

AFTER LABOR DAY—WHAT THEN?



Imaginative use of foods, parties, dancing, sports and cultural functions can make this a most productive season.

By JEAN EHL Y

Labor Day blues? The pool is closed, teenagers are off to college, parents are busy in fall activities. Even golf slacks off as club members watch the fall televised football games.

What does a club manager do to keep members using club facilities and to maintain the flow of traffic?

Lynn H. Markham, CCM, who has been at the helm of the Amarillo Country Club in Amarillo, Texas, for the past two years considers fall a time of renewal and challenge. Here are some of the ideas he has found successful over the years.

Tournaments stimulate golf interest. Last year the Amarillo Country Club hosted the Amarillo Ladies' Open Golf Tournament and, this year, only slightly preceding Labor Day, the club will welcome the greatest gal golfers in the world, the best of the Ladies Professional Golf Association of America in a \$12,500 open event to be held August 23-30. Markham agrees with the golf professional, Troy Badgett, that such a tournament will keep club members playing oftener, with more improvement goals.

In September will begin the mixed "Mr. and Mrs." tournaments, featuring Scotch foursomes, special dinners, and T-bone cookouts, with the club's Mexicali brass band. Also of interest is the Nov-

ember Granddad's tournament followed by dinner; a gold engraved putter will be awarded the winner.

Probably one of the last outdoor fall feasts will be the Hawaiian Luau at which members of Haiti Hattie's group have performed with grass-skirt zest in the past. Exotic Hawaiian foods are served while Island music plays. The club members wear leis, and fantastic straw hats.

Women golfers are encouraged to attend the weekly Tuesday "Ladies' Day" golf luncheons by the serving of more sumptuous cold weather foods, and occasional cocktail parties.

Concerning foods . . . in the fall, Markham pays special attention to menu planning since lighter, summer fare must be replaced with heavier, more exotic foods.

"Food variety is so important," says Markham, that a club manager friend of mine, Claus Anderson of Albuquerque, visits Europe to learn of new foods for buffets and gourmet menus. He serves foreign foods at monthly buffets, featuring perhaps Yorkshire pudding and roast beef from England, or sauerbraten with potato pancakes from Germany.

"We plan Italian dishes and South-of-the-border, Mexican buffets along with occasional fresh seafood buffets. We perk up food interest in September by flying in lobsters from Maine for a big lob-

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ster feast. In the past, I have even displayed live lobsters in big water-filled glass tanks in the lobby.

"This fall we will introduce members to our new hot-bread feature, serving dinner guests small individual hot loaves of bread on a cutting board with bread cutting knife.

"We welcome menu suggestions from patrons and change the menus frequently. Some diners never recognize the same menus for one of two reasons: they may not be food conscious or they seldom eat out at the club. On the other hand, some members dine out most of the time and like good food in variety. They get to know the menu by memory if they see it too often.

Markham and his kitchen staff are continually alert to use efficient food methods in the new, all stainless steel kitchen at the ACC.

In the fall, after Labor Day, most civic organizations resume activities and where could they find a finer place to dine than at the Amarillo Country Club?

Says Markham, "We dine only organizations that are predominantly made up of club members, which in our case are

Rotarians, the Pen Women, Knife & Fork Club, as well as others.

Special bridge sessions are set up for men who find cold weather a golf deterrent on weekends. Women play more bridge in the fall and attend more luncheons, style shows and book reviews.

In the past, Markham has featured bingo games on family nights, with the exciting awards of free trips to foreign countries. Sometimes three to four such trips per year.

Another project stimulating club interest and good fellowship is the group participation events in the realm of sports and the arts.

Markham states, "Fall means football and club football fans enjoy getting together at the club for dinner or brunch (if it's a daytime game) and then going in a group on chartered buses to the football stadium where they sit in a section reserved for them.

"On occasion in the past, we have even given club members box lunches to take on the bus, if it were a long ride to an afternoon game. I have chartered as many as ten buses for such excursions and, after the game, the football fans brought fine revenue to our cocktail lounge and dining rooms at the club."

