



Radio Magnate Reviews Club as an Investment

By HERB GRAFFIS

IN ROLLING country northwest of Chicago the Skycrest Club is rapidly taking form along interesting new lines. Skycrest formerly was the Kildeer Country club with two excellent 18-hole courses and a large and attractive clubhouse, constructed during the boom days of the 20's. When the depression hit, Kildeer, being one of the later private clubs of the Chicago district, naturally was one of the first to feel the pressure. With gasoline rationing and the necessity of quickly converting into cash some estate holdings that included Kildeer paper, the club disbanded.

Thus ended the life of a well-appointed club that had begun with bright promise and enthusiasm and which had suffered financial vicissitudes not uncommon to prewar golf clubs.

It appeared that Kildeer was doomed to its previous status as farmland when along came Gene Dyer, one of the nation's most successful independent radio station owners. Dyer bought the property as an investment and contemplated making it his country home. The club is situated on the highest land between Chicago and Milwaukee. As altitude is rated in some parts of the United States this club property doesn't qualify for the Skycrest title it now bears, but in the

prairieland around Chicago it sticks up and commands lovely vistas of well-maintained investments of gentlemen farmers.

Club As An Investment

As Dyer considered his buy he continued to be intrigued by the thought that as a wisely operated private club it would be a better investment for him than it would be a farm. Therein lies the basic element of the Skycrest enterprise; it must operate on the same sort of a platform that makes a success of a private business despite keen competition. Dyer should have a pretty fair idea of how to go about that, inasmuch as he's done exceedingly well bucking powerful and smart competition in the broadcasting business.

Dyer is a genius at marketing and a canny man with figures. His market analysis disclosed that in Chicago's north and northwest suburban territory many highly desirable private club potential members were virtually excluded from membership by the prevailing initiation and due costs. He found that approximately 60 percent of representative private club memberships in the Chicago district were older than 45 years. Wartime conditions in the type of private country clubs a younger man with a growing family would like to join had

been freezing out this class of candidate for membership.

Whether this class of potential members had returned from war service or had been in industry during the war, these younger people had financial leeway for recreation that would assure lively patronage of a country club built and operated along advanced lines, investigations revealed.

Dyer is a man who looks at financial figures with the gift of being able to see them in terms of human beings. The figures on remodeling the clubhouse, on restoring the course, on making innumerable improvements and additions, meant to Dyer that an organization would have to be secured to plan, supervise and conduct the job. So the figures were converted into an operation pleasing and care-free for the members, and into a profit for Dyer.

Hires Club Executives

Dyer engaged Barney O'Grady as manager, Jerry Glynn as pro, and Ray Davis as greenkeeper. All three are widely known in golf as highly successful men in their departments of the business. O'Grady was manager of Olympia Fields before joining the Marines. Glynn had made himself noted as a businessman pro by his work at Olympia Fields, Barrington, Park Ridge, and Knollwood in the Chicago District. Davis had been greenkeeper at Kildeer for 14 years and had maintained the 36 holes and grounds in fine condition.

Jules Marling, nationally known for outstanding architectural jobs, was engaged to remodel the clubhouse. Clifton Crow, Ltd., was set to work on interior decoration.

This clubhouse remodeling job is a major operation and one of the far too few in which the men who'll have to do the operating have had fullest latitude in presenting their observations and ideas to the architect. Dyer has gone all out on this phase, too, in authorizing ample initial expense to make certain of charm and utility for the members and efficient operation by the staff.

One part of the reconstruction that members won't realize will have strong effect in providing superior service at the club, is helps' quarters on the third floor. These are about as good as exist at any country club.

Fine use has been made of large "picture" windows to brighten the inside of the clubhouse and to bring indoors the beautiful panoramas of the course and surrounding territory. Special efforts have been made to make the men's and women's locker-rooms striking examples of social and service sections of a golf club. Even the entrances have been redesigned. They are far from being like the usual country

club entrances, which have no more atmosphere of welcome than any other doors to basements or storage rooms of buildings.

Special shower and locker-rooms are provided for youngsters of members who'll be using the pool. The members' children's angle also is cared for by a spacious and well-equipped playground. That's fenced in and will be supervised by trained personnel.

Small Plane Airfield

At one end of the men's locker-room is a large "picture" window overlooking part of the courses, lakes that make exciting waterholes, and a section of the airfield which has been built to care for the small plane use that's inevitable at a club with younger members.

Interesting and attractive use is made of glass blocks in remodeling the women's locker-room. Much expert attention also has been given to the lighting in the women's as well as the men's locker-rooms.

The lobby of the clubhouse has been completely redesigned to give a warmer atmosphere of welcome than generally is reflected in the architecture and furnishing of larger clubhouse entrances.

Major changes have been made to facilitate food and beverage service with minimum demands on time and labor by the employees.

The grill has been given particularly ingenious treatment to make it a place that really fits a country club instead of looking as many country club grills do; as a transplanted down-town saloon or a roadhouse room.

