

MEMBERS ARE MORE THAN PEOPLE

By MARGARET KING

Robert E. Love served as manager for two years of the Beaver Dam Country Club, Landover, Md., where Miss Margaret I. King, author of this article, has been employed as assistant manager for the past 16 years. Love, who resigned his position at Beaver Dam last December 31, to accept the managership of the University of Pennsylvania Club of New York City, makes the following comments on Miss King's personality, her ability in helping to handle the 1,001 problems confronting country club managers, and the smooth manner she employs in dealing with idiosyncrasies of the members, who incidentally, are treated always as 'individuals' at Beaver Dam, not as just another group of golfers:

"An exceptionally well-balanced sense of intuition that averts many catastrophies is one of the gifts Miss King possesses. By analyzing situations and acting before things have much of a chance to develop she heads off many serious problems. Beaver Dam's roster includes many high government officials and the managerial job demands great finesse and the utmost in tact; that's why Miss King is so successful. Her grand personality, her patient and understanding nature have made friendships that have mellowed through the years. No wonder she is so greatly loved and respected by the members."

I OFTEN wonder at the end of each golf season, and we have long ones here in the Washington district, if I will be with the club another year; but long before the last ball has been hit in the final fall tournament I always find myself making new and bigger plans for the next season and trying to figure out how certain things can be improved about the club.

There are probably several things about my job of being assistant manager at a country club that need some explanation. First of all, I am a woman, and for that reason alone, perhaps, I am qualified to see that certain and many little details, which may seem insignificant in the actual operation of the club, are cared for in the best possible manner. You see, I don't look upon those who make up the membership as just people who come and go—somebody to serve and that's the end of it until they come around the next time. I look upon each member as an individual and try to carry out the wants of these individuals to their complete satisfaction. A big job, yes, but one that pays big dividends in greater club enjoyment for every member.

Study to Learn Member's Likes

Let me explain just what I mean by making an individual out of each member. You've got to study—and study hard; and you've got to remember what you have learned. You must study every member, learn what they like and what they dislike, what eating preferences they have, what they are interested in; in other

words, you've got to know everything about them and what to expect from the time they open the front door with a pleasant "good morning" until they slam it at night with a mumbled "goodbye".

I have watched men come into the clubhouse in gay spirits, have something go wrong with their game, and go away threatening to resign or have someone fired. By lending a sympathetic ear at this time, even though the member may be unreasonable, you can do him and the club a lot of good in helping him solve his problem, and by assuring him that such trouble will never happen again.

Women today sign some of the biggest checks around a country club, and I've found that keeping a member's wife happy is one of the most important duties of every club employee. An employee may linger in the locker-room just a little longer than a woman thinks she ought to be neglected. The best thing to do in this case is to prevent its happening by having your members so catalogued that you can fit each woman into a group that will make her forget her seeming neglect.

Iowa State Golf Assn. has added a junior tournament, open to all boys 16 or under. The championship will be played in Des Moines during August.

Clever opening announcement of Bridgton Highlands (Me.) CC pictures a quartette of lovely golfers behind a wire screen. The screen represents part of the front of a chicken coop on which appears the lettering: "We haven't scratched yet", and "Fed on Vitamin Tee."

Then give the locker-boy a gentle hint about better service, and keeping members in a good humor.

You will sometimes feel that some of the women must be neurotics. I recall one member's wife who always found fault with the menu till you wondered if you could ever please her. If we had pumpkin pie for lunch, she wanted that pie for dinner, and if, by chance, we would run out of something listed on the menu, she would complain and wonder why a portion had not been placed aside for her. Yet we all know that woman is 100 per cent for us, and all the help, from the chef to the locker-boy, wait on her with a smile. That's the way it goes in a country club. You've got to be ready for any emergency and solve it successfully, because the members are used to the best and are paying for the best.

Sixteen Years and No Fights

I have never had an argument with a member in all my sixteen years of service at Beaver Dam, and that's because I never forget a member's rights. Recently, a day or two before one of our club dances, a member called me on the phone and said he would be over with a party of 24. This was made even more serious when he said he wanted his table in the ballroom, and at his table he and his wife would be the only members, the balance guests.

I told him that it would be all right, that we would be glad to take care of him, but that we would have to put them on the porch. Then a bomb exploded. He said, "Young lady, you will not put me on the porch now or at any other time," and for fully five minutes I wasn't able to utter even one word. When he had finished I said only a few words that went something like this: "After all, Mr. . . . , this is your club and this is your party. I am the employee and I am here to see that your party is a success. Now if I fail to do that I would be more unhappy than you." He never answered me, just hung up the phone.

When he arrived the night of the dance I greeted him most graciously, and when

I had the waiter show him to a table in the ballroom and at just the exact spot he wanted, he immediately hunted me up in the foyer and looking like a naughty child who had learned a lesson, thanked me kindly for saving a spot for him. Giving your members what they want is part of your job, but remember that losing your temper will never clear the situation. In this job I have taught myself to be able to place myself on the opposite side of the desk so that I would know how I would feel were I the member and not the employee.

Committee Job Stops Kicks

Keep your eyes open for members that are dissatisfied. If they are dissatisfied with the golf course, put them on the green-committee; the same with clubhouse and tournament committees. After a member has served on a committee and has found out for himself just what the problems are that must be handled for the benefit of the most people, you'll be surprised at the 100% member he'll turn out to be.

Recently I was having dinner with a member and his fiancee. The main course arrived and as the food was placed before her on a grill plate, I remembered that she detested food served on one dish. I had the waiter remove the plate, and although the meal service was slowed up a little, I had saved the good-will of a potential member of the club.

Unless you have studied all of the members of your club, never attempt to make up a match for golf play, or to form groups for social sessions around the clubhouse. This is especially true regarding new members, whose friends and golf partners must be chosen most carefully so that personalities do not clash. Remember, a man's golf partner is a very dangerous thing to tamper with. Luckily, I have never failed in my efforts to fix up a match.

In club management it is the little things that are important in giving correct, appreciated club service. Few members' wishes will seem unreasonable if you realize they are individuals and not just another member. I love my work, am proud of what I am doing, and I only wish I could visit every club in the country and help those people employed at these clubs to realize they have the best job in the world, although it's a long way from being the easiest.