discussion of ideas that call for consideration in new clubhouse construction will be featured in the managers' program.

**Milwaukee Wants Greensmen** — Milwaukee intends to put in a bid for the 1938 convention of the National Association of Greenkeepers. Ample and first-class hotel space for exhibitions and convention attendants is available at moderate rates. Central location of the city has been an important factor in making Milwaukee famous as a convention city.