

# The functional approach

by Jerry Marlatt, CCM

Manager, Northmoor CC,  
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**W**ithin the histories of all clubs and the careers of all managers, there is a memorable period of time known as THE CLUB BUILDING PROGRAM. This can be either a new or remodeling program, but it either did, or will, include working with an architect. If it is all behind you now, it may be referred to as "the turning point of our club," or "when we up-graded the facilities," or "just after the manager resigned," or "just before it started costing money to belong to our club."

Regardless of how you might remember it, or what you contemplate it as being; it would be a good thing to get to know more of the architect, his job, how to work with him, and what you should anticipate as a result of this association.

In meeting with Earl R. Larson, of Earl R. Larson and Associates of Hinsdale, Illinois, I wanted to find out just what an architect's job is in relation to club remodeling or renovation.

"My task," Earl relates, "is to develop, basically, a building which will function in the manner in which it was intended; yet still function from a stand-point of

economics. You can develop a building which will function, but require so many employees that it would be economically unsound to operate. This is where I feel some architects, and committees are 'missing the point.' They create something esthetic and when you begin to operate this creation, you find yourself with a costly operation for many years to come.

"It is in preventing such a mistake as this that the experience, background, effort, and real 'head scratching' of a good architect 'pays off.'"

Mr. Larson continued: "From the FUNCTION comes the FORM. This is the placement of the various facilities and rooms around a 'functional' center. One of the things I feel a country club has over a restaurant, motel, or city club is the natural beauty which surrounds it. You can see the flowers of the grounds, the trees, and the golf course. You can see the swimming pool, tennis courts, skeet range or curling rinks. Through our form, we want to make the member a part of these facilities. We want him to become totally involved. In this way he becomes a part of the

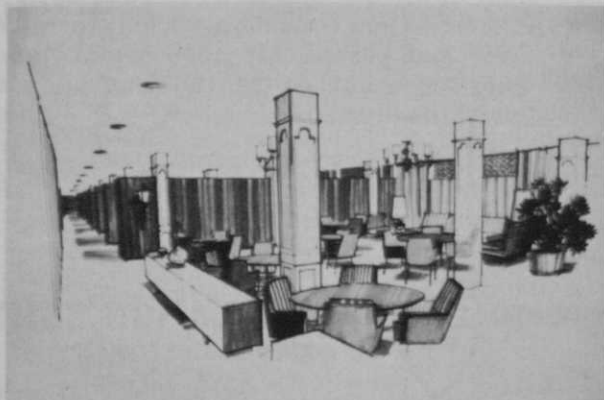
club and is not just at the club.

"We want the people who are going to operate this club to also become totally involved, and to also be a part of its operations through our form. To illustrate my point: At one job, through a convenient elevation, the dining rooms and grill room were placed so that one could see practically the entire club from these two locations. Not only could mom see dad as he passed on the golf course, but she was able to keep an eye on the kids in the pool; and at the same time she could be dining with other women friends. Secondly, in the matter of bar facilities, we took two bars, one on each floor, and served the entire club. The downstairs bar accommodated the men's lockerroom, the 19th hole, the men's card room and the outside terrace. The second floor bar served the cocktail lounge, became a service bar for the dining room, and two terrace areas as well. Third, was to carry this functional planning right to the manager's office.

"It is situated so that when he sits at his desk to do routine work, he can observe his kitchen, ac-

These architect's renderings are of work done by Earl Larson & Associates

Ladies card room, Beverly CC, Chicago



Exterior, Kankakee CC, Kankakee, Ill.



*Every member wants a beautiful club, but be sure yours is designed practically. A good architect should be able to accomplish both.*

counting office, front desk and cigar counter, and even see his cocktail lounge through a doorway. Through a window, in back of his desk, he can see his dining room. In this design, we have created in effect a functional control center."

#### ESTHETICS ARE SECONDARY

I then asked Mr. Larson if the architect has foregone esthetics in making "labor savings" a prime feature of club design. He replied: "I feel that, unfortunately, people without experience have a tendency to take the most glamorous part first, and think of the function in a secondary light.

"Once you get 'hung up' on esthetics, you find the functional part that much harder to bring about. This brings you back to the area of economics and the question, 'What will it cost you to operate after you build it?' Then you are returned to the purpose of the building, the people who operate it, and how they will function. This is why, when we create a building, we go through the phases of FUNCTION to FORM to ESTHETICS.

