

# Summer help wanted

**A**s a Chicago district country club manager about the labor situation at his club and in most instances you'll catch a mumbled "crisis compounded by emergency." If it isn't muttered it will be growled or expressed with theatrical exasperation.

Late winter is a particularly bad time to ask the question; practically every manager is in the process of recruiting summer help or is contemplating it. In either case, the prospect isn't very cheerful. The manager, having gone through it many times before, isn't kidding himself by thinking this is the year the situation is suddenly going to improve. The record of the last decade consistently proves that it isn't.

Two out of three managers say that recruiting extra help is the toughest part of their jobs. At clubs where the regular membership is 250 or 300, the clubhouse staff has to be doubled, even tripled, to handle the summer golf season volume. This means taking on from 25 to 75 extra employees, and depends less on the size of the membership than on the golf and social activity that goes on at a club.

More accurately, the term "taking on" should be re-stated to read "finding." Locating bodies isn't easy, a Northside manager points out. "And, after finding them, you're not sure if they'll show up. If they do you never know how long they'll stay."

**By Joe Doan**

About the only thing a manager can do is overhire, knowing that the "no shows" and attrition will quickly reduce a staff to what is considered normal strength, or below.

Prosperity has more to do with the clubs' personnel dilemma than any other factor. Although many clubs have greatly increased their budgets in recent years to close the wage and benefits gap, they continue to find themselves at a big disadvantage in competing for labor against business and industry. The menial nature of a large percentage of jobs clubs offer is also a handicap. So is the clubs' often inaccessible location.

Split shifts are another factor that discourage employment. Weekend work causes most people to seek other jobs. Lack of living accommodations hurts many clubs, too, although more and more of them are providing dormitories and private quarters, even apartments, for their help. Another deterrent to staffing club jobs is the minimum wage law. It gives an enterprise that is running a food, beverage and hotel-type operation a 30-cent an hour break compared to most other businesses and industries, but at the same time makes hiring difficult since most people are looking for

jobs that pay the higher minimum. To offset this, many clubs are paying the \$1.60 minimum rather than \$1.30, which they are legally permitted to do.

Thomas O'Conner, manager of Midlothian CC, located south of Chicago, feels that what hurts clubs most in his area, in addition to hotels and restaurants, is the lack of schools that teach food preparation and handling. There is only one non-private cooking school in Chicago. What is more, its curriculum seems to be slanted to the type of food preparation that is required by moderate-price restaurants, or at least its graduates seem to prefer to work in these places. Country clubs, at any rate, get few of them.

"The Club Managers Assn., not only in Chicago but in other cities where there is a shortage of chefs and cooks, should do something to encourage the establishment or expansion of cooking schools," says O'Conner. "Some kind of a cooperative school-work plan undoubtedly could be worked out. I have no doubt that a lot of managers would be willing to help in a program of this kind. In the off-season they probably could arrange to have their chefs teach cooking classes. If the shortage of trained kitchen help is ever going to be eased, clubs as well as hotels and restaurants are going to have to get together and do something about it."

O'Conner also thinks that some

kind of a campaign is needed to get more people interested in food preparation and allied work. Little is done to promote what is usually referred to as the institutional kitchen, as a pleasant place in which to make a living. Chefs and cooks aren't recognized for their skills. Too many people associate only dishwashing and potwashing with the institutional kitchen and thus a stigma is attached to working in it. The same thing is probably true of the general housekeeping operation at a club. Yet, club jobs, O'Conner points out, are cleaner than most offered in factories, come close to equaling them in wages and benefits, and often offer more opportunities.

To support his argument, he cites the pay scale of clubs in the Chicago area, based on monthly wages or salaries (see chart).

The list, with the possible exception of waitresses, constitutes permanent staff employees, people who are employed year-around. Managers generally don't have nearly as much of a problem keeping the permanent staff intact as they do in filling in with part-time summer help. That isn't to say that chefs, cooks, bakers, etc., aren't frequently lured away by higher salaries, but their stability records probably rival those of people with good paying jobs in other industries. The chef at Hinsdale CC, where E.W. Matteson is manager, has been there for 15 years; the hostess has been with the club for 22 years. Most of the staff at Evanston CC, where Everett L. Woxberg is manager,

has been employed at the club for 10 or 12 years. Equally impressive longevity records are claimed for many people who work at Northmoor, Glen Oak, Edgewood Valley and Glenview clubs, to name a few.

