

Managers' 25th Convention Seeks Operating Answers

By HERB GRAFFIS

Club Managers Association of America, returning for its Jubilee convention Feb. 10-13 to Chicago where it was founded 25 years ago, drew a record attendance. More than 600 men and women club managers and suppliers participated in discussions at the Edgewater Beach hotel concerning the problems of country and city clubs.

Rising taxes and operating costs were the chief difficulties considered, with the labor situation coming in for third place among managerial headaches.

Much of the discussion was frank and off the record. The complex tax problems, a variety of labor conditions and a wide gap between various club characters, operations and policies called for intimacy of testimony and discussion that often made recorded proceedings inadvisable. The conferences were of definite practical value.

Always the club managers have to use considerable discretion in stating and seeking solutions for their problems as many of the problems are basically those of membership nature or official policy, or something having to do with government regulations. The clubs are more afraid of government looking for a chance to make trouble than general business is, and that means a condition of acute nervousness.

Standards Change

The change in service standards in club life and club management has been marked since the CMAA earlier days, and the veteran managers as well as younger men and women in the field, confessed themselves up against tough handicaps in maintaining the club atmosphere at a modernized version of its traditional character. Harry H. Davies, one of the CMAA founders and a distinguished Canadian manager, in speaking on "Club Management in Retrospect" brought memories of the days when the problems of the manager were less severe although members educated in fine living had to have their wants anticipated just as members of the better clubs do today. The manager's difficulty now is that at numerous clubs the members don't know what they want, but complain about what it costs them.

The general session was opened by Pres. Wm. Bangs, Jr., and Convention chmn. Wallace Wommeldorf. After officers' reports, which showed the national association and its regional chapters in solid,

smooth-running shape, Alex F. Talbot, a Chicago business executive, talked on physical conditioning for the manager.

Talbot emphasized correct breathing, good posture, walking and simple exercises, some of which he demonstrated.

Herb Graffis, GOLFDOM's editor, spoke on the rough conditions that confront country club management in particular. He quoted from an economics book by Ernest Shinner, Chicago capitalist, in which Shinner related that country club management with its demands for skilled employees and short season, was the toughest business he'd ever tackled. Graffis cited the financial plight of organized baseball, the financial difficulties looming for university and pro football due to television, and the fact that boxing was getting by only because of television sponsors' income, as indications that the sports financial picture wasn't as fiscally bright as Americans are inclined to believe. Therefore, he remarked, the golf club has to be foresighted and honest with itself in getting its own finances in sound shape. He observed that too often in the case of private clubs, officials are inclined to believe that the solution of every problem is canning the manager, course superintendent or professional, when the correct solution actually lies in organizing, deputizing and supervising at the top official level. Numerous instances of unsatisfactory club operation, he recalled, were the result of hiring competent men and not allowing them to do the job the men thought they were hired to do, but having the job bossed by amateurs elected solely because of club politics.

Graffis also questioned the timidity of clubs when facing taxation or other political situations, and said the usual presidential year sneering references to "the country club set" was an indication of the politicians' contempt for honest men who contribute heavily to campaign funds.

Training Programs Explained

Leslie W. Scott, director, Hotel and Institutional Management, Michigan State College, and John Anderson of the University of Florida's new school of club and resort management, gave addresses on various phases of personnel training. Scott said a lot of the blame for unsatisfactory service by club employees is due

to failure to tell them clearly what they are expected to do when they are hired. If the details of the job are fully explained the fitness of the prospective employee for the job is accurately determined, Scott remarked. Labor turnover, to a large extent, is the result of the employer at a club hiring employees who don't understand the job and wouldn't take it if they knew what is expected. Due to varying demands of members the club job requires an intensive and well organized training program that must be in operation right at the start of a short season. The manager also has to have a simple, definite and very well organized plan of training the young men and young women who work at country clubs during school vacations. Scott brought out the point that when an employee is conspicuously corrected in public it can be a sign that the manager, as well as the employee, needs training. The subject of member training was touched lightly, but more in detail later at a round table discussion.

