

Study Omaha's Golf Market— Then Build a Club to Fit

Architect Floyd Farley (l) and Harold Glissmann supervised design and construction of Miracle Hill

They didn't rush into the building of Miracle Hill — but rather took a survey that proved the need for this new layout. The Result: A course that practically is guaranteed to be an immediate success

See Miracle Hill's clubhouse design on page 28)

Miracle Hill is a new golf club in Omaha.

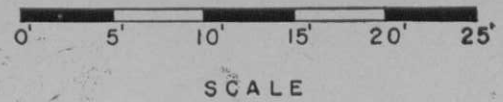
Miracle Hill is somewhat of a miracle in golf business. It is a club that was built after the same sort of a market investigation that would precede the design, manufacture and merchandising of any other product involving a big investment, was made.

Guessing and hoping, rather than investigation then investing, is the customary pattern in getting golf clubs started.

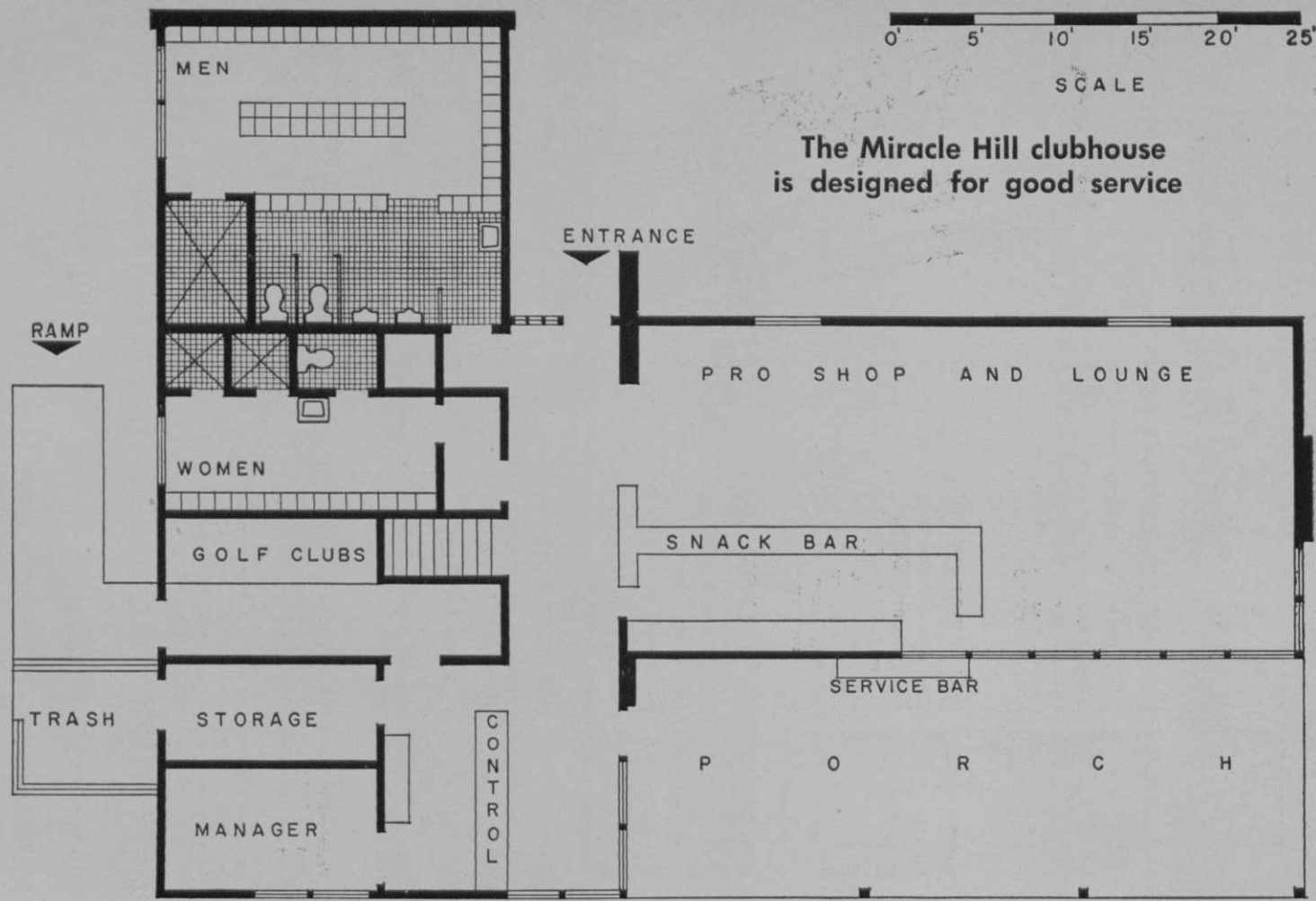
The procedure in preparing Miracle Hill for a specific and desirable class of Omaha golfers should give other persons ideas that not only will save millions in new club building but result in more attractive and useful clubs.