"After the function has dictated

the form, we can make this esthetically pleasing to the eye after all other requirements have been met. This is one of the factors in a committee's selection of an architect which should be considered; 'Does he possess the esthetic tastes to give a finished look to the project after function and form have been dealt with?'"

#### CONTACTING ARCHITECTS

Once a club has decided on a building project, how is the architect brought into the picture?

"An architect, says Earl, "has an extremely difficult and delicate task from this standpoint, in that he cannot, and rightfully so, bid on a job. He is a professional and a specialist—just as you would not expect a pediatrician, a surgeon, or a dentist to bid on a job or solicit patients. In other words, you must contact him."

The American Institute of Architects has recommended a standard rate of charges for various work. Basic charges are 7 per cent for new construction, and 8 per cent for remodeling work. The additional charge for remodeling comes from the fact that a great deal more research, in the field, is necessary.

"In new construction, if one wants to move a wall, it can be done with a pencil and an eraser. On a remodeling, a two foot change in a wall could bring conflict with the sprinkler system, put you over an underground storage tank, or even into the swimming pool. In remodeling, before we can do anything, we must know what already exists, its relation to the present and ultimate function, and keep our remodeling in direct relationship with these functions. All of this causes the additional field work.

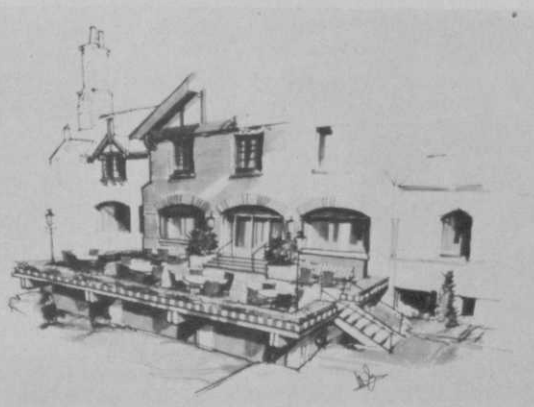
"Let us surmise that we are going to do a remodeling job and that the paper work of the contracts, the fee, and all other details have been worked out; since the contract is usually a standard A.I.A. form which spells out who gets paid, how much, and when. The first thing we need is a set of all of the existing blueprints of the building as it currently exists. Here the manager is a big help because the plans are usually all over the club, at members' homes, and in safe-deposit boxes. It could be a simple sketch of a door moved in 1937 from one location to another; or a complete

*Continued on next page*

Terrace, Beverly CC



2nd terrace, Beverly CC



Entrance, Idlewild CC, Flossmoor, Ill.



## Functional approach Continued from preceding page

layout of a revised heating, plumbing and electrical system done just last summer. But the architect can use any and all material available.

"We gather all of this information together, and with our field work come up with a set of 'as is' drawings. From this we get a complete floor plan of all changes made from the original building until its present date. We now face the physical facts of what we are working with.

"Then we will talk with the committee and the manager to see what their ideas are in regard to the new building; its services, its facilities, and their requirements. We ask about problem service areas, where they feel their service is expensive, what new service or type of service they feel could replace old service. All of this information is tabulated, and from it we get a picture of not only what they desire in the new building, but what has been happening in the old.

"It is then our job to enlarge upon this, and through suggestions, we bring out things like 'number of bars,' 'kinds of grill

and card rooms,' 'have you thought about putting in a sauna?', and 'a tennis court right beside the lockerroom would be very accessible wouldn't it?'

"We suggest these things even though they may not be in the need or contemplated category. But we present what we feel is an overall package, one which will enhance the club, its services, and its enjoyment by its members.

"Here, too, is where I feel we differ from other architects. We not only show the committee what they have, what they say they want, what they are lacking; but tell them what they may need in the future. It is here that we can make them aware of such things as storage, inadequate electrical service for future equipment, variations from present day building codes, need for emergency lighting, and additional fire exits.

"We also think there is a need to visit the club and observe its daily functions. If linen is being delivered through the front entrance, and garbage pickup areas can be seen from the dining rooms, or storage closets open out

into private dining rooms; then after having seen these things, we can, in our new plans create answers to problems they may not have ever been aware of.

