

How to Get New Members Is Study of Club Heads

IT'S a lucky club that has a waiting list, or in lieu of that, a membership committee working effectively, for a full membership is the foundation of every successful club operation. A good idea of the basic importance of the full roster comes from the Back Swing, the house organ of the Alderwood C. C. of Portland, Ore. Alderwood's monthly dues vary according to the number of members in good standing, and the club allows each member a month's dues for every new member obtained. The ideas are uncommon, but seem to work out well at this northwest club. Manager Art Craig in the club paper shows the following division of the club's income sources:

| | Pct. of total. |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Members' dues | 71.6 |
| Greens fees | 10.4 |
| Caddy house | 4.35 |
| Locker rentals | 4.75 |
| Transfer fees | 3.25 |
| Initiation and forfeitures..... | 3.4 |
| Miscellaneous income | 2.25 |
| Total | 100.00 |

"The impressive thing about these figures is the huge proportion of income represented by members' dues. Obviously this is the club's principal source of income, the impairment of which throws everything out of kilter," he comments.

Officials of golf clubs have written GOLF-DOM so frequently about various phases of membership handling by representative golf clubs that we have invited the co-operation of a number of clubs in answering the usual questions by relating their practices. It will be noted that the recent rapid growth of golf has created problems that are being handled in a manner often quite different from that in vogue in the old days when each golf club was a rather exclusive, or at least, unique establishment.

You often hear the statement made that the average annual membership turnover is 10% with the larger city golf clubs. It is our observation that the 10% figure is too low. On this matter we cite the testimony of Willard D. Hosford, president, Omaha (Neb.) C. C.

The Omaha club was established in 1896 and always has been careful about its admissions. This year the club has a new course and clubhouse as inducements for acceptable members.

Secret Committee Assays Candidates

Mr. Hosford says:

"The past year we had a total turnover of 14 per cent out of the 265 regular members, but at the end of the year we had a net increase of 8 members over the previous year. Therefore, while the turnover was heavy, still the club gained 8 members. We are endeavoring to build our membership up to 275 regular members, and, as you will see from the above, we are making some progress along that line although it is rather slow.

"We have a rule, of course, that when a membership is offered for cancellation either on account of death, resignation, or transfer to some other city, the club will buy such a membership for \$150 and then we will turn around and sell that same membership to a new member at \$400, which is the price of the regular membership to everyone at the present time.

"We also have a rule, however, that a membership which is offered for cancellation can be sold to a purchaser, if the purchaser can pass the secret committee and the board of directors for membership, and that we will charge \$100 for the transfer of such membership. Frequently members elect to sell their membership to someone and they can get considerably higher price than the \$150.00 the board will allow for cancellation. Theoretically they should get \$300 when they sell their membership and that together with the \$100 transfer charge would make the membership cost the purchaser \$400, the regular price of a membership. As a matter of fact they don't often get over \$200, but, of course, the purchaser is somewhat ahead in buying this way, and also the former member is somewhat better off in selling in this way.

"It is interesting to note that of the total of 14 per cent resignations last year, half of them were transfers which the club did not have to personally handle other than make the actual transfers themselves.

"All of the above deals with regular memberships. In addition, we have several classifications of associate members and we ordinarily allow these associate memberships to take care of themselves. We make comparatively little effort to get new members, but we make the terms of associate members so attractive to young men that we have little difficulty in holding them up, although, of course, the turnover in that membership is quite large.

"We do have a membership committee who are on the job all the time and we follow up every possible prospect.

"We also have one feature which I think helps our membership. We admit young men as privilege members:

Up to the age of 25 years at \$60.00 a year;
25 to 30 years at \$100.00 a year;
30 to 32 years at \$150.00 a year,

without requiring these privilege members to own a stock membership. After they attain the age of 32 they must buy a stock membership and pay the full dues. The minute one of these privilege members arrive at the age of 32 we make an effort to get them to take the stock membership and we are successful in 90 per cent of the cases in getting them to come in at that time."

E. I. Gossom, manager of the New Orleans (La.) C. C., tells of the membership plan and enviable position of that famous organization. You will note in the last paragraph of Mr. Gossom's statement the usual happy result of a full membership.