Benefits, of course, are the reason they stay. Consider what Northmoor, where Gerald V. Marlatt is manager, offers its permanent employees: Chicago District Golf Assn. recommended insurance, including sickness, accident, major medical and life coverages; retirement pay; 24 days vacation after two years; 24 days sick leave after two years; uniforms and board for some, and uniforms, board and rooms for others; educational assistance; and use of the pool and golf course for the employee and members of his family on Mondays throughout the season. Between 1967 and 1968, Northmoor increased its labor operations budget for the whole club by approximately \$50,000.

Northmoor may offer the most generous benefits in the Chicago district, but most of the larger or better endowed clubs aren't far behind. Insurance and vacation and sick leave privileges are provided by most of the clubs. Many have living quarters for at least part of their staffs. Hinsdale, for example, has 24 private rooms in its dormitory; Northmoor houses nearly 50 members of its staff; more than 30 employees live at Glenview Club; and Evanston has room facilities for part of the people who work there. As for food,

employees themselves will tell you they do as well as the members since they eat the same fare. Most clubs have the Hinsdale outlook in this respect—good food probably has more to do than anything in persuading employees to stay on at a club.

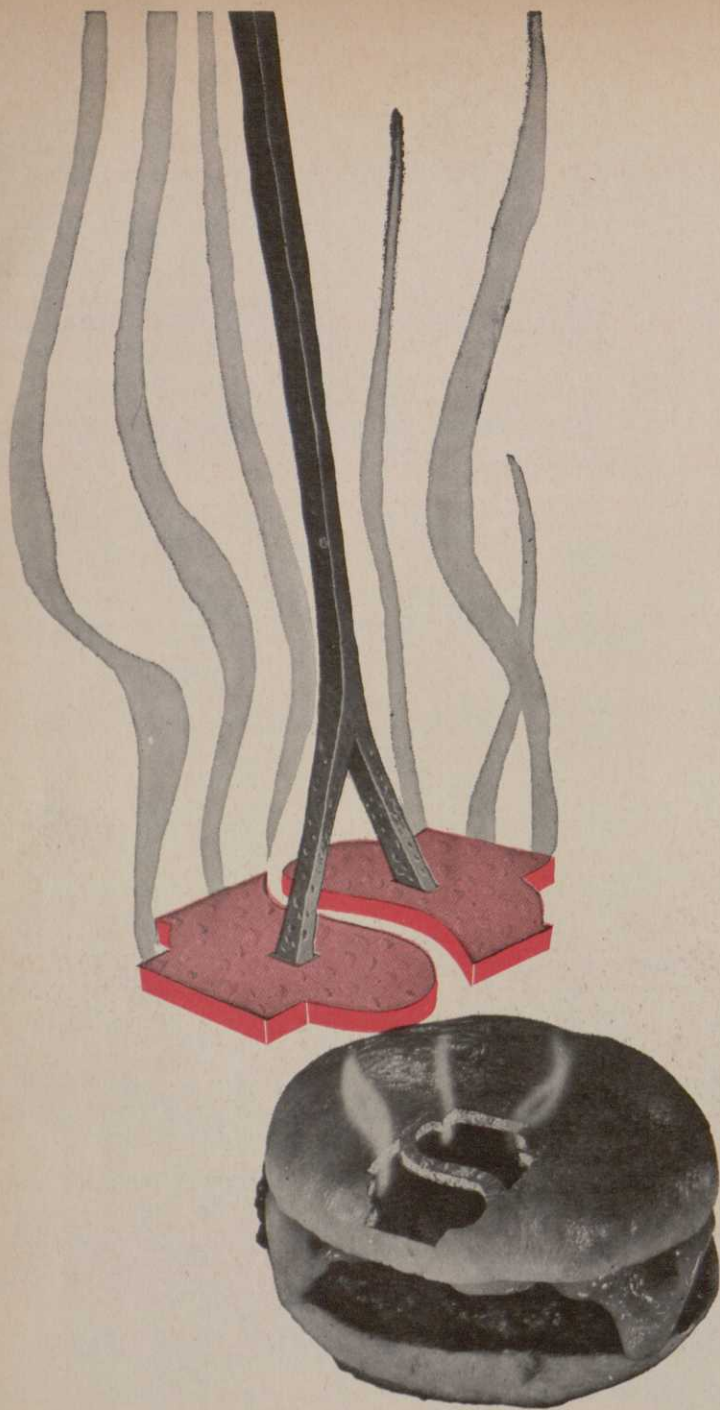
The picture changes rather abruptly, though, when the permanent staff is compared with the temporary one. Finding 25, 50 or more reasonably responsible spare time employees isn't easy in this day and age. More time than is generally realized has to be taken by most club managers in recruiting summer help. Usually they start in February and spend the better part of two or three months getting extra employees lined up. Employees' referrals, high schools and colleges are the best sources for finding summer employees. A few managers seek help through neighboring churches. If, by the end of March, the summers quotas aren't going to be filled, most managers start advertising in community newspapers and putting in orders with employment agencies. This may seem to be rushing it, but in recent years the managers have found that the earlier they have their orders in for in-season employees the better their chances of finding them. Even then they usually don't get all the help they need and too often have to settle for transient-type employees.