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While Markham was at the Petroleum Club in Oklahoma, he chartered planes so members could follow the winning Oklahoma University team to New York.

"While there, we had a night out at the Copacabana," he said. "If a city has a university championship team, the members like to go to out-of-town games which can be arranged in group participation through the club manager."

Currently, Markham plans to host the Amarillo baseball team, the victorious Sonics. They will be feted at an appreciation dinner during which they will give out autographed mitts and bats.

In areas where hockey is a popular sport, Markham has arranged hockey dinners for fathers and sons giving them a package deal price-wise by lumping the price of the dinner, hockey match tickets and bus fares. Such group participation keeps club members thinking of the club

in terms of what-will-we-do-next?

"And, the more you think up things for them to do, the more they do it," muses Markham smilingly.

Since club members are cultured people they enjoy the symphony, good theater and opera.

These events are most popular in the fall and winter seasons so Markham speculates on attendance en masse by club members to just such excellent entertainment, even hosting on occasion, film, opera and symphony guest stars at club functions and dinners.

"One evening" Lynn says, "we hosted Van Heflin, the movie star and had a bust made of him, in butter as our center table piece . . . Another time, our center piece was made of cake frosting, depicting a scene from the opera Aida, which was attended by our club members in a group, after the dinner."

"Dancing brings in revenue—members who are never too young or old to dance

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will enjoy the Arthur Murray Dance classes starting at the ACC this fall.

"Some club members want to learn more about modern dancing and lessons by the Arthur Murray instructors will cost about \$30 for six lessons, held one night per week. This means more cocktails and dining revenues. Special classes for youths may be arranged.

"At the end of the dancing course we will no doubt host dinner parties, inviting the Murray dancers who will put on demonstrations, comparable to the one used on television with the Arthur Murray dancers."

Fall activities include the high school dance clubs, the Amarillo Symphony Ball and other seasonable dances, with such big names bands as Jan Garber, Woody Herman, Joe Reichman. In between times, there is often Saturday night dancing with combo music.

How does one stimulate outside club activity when snow and ice cover the golf course? Markham says, "In Seattle at the Broadmoor Club, we strung lights out over the frozen club lake, imported a band to play skating waltzes and had hot buttered rum stations around the skating rink.

"We also enlisted club interest from members one Christmas when we closed the Broadmoor Club for a day and put all the employees on a big truck and repaired to the woods to chop down an 80-foot evergreen. We put the Christmas tree up in front of the club house, surrounded it with ladders and invited club members for a buffet and a tree-decorating jamboree. Club pride was engendered when we won the tree decoration contest for three years. We saved the tops and bottoms of tin cans throughout the year, painted them gold, silver, red and blue, and strung them on the tree. When we flashed color flood lights

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over them, my, how they shimmered!

How do members know of these accelerated fall activities? The same way they know of summer ones—by mailers and monthly calendars telling of routine and special events.

"We make our mailers attractive," says Markham. "For our Pow Wow Dance notice, we decorated the mailer with colored pictures of Indians and invited 'Heep Big Chief to bring his Squaw where Free Firewater (Scotch & Bourbon) would be served with Dixieland Music.' Attractive mailers arouse club interest—particularly after summer."

In summing up, the challenge of the after Labor Day slump can be met by club managers making imaginative use of foods, parties, dancing classes, organizational dinners, group sports participation and attendance to symphonies, theater and opera functions.

Markham believes a club is a club of the present and future, one not "sitting on its hands."

He anticipates the fall and winter as a most productive part of the year for the members and for club business. ●

Editor's Note — Lynn Markham is a Certified Club Manager. After World War II, he built and managed his own hunting lodge in Kodiak, Alaska. He then returned to Seattle and became manager of the Seattle Town and Country Club. Later he managed the Oklaboma Club, and Oklaboma's famed Petroleum Club. Today, he manages the 750-member Amarillo C.C. in Amarillo, Texas.

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