

# Sales Doubled in 2 Years; Pro Tells How It's Done

*Fine Service, Topgrade Merchandise, Attention to Women, Alert Staff Spell Success at San Gabriel*

By **LEN KENNETT**

Professional, San Gabriel (Calif.) CC



Len Kennett

**I**N the two years I've been at San Gabriel, I've had the gratifying experience of seeing our pro shop sales increase about 100 per cent.

No one thing has accounted for this rather remarkable increase. Offhand, I can put my finger on at least four factors that I think may be responsible, yet there is a chance that I am overlooking some others that may be of even greater importance. But first, let's look at what I think the success of our operation is due to:

1. Great emphasis is put on giving top service to members.
2. The merchandise we handle, especially golfwear, has been upgraded.
3. We've gone after the women's business.
4. I have very capable assistants and a

membership that is both loyal and responsive.

## Most Important Factor

I suppose that service is the most overworked word in the pro shop vocabulary. Undoubtedly, every shop in the country gives it in one form or another. But it is not so much the giving as the way in which it is rendered. It can be given cheerfully, grudgingly or in the most matter of fact way, but it's my observation that if you leave a person with the feeling that you're happy to handle even the most menial chore for him, you've won a supporter. Trite as that may sound, it's important in business.

I broke in at Santa Anita GC under Roy Bearden and Bill Reynolds, both easy going fellows but very competent businessmen. They never let me forget that service, even in the 12th or 14th hour of the working day in a pro shop has to be just as sprightly and cheerfully performed as it was in the first hour after the shop was opened. I have adopted their philosophy. My assistants and I are permitted to make our share of mistakes or errors in judgment, but discourtesy or rudeness



Long view of Kennett's shop. It's carpeted, paneled, has beam ceiling, and was built with idea of giving the pro plenty of display area.



Tees are used to spell out coming events in open pegboard area above club display. Large cases at left with latticed windows can be used for a variety of displays. Golf bags are on platform above floor level.

in treatment of customers, no matter how exasperating the latter may be, is unpardonable.

As for top quality merchandise, when I came to San Gabriel one of the first things I did was to make a decision to handle the best stock available. This always had been done where playing equipment was concerned but cheaper lines of wearing apparel were mixed in with the better ones.

It didn't take long to convince me that the members were more quality than price conscious. After that only topdrawer stock was purchased.

#### Model Stock Pattern

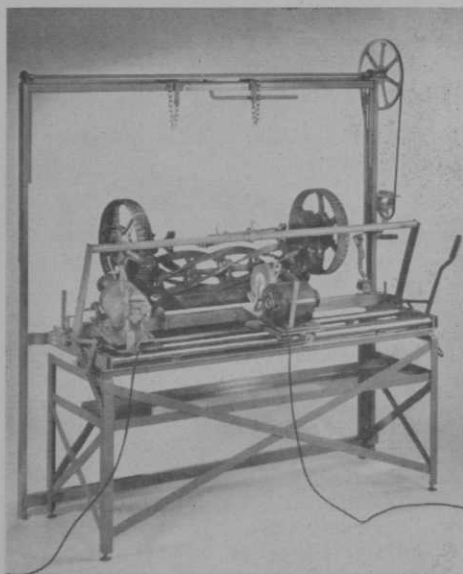
In the last year or so, I have set up a complete list or inventory of what I consider to be model pro shop stock and make all purchases with the thought of keeping this constantly replenished. Since we operate 12 months a year, we rarely allow our inventory to get very low.

The growth of women's business in the last two years has been the most pleasant and surprising thing about my stay at San Gabriel. It was built up rather slowly because, like many pros, I had a  
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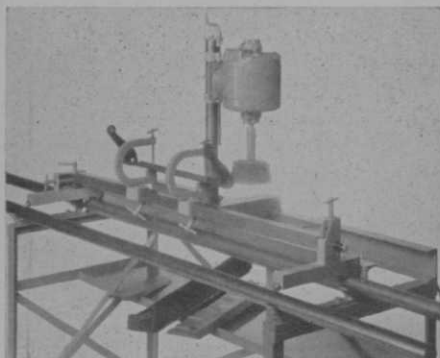
Looking across the San Gabriel shop. Recessed panels along with table, rack displays, enable pro to get nearly every item he handles out where it can be seen by golfers. Note shop's excellent lighting.

