

# Curtis Creek's Volunteers

*Golfers Pay Part of Their Way at This Indiana Course by Pitching in to Help With Maintenance and Building Chores*



Curtis Creek clubhouse as seen from beyond the ninth green.

Curtis Creek CC in Rensselaer, Ind., probably is typical of many small town country clubs in the U.S. There may be as much golf per member played here as at any place you can name, and the golfer has to partly pay for his play by donating workdays. This scheme has been traditional since the Indiana club was founded some 40 years ago. It was accented, or perhaps doubly accented, through the Depression years when the course had to be contracted from 18 to 9 holes and members had to increase their quota of donated labor to keep their property from going under the hammer at a sheriff's sale.

Just last summer, in fact, Curtis Creek's volunteers were called upon to chip in their labor at what at many clubs might be considered above and beyond the call of obligation. Bob Clarke, the supt., was injured quite seriously and wasn't able to return to work for about twelve weeks. His maintenance crew of three men with the aid of members not only kept the course in shape, but in extraordinarily fine shape despite the threat of wilt and other ailments that can beset

turf during the hot months.

## Here's What They've Done

Over the years, members of the Rensselaer club have done these things: Practically built their course from scratch; Erected the original clubhouse 30 years ago and later added wings to it; Painted the clubhouse inside and out every four or five years; Transferred enough stolens from nurseries to greens to cover at least half of the state of Indiana; Reclaimed the second nine around 1946 after it was sold and put into pasture land in the '30s; Built and repaired bridges; and installed an irrigation system that today covers practically all of the 18 holes.

If there is anything that is missing from this list that can be done on a golf course, it probably has been taken care of by the Curtis Creek volunteers. The only reason it is omitted is because somebody forgot to mention it.

Does anyone find time to play golf here?

Yes, a great deal of it! Curtis Creek has about 250 members, most of whom live in Rensselaer, about 10 minutes away.

When the five o'clock whistle sounds it isn't unusual for as many as 75 to 100 men and women to swarm over the course for twilight play. In the middle of the summer they get in as many as 12 to 15 or 18 holes before the sun goes down. That is one of the real advantages of living in an area where there is plenty of swinging room and where many roads lead to the golf course. Players from Gary and Hammond also come in to take advantage of the semi-private or fee privileges that the Curtis Creek club makes available to them. On Saturdays and Sundays it isn't unusual for the club to have more than 200 players in various stages of playing or getting ready to play the course. From mid-May until well after Labor Day, a kind of festival air prevails around the Rensselaer club, at least from noon until dark. The family picnic basket is one of the more familiar sights here, but that doesn't mean that the clubhouse dining room is run at a loss.

### **Don't Go Into Debt**

Officials of Curtis Creek have always operated the club on the theory that the fewer the financial entanglements, the better. The board, which presently is made up of nine Class I stockholders, never has had much traffic with mortgages even though its membership long has included bankers. Material for the original clubhouse was donated by Thompson Ross and volunteer labor built it. Two years ago when a \$5,000 locker-room was added, 18 members put up the cash for the project and the club paid them back in monthly installments, without interest. When new maintenance and clubhouse equipment is added, the membership is assessed only a small amount to finance it.

Over the years, Rensselaer construction and business men have donated the use of a good deal of heavy equipment to help in making capital improvements in the course. When the second 9 was reactivated in 1946 probably more donated equipment than ever could have been used was wheeled in. But that is typical of how things are done in the northwest Indiana community.

### **Rebuilding Started in 1946**

Like many small clubs, Curtis Creek barely survived the Depression. It revived somewhat around 1940, but World War II again knocked it back on its heels. It did manage, though, to con-

tinue operations throughout the war years. In 1946, Emmet Eger, Homer Hendrickson, Gaylor Hershberger, Dr. Ray and Charles Beaver and several other Rensselaer residents stirred up the old members and added new ones to start the reconversion project. It was during this period that everyone who had the least interest in the club volunteered his help. The old nine and the clubhouse were given a thorough face lifting and the pasture land, which had been re-purchased, was re-converted to its onetime glory.

The Curtis Creek course is built on two levels and at least two or three of its holes rate architecturally and artistically with any that can be found in the state of Indiana. Don (Swede) Lyons, the pro-manager, is an imaginative promoter of club events and much of the activity that goes on at the Rensselaer course can be directly attributed to him. In the last five years, Lyons has been running an area-wide amateur tournament for women that has steadily increased in popularity. In 1960 he added a pro-am for men that gives promise of developing into something bigger than just a sectional affair. Last year about 50 pros and 100 amateurs took part in this event. Prize money amounted to \$1,500. Swede hopes to improve on this, bringing in a larger field and upping the purse. Mrs. Lyons is in charge of the clubhouse and operates the food concession.

### **Courtesy Reminder**

One in each foursome playing the Gaston (N.C.) CC course is handed a small card which reads: "I will accept the responsibility of this foursome for the following courtesies: 1. Repair of ball marks on greens and replacement of divots in fairways. 2. Smooth footprints in sand-traps. 3. Putting used cups at drinking stations in trash containers." Furman Hayes, Gaston pro, says the idea of making one player responsible has proved to be good practical psychology.

### **New England GCSA Officers**

New England GCSA has elected the following officers and trustees for 1962: N. J. Sperandio, pres.; Joseph Butler and Ray Brigham, vps; William A. Ash, sec.; and Arthur L. Cody, treas. Trustees are George Webster, Marion Finizia and Michael O'Grady.