



"The second article in the 'Confessions' series takes some potshots at today's golfing generation, women members, children and employees. Yet the profession is still the greatest seat in the national stadium from which to observe the game of life."

ANONYMOUS

## Confession of a club manager

Let's face it. The old days of the country club manager standing in a cigar-store Indian position as a form of dignified convenience and conversation piece for status-hiking members are long gone.

Myself, I don't have time to serve as some showcase decoration. The job has changed—maybe for the better, maybe not. But it has changed. So has the country club clientele.

The old guard was really some-

thing. I've been around long enough to have tolerated them. Those who were the overbearingly rich, I'm talking about. The country club set was bathed in money and stuffy, with a cold approach to new friendships.

I suppose there are some of this type still left. There is a place for the exclusive-seeking cod. However, today's generation has moved into the country club field despite the stern looks of the

upper crust. There's just too much money around nowadays to stop them.

For instance, at my present job the working man has infiltrated to a great degree. And I mean, roll-up-your-sleeves-and-grunt breed of working man. Why, some of the plumbers in our locale make as much if not more than so-called executives. Their money is just as clean, just as acceptable.

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## CONFESSION OF A CLUB MANAGER

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So, what we have here is a kind of revolution. Some of it I like. Some of it makes me squirm. For one thing, along with the coming of the common man have come his children. Now, don't get me wrong. I am not against motherhood. But I've always believed the country club is not the place for children. I do everything to discourage their presence. Of course, I'm talking about the clubhouse, not the individual recreational areas of the club.

It follows that with the displacing of the establishment by the newcomers I must set my service policy differently. I find some of the problems at the table. My members demand cheaper prices than the public restaurant down the road. And I find it easier to comply than to argue. Right now, we're running 10 entrees, and six of them under \$5.

With the coming of members who swing rather than bow from the waist is the annoying accompaniment of wholesale participation in club affairs and club dictate. I am overwhelmed by committees. For example, last month I suffered through 11 committee meetings. The time spent amounted to 60 hours—most of them wasted.

It has been my experience that everyone who sets foot into a country club figures they can run it better than the manager. I foster this feeling at every meeting of every committee, which means 90 per cent of the advice goes in one ear and out the other.

I hope I live to see the day when there is established one executive board to oversee the operation of the club. And it must be a group of men who are close to the scene. Picture, if you will, a steel salesman telling me how to make the cut and set the price for a roast beef sandwich. It makes no sense. But it happens.

Notice I said men members for

the executive board. Women? They should restrict their contributions to the handicap committee. As far as I'm concerned, women are a definite detriment to the functions of the clubhouse, especially house committees. They waste their time arguing over what color to select for drapes. I fear any kind of committee with a woman on it.

Naturally, the touchiest problem of all in our profession—which is more business manager than club—involves labor. You can pick up a job pushing a broom in these parts for \$2.40 an hour. So you can see that I must be kid-glovisish with my help.

At the present attack on my senses, there are 131 employees. That's full and part-time. But in the case of country club operations, it means there are 131 problems to be dealt with.

In my travels (I've been associated with 10 clubs, but only three or four on a solid basis) I find that loyalty is the hardest workable asset to find among employees. And that covers everyone from the chef down to the kid who shines shoes.

Chefs can be a delicate problem, as we all know. Again, I have a particular gripe with their cult. Presently, our head man is paid an annual salary of \$15,600. His fringes are ridiculous, among them one month's vacation plus weekend work only during two other slack months.

Waitresses? What can I say about them? We have quite a crew, some good and some otherwise. My biggest headache is absenteeism. And I can't see why. Our members are pretty good tippers. I'd say on the average, a girl takes home \$150 a week.

Returning to the membership for a moment, let me pass comment on the nasty version of same. In every club, there are the few who look down upon all employees—the club manager is included—as just so much rubbish. These are the unwanted members, but who are nevertheless

equipped with enough where-withal to be accepted.

Reverse psychology is the best weapon here. Whenever a member becomes unusually nasty, I smother him with respect. I find that he can't handle it. In the end, he often changes his attitude and returns that respect. Don't laugh on this score. I've tried it a million times. It really works.

My present job would have to be classified as one of the better club managerial posts in the area. We have 1,300 social members at \$200 a throw before they even get a setup. In addition, there are another 400 golfing members whose tab for that privilege runs over \$500. Our payroll rises \$1,500 a day in regular times and goes as high as \$2,200 a day at the peak of the golfing season.

There is virtually no social snobbery at our club. I surmise that 70 per cent of the members are congenial because they have the same problems. This is a sign that the social gap of yesterday has narrowed considerably and it draws closer by the hour.

As far as my duties are concerned, the range has expanded. I must now be able to tell how many cups of coffee can be drained from a pound can. I must be familiar with air conditioning, plumbing, carpeting, golf cars, fertilizers—the whole bag. What it amounts to is a working knowledge of every facet of the club operation, both indoors and out.

My compensation I consider adequate. With the fringes, *et al*, it comes to some \$25,000 a year. But I feel I earn it and then some. I average 90 hours a week and I'm constantly on call. Yet, I sincerely believe I am engaged in a budding, fascinating business.

With all its little setbacks, demands on my ability and patience and day-to-day chinning with certain members, I highly endorse the profession.

It is a wide, wide world of experience, the greatest seat in the national stadium from which to observe the game of life. □