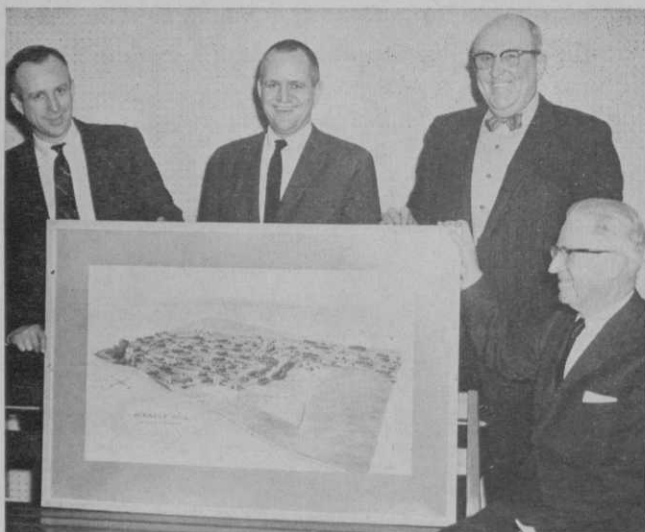
Before a new club is ready for opening, usually, it has tossed away a lot of money because of lack of specifications, contracts, budgets, budget control, effective organization, clearly defined responsibilities of committees, executive supervision and coordination and information

(Text continued on page 30)



The Miracle Hill clubhouse
is designed for good service





Artist drawing of Miracle Hill is held by Dr. H. H. Davis (r). With him in the photo are his two sons, Dr. John and Herbert, Jr., and Harold Glissman (r). Dr. Herbert Davis is chmn. of the board, John is vp, Herbert, Jr. is pres. and treas. and Glissman is vp and general mgr. Tyler Gaines, sec., is Miracle Hill's other officer.

to members and prospective members.

According to golf course superintendents, architects, professionals, clubhouse architects and managers, the private club that spends \$200,000 or more on a new property usually wastes from one-fourth to one-third of its money.

Innate Ruggedness

This waste of their own and their friends' money by good conscientious businessmen engaged in building new golf clubs is something nobody ever has been able to explain. The fact that golf clubs have survived and flourished in spite of large and unnecessary losses of capital funds indicates the innately rugged nature of golf clubs. Clubs seem to be able to survive despite apparently deadly mistakes.

Some promoters recently working new clubs came up with the same screwy ideas that led to failures and receiverships as the building boom of the '20s faded. The low-priced "life membership" arrangements that give promoters a quick grab and leave the club short of operating income is one of those gimmicks. But nobody ever seems to think of asking for and examining construction and operation budgets and probably wouldn't know how to appraise them if they did. Hence the cost of club memberships continue to be unnecessarily high.

This One Is Different

In contrast to the too common picture of golf club economics is the Miracle Hill idea.

Herbert H. Davis, Jr. of the family that

planned Miracle Hill, had Harold Glissmann build it. Glissmann will supervise operation of the club. Davis, an investment banker, looked at Miracle Hill as he would examine any other enterprise in which he might invest his own and his family's money or recommend investments by his clients.

