

Here's how Frank Miscocki (r) helped to ease the crop surplus . . . He took his land out of production and built something that's needed—a golf course

By LESTER FOX

U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service,
Upper Darby, Pa.

Six years ago Frank Miscocki got his fill of farming. In one season he struggled in slimy, knee-deep mud to help a neighbor install irrigation pipe. Then he watched in despair as 105 acres of his own sweet corn withered in a drought. That was enough. He liked farming but figured the cash returns were too slim for the hard work, risks and large capital investment involved.

"What can I do that's something like farming, that will keep me outdoors," Miscocki wondered. Then he had it. Golf! He'd turn part of his 208-acre farm near Cream Ridge, N. J., into a golf course.

Miscocki had no illusions about the trials ahead. He knew he was in for more hard work and new problems. But he had



New Jersey Farmer Sows Greens, Fairways and Reaps A Profit

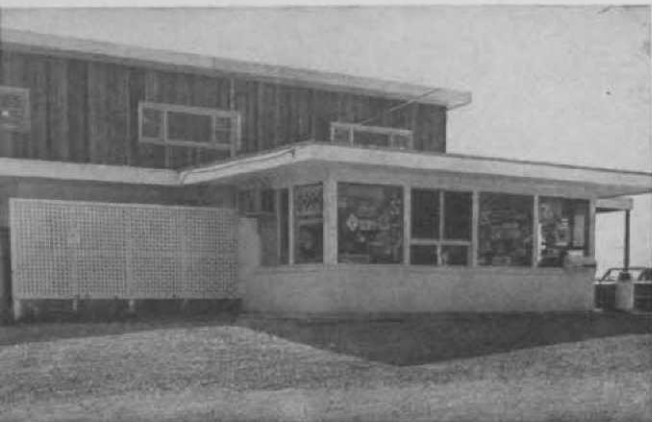
an inquiring mind and boundless energy. And he had to do something.

Studies the Situation

As soon as he decided to go into the golf business, he started studying. He walked a number of courses, noting their layouts. Pros gave him their ideas on what makes an interesting course. Pointers came from supts. and golfers. He buried himself in "Turf Management," that classic by H. Burton Musser, professor emeritus of Penn State University and consulting agronomist for the American Society of Golf Course Architects. From the book he learned what grasses would be best

for his fairways and greens. Checking into the need for another course in his area, Miscocki discovered there were more players and potential players than could be accommodated comfortably on existing links. The public course at nearby Trenton, for example, was usually crowded.

Miscocki took stock of his own resources. He noted several advantages. He owned land and his credit was good. His gently rolling, tree-splashed acres were pretty to look at. They'd make a pleasant setting for golf. His land was in an area where outdoor recreational facilities had not kept pace with population growth. He



(Left) Cream Ridge clubhouse has been enlarged in recent months and now has a pro shop, snack bar, shower and locker rooms. Club started humbly in 1957 with shop shown at right. It's now used as a storage building.

owned a barnful of costly farm equipment that he could use in building and maintaining a course. The work he had done on the land as a cooperator with the Freehold Soil conservation district would enhance the course.

"With U. S. Soil Conservation Service help, he had installed a tile drainage system to get rid of excess water quickly after a rain. For irrigation water he had built a pond. He had grown cover crops and had turned the residue of corn and wheat crops into the earth to keep the soil soft and spongy. All these conservation measures would benefit a golf course.

His studies over, and confident he was on the right track, Miscocki started work on a 9-hole, 35-par course. He did all the

work himself with his own farm equipment except for the hiring of carryalls and draglines and their operators. The first job was grading. Then Miscocki dug several ponds for water hazards and built a pro shop and a drive-in-sit-in snack bar to serve passing motorists as well as golfers. While all this was going on, he planted the fairways and greens to the grasses he had read about in Musser's book.

The planting alone wasn't a cheap operation. It cost \$320 for the 40 bushels of Penncross bentgrass stolons required to plant each green. The Pennlawn red fescue planted in the fairways was another expensive item.

On a clear, sunny April day in 1958, Frank Miscocki opened his 9-hole course to the public. Eight players showed up.