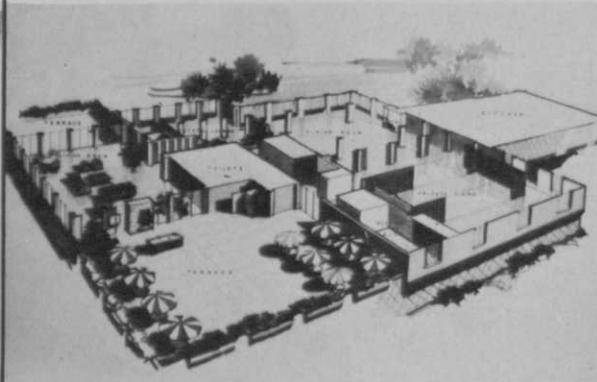
### ALL NEEDS STUDIED

"We study the complete needs, not just the immediate need, and we also look into future needs. The advantage of this to the club, is it can then make its own five or ten year plan. This can also prevent future problems in building programs, expansions, or remodeling. If we do not make them aware of these things, then we have not performed a service.

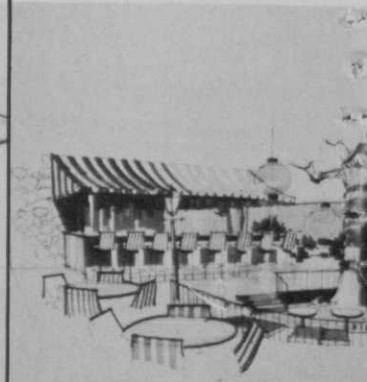
"Another thing we need to know, and make it a point to know, is the type of people we will be talking to when we go into a club. Clubs are individuals, just like you and I, or anyone we will ever deal with. For instance, there is no comparison between a 700 member club on Chicago's west side and a Jewish club of 300 members on Chicago's south side. There is all the difference in the world in the two memberships. Their needs are different, their concept of luxuries are different, as are their social patterns and

These architect's renderings are of work done by Earl Larson & Associates

Men's lockerroom-lounge, Idlewild CC 2nd floor arrangement, Beverly CC



Cocktail lounge, Kankakee CC





their eating and drinking habits."

It has been said, by some managers, that one can tell how affluent, or how well used, or the type of members in a club, by the size of the men's lockers and the men's lockerroom. Mr. Larson had this to say about the point.

"Clubs are fascinating in this respect. For instance, you do not build any 'second rate' men's lockerrooms in clubs today; sometimes the women's. This is why we no longer build the central or 'gang type' shower room. Men want easy access to the shower room, so we build shower rooms and dressing rooms at the end of each aisle. In this way there are no good or bad lockers in the lockerroom. Regarding size, today, more people keep more things in their lockers. Years ago a man needed a locker for his golf clothes, his golf shoes, and his suit. Today he could need space for golfing attire, swimming suit, tennis racquet, a bowling ball, skeet outfit, and even a curling stone.

"You cannot have any set 'norm' for locker size in any two clubs. We used to have a 12 x 14-inch locker, and I have done

some 18 x 24-inch ones lately. Clubs change, members' habits change, and needs change.

#### THE 12-MONTH CLUB

"Many clubs have had a total change in their members usage of the club. Summer golf clubs have become twelve month operations due to the influx of members and their businesses to the suburbs. Members with a suburban office no longer belong to the Downtown Club, but use your club and some need handball, squash, sauna and steam rooms, barber shops, teen-age rooms, and bowling alleys besides the golf course, tennis court, swimming pool, and skeet range.

"When we plan a club today, we plan it as a twelve or eleven month operation. While the club may not be open, we plan it to be open, if necessary, on a seven day per week basis. This means a manager can employ a year-round staff, provide them job security, and in general give the members more for their money if they have a clubhouse and physical plant capable of being used on a year-round basis.

"Again economics is a factor.