In this light, look at the Miracle Hill market study as Herb Davis, jr. tells the story:

My grandfather, Dr. B. B. Davis, bought a 225 acre farm outside of Omaha in 1905 to establish a hobby farm where he raised certified Holstein cattle. He died in 1933 and the land, without the cattle, passed to my father, Dr. Herbert H. Davis. As farming became less profitable and taxes grew ever higher, our operation started to run in the red and in due course we decided to investigate the possibility of building a golf course.

With the help of GOLFDOM, The National Golf Foundation and others, we soon concluded that there was a need for additional golf facilities in the Omaha area and a public fee type course could be profitable.

The only question then remaining was what type of golf course should we build, what should our approach be to the problem and what should be the basic philosophy of our course.

Four Munny Courses

In Omaha we have four municipal courses — three 9-hole and one 18-hole. Directly across the Missouri River, the

(Continued on page 101)

Build Club to Fit Market

(Continued from page 30)

city of Council Bluffs, Ia., has one municipally owned 18-hole course, Dodge Park, which is easily the best of the local municipal layouts.

Also in Omaha we have four country clubs. Three of them are comparable and for a city such as Omaha, are of a type to be admired and emulated. They include the Highland CC, which is an excellent predominantly Jewish club, Happy Hollow Club and the Omaha CC. The fourth club is the Omaha Field Club which years ago was one of the great country clubs. But it is located well within the city in an old residential neighborhood and is not the glorious spot it used to be. In addition, it has lost some of its land to various civic projects, including a veterans hospital. The course now is only 5,427 yds. and is a par 67.

I had a large chart made to use at our initial press conference for announcing our fees. It also was used when we filled speaking engagements with various civic groups and luncheon clubs. It showed the 1960 dues for the four private clubs and the current initiation fees. It also included

the cost of playing at Dodge Park. As I have mentioned, Dodge Park is the superior public course. The proposed cost of playing at Miracle Hills also was shown.

The chart demonstrated the dilemma that confronted the Omaha golfer at the time we began planning Miracle Hill.

The most anyone could pay in one year to play on the public courses was \$75, or the cost of a season ticket at Dodge Park. Since Dodge Park and the four Omaha courses are not unusually good municipal facilities, many golfers were completely dissatisfied with them. In Omaha the next best step would be to join the Field Club which costs \$350 initially plus \$325 per year and provides only a 5,400 yd. par 67 course.

Therefore, if a golfer wanted to play on a standard 6,000 yard plus course he really was confronted with the prospect of paying an initiation fee of from \$900 to \$1,500 and dues in the neighborhood of \$450 per year.

You can see from this that golf in Omaha was designed for the "prince or the pauper." The great mass of reasonably successful people, particularly young married couples with growing families, was completely forgotten.

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We therefore concluded that we should build a golf course that would fill this void. Our next problem was to determine how good a golf course we could afford to build and still keep our rates in line.

We proceeded to analyze the annual reports of the Omaha clubs and the audit reports of as many other comparable courses as we could get our hands on. The results of our analysis were very startling to me as I had always heard the non-golfers at the Omaha CC, where I belong, complaining because they were paying dues to support a golf course they did not use.

Completely contrary to this viewpoint, our analysis indicated that of the total dues that were paid by members belonging to these and other clubs only about one-third went into the golf course and related activities while the balance was spent on purely social activities that are part of country club life.

Looked to Profitable Operation

Pursuing this lead further and after analyzing costs, etc., it became apparent to us that we could actually build the finest golf course in this area, and with proper management, make a profit so long as we held our clubhouse facilities to a minimum. This is exactly what we have endeavored to do.

Miracle Hill was designed by Floyd Farley of Oklahoma City. We are convinced that he did an excellent job.

I am sure that the older country club courses could be reproduced for less money than we spent at Miracle Hill. I am convinced that we very definitely got our money's worth for the money that we did spend. Given a few years in which the 2,500 trees we planted will have an opportunity to grow, and the fairways to become well established, I am sure that we will be recognized as having the finest course between Chicago and Denver or between Minneapolis and Kansas City.

