

Gen. Ike's Home Town Boasts Attractive Club



There's always something doing at the Abilene CC.

Abilene, Kan., has a population of slightly more than 6,000 according to the 1940 census. You're read of Abilene, but you may have forgotten why you happened to see its name. It's the home town of Gen. Eisenhower. The town has another distinction as far as golfers in Kansas are concerned. It's also the home of one of the liveliest and most attractive small-town country clubs in the United States.

The Abilene CC now has about 160 members and a program of golf events and other entertainment that make the club not only a community center but a delight for pleasant and vigorous people who are its invited guests from many miles throughout eastern central Kansas.

What makes the Abilene club click and has put it on a solid financial basis? The answers are given by Kenneth Smith, Abilene automobile dealer, who is president of the club.

Says Smith:

"We are rather proud of our club for several reasons, and particularly for its activities during the past few years.

"First, of course, is the fact that we were able to continue operations during those years when almost all of the small towns in this vicinity have had to close their clubs.

"Second, we are free from any debts and our treasury is in a satisfactory condition. We owe this to a continuously active interest in the club by those members not in military service. Also, during the years 1943-44 and '45, we made available to those who wished to participate, a membership which we termed 'associate'.

"Associate members owned no stock so had no voice in management but they had the same social and playing privileges as stock members. This plan was accepted by a goodly number of people, and when the

plan was discontinued the fore part of 1946 because it was felt the plan was no longer needed, almost 100% of the associate membership made application for regular membership. I might add that the dues were the same for both memberships.

"The officers and directors like to emphasize the social affairs. Special days of entertainment for the whole family, with refreshments, etc., are always held on July 4 and Labor Day. We have what we term 'Divorce Night' with committees selected to act as managers arranging teams for golf for each week throughout the summer. No man is allowed to play with his wife and prizes are offered the teams. Each couple furnishes a covered dish and bread and butter, all of which is placed on a central table for serving cafeteria-style. The remainder of the evening is spent playing cards or any other entertainment those attending choose. These 'Divorce night' socials are always well attended.

"Beginning in October and until April, we have a monthly party with the entire membership serving on one of these monthly party committees. Our last, but our best party, is held on New Year's Eve. We make this party as attractive as possible with a good orchestra, good food, favors, etc., with the result that it is always very well attended.

"Our Abilene CC actively supports a 'Women's Golf Club' which meets once a week to play golf, enjoy luncheon, etc., with a tournament ending the season.

Compete With Neighbors

"Among the men, an annual Hookers vs. Slicers tournament is held with the entire membership participating on one team or the other. The last day of the tournament ends with a dinner which the losing side buys the winner. The men also participate

in an annual golf tournament in which there are 8 flights.

"Another idea creating considerable interest is playing golf with some neighboring town's club with each club entering a 12-man team. Of course the 12-man team does not always consists of the same individuals. The neighboring club at a later date returns our visit by playing on our course. These trips had to be discontinued during the war period due to gasoline rationing, etc., but they have and will become popular as more people accompany the teams.

"We have made a 5-room apartment on the third floor of the clubhouse to accommodate the caretaker, his wife, and family. They are the only permanent help we have through the winter but naturally we have extra help outside during the summer. We have made no recent changes in the course only attempting to keep it in the best condition possible. The clubhouse has been repainted and redecorated with new draperies acquired. We have had to enlarge the locker room, and as soon as material is available, it is our intention to enlarge the first floor making larger rooms for the ladies' locker room, commissary, etc.

Year-Around Program

"Located on the north side of our property is a small lake containing a considerable number of fish. Since many of our members like to fish, the lake is used all summer, and likewise for skating in the winter months. We also have a skeet shoot which will again become more active as soon as ammunition is available.

"I believe our yearly dues are very reasonable being only \$30.00. We do have other means of income as the club is in demand constantly throughout the year for civic activities, dinners, meetings, etc."

The total operating cost of the club for 1945 was \$4,733.80. Its course is 9 holes with sand greens and provides many interesting shot possibilities.

The club is definitely a civic asset of a busy, tranquil and flourishing agriculture, cattle and industrial little town in which 70% of the residents own their own homes. In the old days Wild Bill Hickok was its own marshal when the cowboys brought Texas cattle to Abilene for shipping. But now all is peace in Abilene and the man with a hot putter can keep the sportively inclined well under control.

Greenkeepers' Testimonials As Public Relations Help

There's been a lot said about the problem of raising the public recognition of the golf course superintendent to the degree merited by the man primarily responsible for playing conditions at the clubs. There has been decided advance in this respect during the past 10 years, especially since the tie-up with colleges has helped to give many greenkeepers more confidence and more experience in publicly expressing themselves.

Another factor that has helped improve the public relations status of the course superintendents is the interest in home lawn maintenance to a far higher general standard than was the case a decade ago. Everybody who begins to take an interest in his own lawn, and especially in these days of high prices for garden labor, soon learns to consider the man who establishes and maintains golf course turf as the ranking expert on grass.

Greenkeepers have seen that factor develop to the extent that it's common for men in charge of golf courses to be consulted by members who seek sound advice not only on turf but on other phases of landscaping care.

But what has that meant in added income or a general public increase of respect for the greenkeeper's professional

status? The fact is that it has meant very little.

Nevertheless, there are indications that greenkeepers may be on the threshold of cashing in. Surveys by marketing and advertising experts have disclosed that the superintendent of a well maintained golf club now has top standing with many home lawn and garden fans as an authority whose guidance they can depend upon implicitly.

The next step then, according to several advertising men who have been concerned with such surveys, is use of product testimonials by greenkeepers for use in advertising to the general public. Such testimonials wouldn't be forthcoming unless the greenkeeper's experience with the product had been sufficient to warrant his endorsement. His professional reputation among his colleagues in greenkeeping, and with officials and members of his club would be at stake, and he would not take the risk of approving a product of questionable merit.

The widespread use of phony testimonials, for which handsome sums are paid by advertisers to people who may not use the product, or not be qualified for authoritative expression concerning it even if they did use it, exhibits the popularity of testimonial advertising. With the valid, honest evidence of greenkeepers' endorsement a testimonial would have