Further evidence of the cooperative planning of the architect, pro and manager, prior to beginning construction, is seen in arrangements made for directing traffic of men and women to the pro shop which is in a building detached from the clubhouse. Glynn and O'Grady maintain, and Dyer agrees with them, that a smartly conducted pro shop performs a definitely valuable function in giving members a return on their club initiation fee and dues.

Clubhouse layout and heating has been arranged to provide unusually good facilities for winter sports, and Skycrest intends to make the most of its natural advantages for skating, skiing, tobogganing and trap- and skeet-shooting.

Membership Classifications

Notwithstanding the extensive alterations and improvements at current prices, the fact remains that the Kildeer property was acquired at a forced sale figure keeps the investment at a figure allowing low prices for good private club membership in the Chicago district. There'll be the full membership privileges at an

initiation fee of \$100 and annual dues of \$180, paid in eight installments. Then there'll be a membership class calling for initiation of \$100, with clubhouse-use fees ranging from \$25 for the head of a family to \$10 annually for a child from 10 to 16. Greens fees and swimming pool fees also are on an as-used basis under this plan.

Skycrest also plans to receive a limited number of trade tournaments. Play of these tournaments will be restricted to one of the club's two courses. A locker-room and bar, with grill food service, is provided in a separate section of the clubhouse for these affairs so they'll not conflict with the members' enjoyment of privacy in clubhouse and on the course.

The smooth segregation of trade tournaments appears to be a logical handling for this factor of revenue necessary to keep the cost down for Skycrest's private members. In the Chicago district quite a few of the trade, social and service organization tournaments have fields that are about 75 percent members of private golf clubs. But with the play the Chicago district clubs got the past two years, and rationing difficulties, these tournaments which previously had been welcomed at private clubs, got turned down.

The Skycrest club's plan promises to be something for business interests in golf to watch as a carefully thought-out procedure for making good private club golf a good private investment.

Chicago DGA's War Events Raise \$123,322

Chicago District GA believes that the Chicago area golfers raised more money for servicemen activities than any golfers of any other district in the world. Events fostered by the CDGA raised \$123,322.21. In 1942 there was \$22,522 raised by the Hale America tournament, in 1943 there was \$15,600 raised; in 1944 the total was \$32,400; and in 1945, various events the CDGA fostered, raised \$51,500. These sums are in addition to the servicemen's benefits from the Tam O'Shanter tournaments put on by George S. May.

The CDGA at its 1945 annual meeting presented a round-up of its wartime operations. Retiring pres., Lowell D. Rutherford said:

"Wide-spread publicity has been given to the veterans rehabilitation program whereby athletic equipment, sports contests and entertainment is provided by funds raised through golf and other sports. The idea originated through the CDGA and has been successfully carried on by that organization.

"1942 saw the Hale America National Open golf championship at Ridgemoor

CC, the only major golf event of the year, which split \$22,522.38 between the Navy Relief Society and the United Service Organizations. The Hale America was replaced by the Victory National golf championships in 1943-44 and -45 for funds to be used to provide recreation facilities not provided for in government budgets, for Hospitalized service men. During the same three years the CDGA fostered the Dime-A-Round plan to secure monies for the world renown Chicago Service Men's Centers where in excess of 100,000 service personnel weekly were given food, shelter and many of the niceties of life without charge. The fund, including 1945, has amounted to \$42,457.94.

"Nine-hole golf courses have been built and are now open for play at both Hines Memorial Hospital and the Great Lakes Naval Hospital. Two 18-hole putting clocks were built at Hines and two 9-hole clocks at Downey Hospital through the co-operation of the Mid-West Greens-keepers Assn. Equipment to play and to maintain the courses has also been given to Hines, Downey and Great Lakes.

"Thousands of service people have enjoyed the use of the District clubs through the USO, the Service Men's Centers and special parties staged by the clubs.

Harry Turpie, Pro Pioneer, Dies at New Orleans

Harry S. Turpie, 71, died Dec. 18, of a heart attack, at the driving range in New Orleans where he was instructing. He was one of the few remaining pioneer pros in the U. S. He came from St. Andrews, Scotland, in 1897 to be pro at the old Washington Park course in Chicago. In 1898 he was pro at Glenview (Ill.) GC and in 1899 he went to the Edgewater GC. Among other caddies in whom Harry Turpie aroused and directed ambition to be fine golfers was Chick Evans, who was one of Turpie's lads at Edgewater. Harry laid out the present Edgewater course.

In 1900 Turpie went to New Orleans to develop the Audubon GC, which was the first course in that city. From 1900 to 1912 he spent his summers in Chicago and his winters in New Orleans at Audubon. From 1912 on he resided the year around in New Orleans.

He designed and supervised building of many courses in the south, and developed many youngsters into excellent golfers. Among them were his daughter, Marian and his son, Harry, jr. Harry Turpie often was referred to as "the Daddy of Southern golf," and throughout the nation was warmly regarded by amateurs and pros.