Adds Second Nine

Business picked up quickly, however, and in 1961 the onetime New Jersey farmer added 9 holes to make a 150-acre, 18-hole, par-70 course. He built more ponds for a total of nine. The original farm pond provides irrigation water to keep the greens in top condition. The other 8 ponds serve as traps. He laid additional tile to keep the course playable during and after heavy rains.

Miscocki is now out of the farming business. He rents the other 58 acres of his original farm to a neighboring farmer who produces wheat and potatoes.

The past summer Miscocki enlarged the snack bar at an additional cost of \$20,000 over the original \$8,500. The enlarged



Frank Miscocki's daughter, Janice, helps out in the pro shop. All five members of the Miscocki family help to operate the New Jersey course.

building provides much more space for the pro shop which now stocks a larger and more varied supply of golfing accessories. It also contains a spacious shower room and a small locker room. A second floor was added to make an apartment. The original pro shop is now used for storage.

Family Helps Out

In running the golf business, Miscoski has the help of his whole family: his wife Ellen, their daughter Janice, 20, and sons Jim, 19, and Bill, 16. In addition he employs six girls in the snack bar, five young fellows on maintenance of the course and a fulltime manager of the pro shop.

Fairways are mowed twice a week, greens at least every other day. Maintenance also includes liming, fertilizing and treatment to control insects and fungi.

"I get up at three in the morning to pour water on the greens to help control the fungi," Miscoski said. "Fungi, of course, thrive on dampness but the water knocks the dew off the grass and so it dries faster. Besides, in humid weather we spray the greens with a mercury solution twice a week to stop fungus growth."

Has 500 Players

Today Miscoski's Cream Ridge GC represents an investment of more than \$50,000. It has more than 500 members and a weekly payroll exceeding \$600, not counting the work of the Miscoski family.

Most members pay \$9 a year plus \$2 every time they play on weekdays, \$3 on weekends and holidays. Twenty-five members pay \$120 a year and play as often as they like without paying any additional fees. Members may bring guests at \$2.50 each for a round of play on weekdays, \$4 on weekends and holidays.

Other revenue comes from the snack bar and the sale of golf clubs and balls and other accessories. Pull carts rent at 50 cents a round, electric cars at \$7.50.

Not All Gravy

"It's not all income and no outgo," Miscoski emphasizes. "Forty per cent of my gross goes for operating expenses. That's lower than average because my whole family works on the course. The federal government takes a 20 per cent tax. Liability insurance nicks me for \$2,000 a year. You're always plowing income back into the business because you just can't stand still. No sooner do you get one improvement finished then it's time to start another. Maintenance is contin-

uous. On top of everything else, my taxes have gone up three times since I changed from farming to golf. While I'm better off than when I was farming, and the future looks promising, I'm still in debt to my bank."

While Miscoski does his financing through a commercial bank, today qualified farmers can get long-term government loans for installing outdoor recreation facilities on their farms.

Government Assistance

Miscoski is one of thousands of farmers throughout the U.S. who have converted part or all of their land to paid recreation, including golf. In the year ending June 30, 1963, more than 250 farmers throughout the country requested technical help in the installation of courses on their land, a Soil Conservation Service compilation shows.

The farmers' purpose in turning to paid recreation is to bolster sagging income. Acres that farmers put into recreational enterprises — including golf — are acres that ease the current national headache over the production of crops not now needed. At the same time, paid farm recreation gives a lift to the whole economy.

Indiana GA Joins in Caddie Scholarship Program

The Indiana Golf Assn. became affiliated with the nationwide Evans Scholars Foundation last month by establishing a caddie scholarship program. Actually, according to Richard H. Stackhouse, president, IGA is taking over a going operation since six Evans scholars from Indiana currently are attending college on grants from the Western GA, which administers the scholarship program. There are 135 clubs in IGA which hopes to annually help 50 or more boys obtain educations within the next few years. Chapter houses at Purdue and Indiana U. are planned for the near future.

Twenty golf associations in the U.S. have scholarship programs and more than half are affiliated with Western GA. A total of 467 Evans scholars will be in school this fall.

Senior Women's Amateur

The USGA's Senior Women's Amateur (for women 50 or over) will be played at the CC of Florida, Delray Beach, Oct. 30-31 and Nov. 1. The field is limited to 120 players.