To Avoid Overcrowding

Our entire philosophy and operational program is designed to conform to the type of course we have built. We will, of course, be greatly interested in having as much volume as we can but still we do not plan to start foursomes in intervals of less than 8 minutes. In other words, we want to get our volume from seven-day-a-week play of the course rather than by cramming them on during peak periods.

We will feature reserve starting times from dawn to dark seven-days-a week, completely eliminating the need for any waiting at the first tee. We are going to insist that our employees see to it that Miracle Hill meets its starting-time commitments very promptly, eliminating the possibility of a delay on the first tee because of complications.

We will staff the course only with people who are congenial so our customers fully enjoy Miracle Hill. With two surgeons in the family, and on the board, we are going to be highly fussy about the appearance of the clubhouse and grounds.

We do not feel that we are compelled to provide the public with a course that everyone can afford. This being America, having money should still have its reward. So we are catering only to those people who can afford to play on this type of a course and who want the sort of accommodations that they will find at Miracle Hill.

Includes Majority of Players


We feel that this includes the great majority of the golfers in the Omaha area. It includes that large group of pseudo-transient citizens who, working for large national corporations, are subject to transfer and don't care to pay the large initiation fees of the country clubs when they are faced with the possibility of being transferred at any time. As soon as our fairways are in shape we will have electric cars for rent.

We have a Men's Special Day Event season ticket for \$45 and Ladies Day Special Event season ticket at \$45 per 18 holes — or \$30 for 9 holes.

We will operate over a 22 week period beginning on May 1 and continuing through Sept. Thursday p. m. men only will play from noon until 4 p. m. Thursday will be known as Stag Day. In order to play on Thursday afternoon a man must either pay the regular \$3 green fee or, if he prefers, he can buy a season ticket for \$45. This will entitle him to play every Thursday afternoon during this period.

Friday afternoon will be called "Salesman's Day." It will be identical to Stag Day in all respects including the availability of a \$45 season ticket. The Thursday ticket, incidentally, is only good on Thursday and the Friday ticket is only good on Friday.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings will be available for ladies



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group play. For \$45 a lady can buy a ticket for any one of these days. For \$30 she will be able to buy a 9-hole season ticket for any one of these days with the requirement that she tee off by 9:30 in the morning and that she play the back nine.

We will have "men only" playing during the \$5 periods on Saturday, Sunday and holidays and will sponsor mixed golf events on Sunday afternoons.

PGA Searches for Survivors of Deceased Committeemen

Some time ago the PGA made up attractive plaques for persons who had served in the past on the organization's executive committees. The men listed below are deceased and survivors, to whom the plaques could be delivered, cannot be located. If you can provide the PGA at Main & Broadway, Dunedin, Fla., with the names and addresses of any survivors of these former officials, an attempt will be made to deliver the plaques to them.

Here is the list of the deceased officials and their sections: Robert Barnett, Mid Atlantic; William C. Byrne, Philadelphia; Charles Clark, Northern Ohio; Stewart Gardner, Illinois; W. V. Hoare, Illinois & Florida; Robert Johnstone, Pacific Northwest; Joseph Mitchell, Northern Ohio; and George Turnbull, Pacific Northwest.

Festivities Mark Opening of Warren's New Pampa CC Shop

When Hart Warren officially opened his new pro shop at Pampa (Tex.) CC early in March he did it with a flourish. An official "open house" was held at which door prizes were given. More than 100 persons attended. Four neighboring pros also dropped in to help with the inauguration festivities.

Warren's new shop contains 2,400 sq. ft. and is of colorful brick exterior construction. A patio, sundeck and floor length windows add to the shop's comfortable look. About one-fourth of the shop is taken over by storage area and the rest contains the display room and Warren's office. The Pampa pro and club officials made a quite extensive survey of other shops in the area before deciding on a final design. Extensive remodeling of the clubhouse is planned to start soon. Pampa CC has more than 400 members.