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## Sales Doubled in 2 Years

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few doubts as to how much golf merchandise women will buy. But these didn't last long. When we started bringing in more and a wider range of women's sportswear, our sales kept increasing. This, too, had the indirect effect of substantially increasing sales of clubs and balls to the lady players.

I don't pretend to be an expert on selling to women. Cecilia Garfield, who handles the distaff department for me, would be much more enlightening on this subject if she were writing this article. But this is what both of us have observed: Once a woman gets the habit of shopping in a pro shop, she finds it both more comfortable and congenial than going to a downtown store. She prefers to have a friend wait on her rather than someone who may be a total stranger.

### Versatile Assistants

As for my staff, Cecilia was a real find. She specializes in women's sales, serves as a gift consultant and knows her way with figures when it comes to handling stock records. More recently I have discovered that she also is exceedingly adept in selling men's sportswear. And, in true feminine style, she has an artistic and sales provoking touch in arranging merchandise displays.

My male assistants are Sam Newcomer, who runs the shop in my absence and more or less specializes in men's sportswear and golf club sales. Edward Alva also handles sportswear and club sales but probably spends more time in teaching. The fact that our sales have shot up by such a wide margin since 1957 speaks for the ability of my staff.

### Strong Member Support

In citing the reasons why volume has increased so substantially at San Gabriel in my two years, I mentioned the membership. I am fortunate in having a liberal spending group of golfers who, as I said before, are more quality than price conscious. The nucleus of a good clientele was here when I arrived and it was enlarged by improving service and, I'm sure, by capitalizing on the purchasing power of women players. There also is another big factor that can't be overlooked — there are 585 registered golfers at San Gabriel and of these, I would say that 60 or 70 per cent play quite often.

My average inventory is around \$18,000. All items that are sold are credited daily against goods on hand in the various

merchandise categories and at the end of the month a physical count is made. My system was set up by an accountant and is administered by my staff. Some people feel that perpetual inventory is a make-work proposition, but personally I am sold on it. Because of the system we use, it is rare when we run out of or even low on strong selling items. And it prevents overstocking and consequent drastic sales to liquidate slow moving merchandise.

#### Profits on Trade-Ins

The trade-in situation is something of a headache for us as well as most shops. We try to realize a profit of 20 per cent on the sale of all used clubs and, in many cases, hold these clubs in stock until we are assured of this markup. This is a policy I'd like to see more pros follow because I feel many of them are literally giving the clubs away to get rid of them. It's hurting the market. Trade-ins constitute a small business and there is no reason why it shouldn't be operated profitably.

Lesson business at San Gabriel has held up remarkably well since I came to the club. Other than to keep a lesson appointment book in a conspicuous spot near the cash register, I do little promoting of this type of business. Our players are quite enthusiastic about improving their abilities as golfers and we try to keep them in this frame of mind by playing up the feeling of achievement and even the pleasure that comes from lesson-taking.

We offer seven lessons for \$25 package. Ed Alva, our teaching specialist, encourages most of his pupils to take advantage of this series and has been quite successful in selling it. Altogether, we devote eight or ten hours a week in summer and about five hours a week in the other months to conducting free Junior lessons, furnishing balls and equipment. This, I feel, is quite a lucrative giveaway since it encourages many young players to take an avid interest in golf and it isn't uncommon for a comparatively large number of them to sign up for individual instruction.

#### Promotion Soft Pedaled

We're probably not as promotion-minded at San Gabriel as many pro shops are. Cecilia Garfield and I write columns for the club newsletter describing new merchandise that comes in. On Father's and Mother's Day we drop notes into lockers suggesting gift selections with prices listed. In just about all promotions we stress the convenience of buying at the pro shop, the friendly atmosphere there and such services as gift wrapping. That is the extent of it.

October, 1959

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