Anderson outlined the general qualifications of a qualified club manager and said that civic-mindedness should be one of the qualities of the good club manager as he is, in effect, a representative of a select group of community residents. Anderson also said that a requirement of the Florida course was that students would have to work at clubs 3 months before being eligible for graduation from the Florida school. He remarked that plans for the course involved a short "refresher course" for managers, probably to be conducted in the winter.

The CMAA, at the suggestion of Wayne Miller, is considering sponsoring a scholarship in the new Florida school.

Lyle E. Stovall, color expert of Sherwin-Williams Co., gave an interesting practical talk on "Color Styling". He showed charts as guides to the correct selection of colors of floor coverings, walls, curtains, furniture and table setting to harmonize.

J. S. Anhoff, pres., Albert Pick & Co., talking on "What's New in Equipment", said that the managers were keeping up so well on the new ideas he couldn't add much to their investigations. He admitted that he, like many managers, wasn't sure about the prospects of ray cooking but it was worth watching.

Supply and Equipment Situation

Anhoff outlined the buying situation as being in fairly good shape due to clubs and hotels doing so much scare buying at the start of the Korean war that in some cases there is an excess of inventory.

Material shortages have buying of few items virtually stopped now, but most needs can be supplied if the buyer can wait. Prices in several lines, among them china, are inflated but cheap considering

a normal dollar. China patterns are good. Glassware isn't in the class with that of the old days when clubs used to demand the best and employees respected it, but a good standard is available. Silverware is on the critical list and you won't get it in former construction, but you'll get satisfactory items, generally after waiting 6 to 8 months.

Aluminum wear is available only in limited stocks. Dealers' stock is low in stainless steel equipment but chrome steel is doing O.K. although not as well wearing as stainless steel. Kitchen equipment is hard to get because the government is a big buyer.

Plastics are not displacing china yet in club service.

Wagons instead of trays are coming in strong. Now the problem is where to park them, Anhoff noted. Textiles are close to normal. Carpet with synthetic fibre must be considered instead of insisting on expensive all-wool.

There's not much of a supply of metal furniture. Wood furniture of good design and construction is available on fairly quick deliveries. Use of plastic-top tables is growing at clubs.

Division of "Service" Income

The country club round table session, presided over by Howard E. Rodgers of Evanston (Ill.) GC, started off with a lively discussion about distribution of service charge income between waiters or waitresses, bartenders, busboys, and kitchen help. Although tipping is growing at country clubs, despite regulations, the service charge split is by far the big added factor in house employees pay.

A definite trend is toward giving waiters a fixed percentage on food and drinks served with the bartenders getting percentage on drinks served at the bar.

Wide variations in charges of extra waiters were reported. Also mentioned were big differences in waiters' union attitudes, with some managers saying that unions wouldn't make them keep loafers and incompetent and dirty waiters. In these cases, the union did a good job for the clubs and for the waiters in getting them employment.

A trend toward higher dues also was much in evidence. Several successful managers said the only way of keeping clubs out of hock was to set up expenses higher than expected and income lower than expected, in preparing the annual budget.

The delicate matter of member education was candidly discussed with the consensus being that a minority of members often prevent officials and managers operating a club on a sound financial basis and to the general satisfaction of members. The highest class clubs reported practi-

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1952 OFFICERS

Page Curran, River Crest CC, Fort Worth, Texas, was unanimously elected President. Carl J. Jehlen of the Glen Ridge (N.J.) CC, was elected vp. L. Roy Leonard of the Cuvier Press Club, Cincinnati, Ohio, was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer. Directors elected for a three-year term were Clyde Mingledorff of the Atlanta (Ga.) Athletic Club, and Edward M. Grenard of the University Club of Detroit, Michigan. Elected for a two year term was Jack Fina of the Elmhurst (Ill.) CC. Elected for one year was G. H. Davies of the Kanawaki GC of Montreal, Canada.

clubs' help problem is accenting the pension matter.