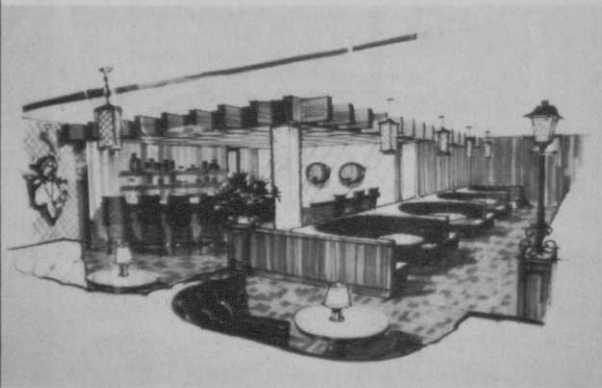
The cheapest thing you can do in a club is to make a capital improvement. Let us say you put \$5,000 into an exercise room, sauna, and barber shop. You now have a twelve month club for your members. This frees the member from waiting in line at the local barber shop. It gives him a place to release his tensions on an afternoon off from the office on a winter day. It gives him something to do at the club after the golfing season is over. Other recreations could be pool tables, curling rinks, bowling alleys, or a skeet range. No one thing will bring out all of the members, but collectively these things will bring people out all year. And, food and beverage business become a valuable adjunct to this usage."

"Do most clubs presently have the basic facilities, and just need to enlarge or improve them?" I asked. "Sure," said Mr. Larson. "They have the kitchen, they have the manager, they have the staff, they have the shower room, the cocktail lounge, and the card rooms. They have the expensive items already; now all they need is the little things to make it complete." *Continued on page 68*

Living room, Beverly CC



1st floor cocktail lounge, Beverly CC



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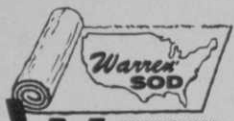
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## Functional Approach

Continued from page 53

"Let us change our line of questioning," I said, "and return to the manager. In your experience in clubs, would you say a manager takes an active, inactive or middle of the road approach to a new building or renovation program?"

### MANAGERS SIZED UP

"Club managers run the complete gauntlet of people, as again, they are individuals," emphasized Mr. Larson. "There are managers with a very definite 'don't bother me, you build it, I'll operate it' attitude. However, all too often, we no sooner begin to build it than he claims the whole thing is wrong, that he was not asked about certain things, and cannot function with what you are going to do. He never got into it in the first place, now he has 1,500 opinions. Other managers, the ones I like to work with, are the aggressive ones. I like ones I can exchange ideas with. But I don't like the ones who take an idea, absorb it like a blotter, and never let you know what he thought about it. I want some 'feed back,' pro or con, when I throw out an idea. Maybe not today, but in the future, but I want to stimulate his thinking so he can give me some of his thoughts and I can gain from them.

"Another type of manager you run into is the one who is only interested in the food operation. This is fine, as the food is an important aspect of the club, but it is not the *only* aspect of the club. The member comes to the club to do something besides eat. He may be a card player, golfer, swimmer or curler. We know he will pay a good price for good food. But will he wait 30 minutes to get that food, or eat it if it is so cold after a trip from a distant kitchen that it is not palatable? This is why I feel the manager must have a broadly based view. So, as he would become knowledgeable of fine wines and with it gain an insight to beers and liquors, so too must he become knowledgeable of all the club's activities and problems. If he knows his job, he should know the entire job.

Continued

"It is similar to what I said about architects. If a man is hired to renovate the boiler room, he shouldn't stop there, but he should think of the total picture; how it relates to the guestrooms, dining room, and other areas it will serve."

For my final question, I asked Mr. Larson: "What are some of the problems encountered in your dealings with the manager which concern the architect?" He answered: "The only common problem, you could put into two categories. But this is not only limited to the managers, it also goes for committees. 1. People with closed minds. Those who don't need an architect because they know what they want and are not willing to listen to new ideas; they don't want advice, they want someone to confirm their thinking. 2. The other type, and the one I dislike the most, is the one who is indifferent, because in the end, he is the one who causes me the most trouble. As I mentioned before, for 90 per cent of the program he says nothing. But in the final 10 per cent he will bring up his problems, your defects, and the new problems you have created for him. Even if his complaints are bona-fide, it is usually the worst time to do anything about them or for him. I might say the most difficult part of any project is the number of varying and different personalities one has to work with on a job."

Mr. Larson concluded the interview by saying: "The responsibility of an architect is to transfer the requirements of the members, the building committee, and the manager into workable drawings that a contractor can interpret and build." □



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