Robert M. Broms of Glenview, who has to find at least 50 extras to carry him through the summer, has set up a rather elaborate referral system. It enables him to recruit a fairly large percentage of college students. Students who are already working at Glenview are asked to write to him and tip him off when they hear of other students who may want to work at a club during the summer. Applications are then sent to the latter and if they are returned, Broms checks with college authorities as to the dependability of the applicants. This gives him all the screening information he needs. Over the years the system has worked out well for him. Most of the students are intelligent and hardworking, well received by the

	North Side	South Side
Chefs	\$900-\$1,500	\$800-\$1,400
2nd cooks	500-750	500-750
Broiler cooks	450-650	400-600
Bakers	650-900	600-800
Fry cooks	450-650	400-600
Pantry and salad	400-600	
Cold cut-appetizer	500-700	
Dishwashers-potwashers	300*	\$2 an hour*
Night clean up	300*	275*
Housemen	325*	300-325*
Waitresses	\$2.50 an hour	2 to 2.50 an hour

\* These figures are approximations since in many cases the employees receive room and board from the clubs. It should also be kept in mind that employees listed above receive at least one meal a day from the club.

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## Summer help

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membership, and if there is any fault in the system it is that more youngsters aren't available.

Even after a manager has done an intensive recruiting job in the late winter and spring and figures that his summer labor force is lined up, he'll probably come in for considerable disappointment when June arrives. Where he may count on only one out of 10 drop-outs among prospective employees, the ratio may run closer to one out of eight or one out of seven. Then, a week or two after they have started working, several others may drop out because they don't like the jobs to which they've been assigned. Replacements will be hard to find at this point and so throughout the summer the manager will be kept busy shifting personnel to plug all the gaps. This is when a man needs an understanding membership.

With all his recruiting problems and wondering whether, each day through the summer, he is going to have a clubhouse labor quorum, the manager is beset by still a bigger worry. Make that two. It has to do with the April 15 to early June interval, and later the post Labor Day through October period. Beginning in mid-April the pent-up golfers start swarming over the course and clubhouse and the pent-up party givers start doubling, even tripling up on luncheons, and teas. The summer help is several weeks away and so it's up to the permanent staff to go into multiple platoon formations and try to scrape through until relief arrives in June. Every manager concurs: "It's the worst damn season of the year!"

The after-Labor Day period isn't quite as bad, but it's still a bustling part of the season. Most of the summertime force has gone back to school and the employees who remain at the club have to scurry once again to provide reasonably good service. It has been a long, tough spring and summer but with the end of October just ahead, the staff will be able to limp the rest of the way. □