Liquor handling systems, on the locker basis in territories where liquor regulations prohibit club over-the-bar sales, also were talked about with several interesting plans agreeable with local laws being outlined.

Mention was made of the bump clubs received when slot machines were outlawed. Now managers find that in most cases the machines trained the members to expect too much for clubhouse prices.

Minimum House Accounts Grow

Minimum house accounts were discussed as the answer to many cases of club operating losses. In some instances it was said that summer vacations of members

prevented adoption of the minimum monthly charge. One manager reported that a \$20 minimum monthly house charge brought members out in the winter and enabled him to keep his crew intact. Generally, experience with minimum house accounts was good.

A manager told how giving members free cocktails from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. brought members to parties on time and saved help overtime charges. He said that the average consumption of free cocktails was less than two, and about a third of the members sip the cocktails then order highballs.

The tax complexities and variations got attention. Particularly discussed were voluntary payments by members such as to Christmas funds. The tax situation on honorary life members also was mentioned by several managers.

One of the touchy problems mentioned was that of under-age daughters and sons of members at parties. Managers were unanimous that no drinks should be served to the kids. If the parents ordered and the kids dipped in, that was up to the parents. Youngsters liven up the clubs, and wedding parties, especially, are features at clubs, so it's up to the parents to preserve home practices.

There was quite a bit of talk about floor coverings for locker-rooms and grills, particularly, with managers reporting sat-

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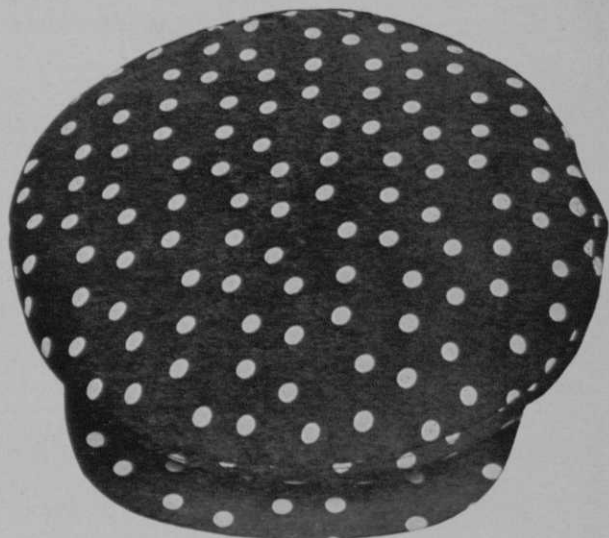
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isfactory results with several different materials.

As usual, the relaxing hours were hospitably and expertly handled. Breakfasts, lunches and dinners kept the crowd together for the reunions and informal discussions that often yield as many answers as the programmed talks.

Chicago chapter arranged a crowded program for women managers and wives of the men managers and put on a preview cocktail party. The entertainment schedule included other affairs given by Pabst Brewing Co., Swift & Co., Pfaelzer Bros., Shenango Pottery, Arthur Schiller & Sons, Peter Zapherio and F. Korbel.

HOW PRO FOUND PROFIT

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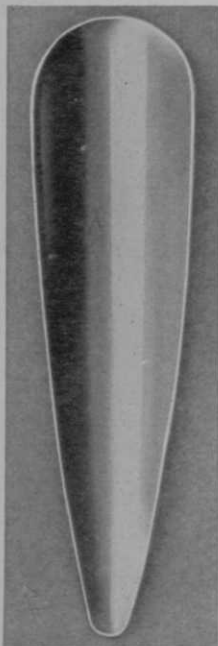
winter and was able to get some handy-men from the course force to do carpenter work, painting, repairing and general clean-up. As a result I got the shop in very good shape, carefully and for less than I had thought it would cost me.

The back of my shop never had been the way I wanted it, and it was getting more unsatisfactory with an increasing number of bag carts. We overhauled that.

Some showcases that were relics were taken out and an old man who had been working on the course in the summer built

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