Supply and Demand Govern Price

"The New Orleans C. C. is a stockholding proposition, divided into 600 shares of capital stock with a par value of \$250.00. This gives us a capitalization of \$150,000.00. The requirements for membership in stockholding classification calls for ownership of one or more shares of stock. The age limit is 25 years minimum and requirements are: residence of more than one year in the city of New Orleans and election by Membership Committee, subject to approval of entire membership.

All stock was sold shortly after organization of club. Each share is assessable \$100.00 plus \$10.00 war tax yearly, and assessments must be paid whether member is active, held by estate or held by a non-member, non-member has no connection with club, no privileges whatsoever. Due to stock being assessable, subject to seizure for non-payment of assessments, roster has to be filled at all times.

The club has no control over sales price

of stock. Owner of stock can sell to whom he pleases, price governed by supply and demand. New owner has to be elected to membership to enjoy benefits of stock. In several cases men have bought stock and then have been rejected by the Membership committee. Club office tries to advise prospective member not to buy stock until notified of election to membership.

This club, since original shares subscribed, has never been in a position to feel the necessity of a Membership drive.

"The New Orleans C. C. is open to members twelve months in the year. The golf course is playable practically 365 days, and clubhouse opens at 7:00 A. M. and closes at 12:00 midnight. Restaurant service given from 7:00 A. M. until 10:00 P. M. We have 72 employees, and have never found it necessary to levy a special assessment to carry on expenses or necessary repairs even including \$120,000.00 worth of recent real estate addition and a swimming pool which cost us over \$60,000.00.

During the last four to six years the newly established clubs have had similar experiences of being stampeded into expenditures larger than originally planned. Many times this has resulted in placing on the club's interest charge burdens that still have the members sweating.

Team Drive Gets Members

An interesting and successful handling of such a case is related by Charles Eisen, president of the Clovernook C. C., Cincinnati.

Mr. Eisen tells:

"Our club, which was incorporated four years ago, had a humble beginning. The 120 acres we purchased for our course were situated in a locality where only about 5 per cent of those interested in golf had ever played the game, so that developing members was our most serious problem.

"Our original intention was to build a nine-hole course, and later, if conditions justified, to add nine more. We started out with nine temporary holes, but before we completed the building of our nine permanent holes, there was such a demand for an eighteen hole course from our small membership, then consisting of about one hundred, that we proceeded to build an eighteen hole course, which was completed the following fall. Then came a serious problem of membership, which we limited to three hundred.

"It was, of course, difficult to secure new members while the course was under construction, and just as difficult

during the winter season, (after the course was finished, so that the completion of our course brought us face to face with the membership problem, well knowing that without a large increase of membership we would not be able to maintain our club. We, therefore, mapped out a membership drive. A chairman was appointed, who in turn selected ten team captains. Each captain selected ten members to make up his team. Thus every member was drafted.

"Several meetings were held during the winter months to discuss the situation. A definite date was set for the opening and closing of this drive, from March 1st to April 15th.

"An inducement to the new members was that those who joined during the period of the drive would be taken in at the original membership fee, which was \$100.00. At the same time an announcement was made that after the membership drive the initiation fee would be advanced to \$200.00. Names of prospects were submitted, and the teams were assigned to different districts in our territory. The drive opened with a dinner and entertainment for the members and their prospects. Much enthusiasm was manifested at this dinner, at which about 200 prospects made application for membership. Weekly meetings were held during the drive, of which the workers submitted for approval the applications they had secured during the week, the names of new prospects were submitted. No cost was attached to the club for this drive.

The chairman, however, offered each worker a box seat for the opening game of the Cincinnati Reds for every new member obtained. This drive added one hundred and four members to the roster. The following spring a similar drive was launched, which resulted in filling our quota of 300 members, which we since have maintained.

"At the present time we are seeking, through the efforts of members, only, a few new members, to make up for those we may lose during the winter months, due to removals, resignations, etc. The cost of membership in our club, including taxes, is \$385.00, as follows:

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Stock | \$100.00 |
| Initiation | 250.00 |
| Taxes | 35.00 |
| Total | \$385.00 |

"We feel that concentrated effort should be made by all the clubs to induce the government to remove this tax. Our members have not the right to transfer or dispose of their stock. All

applicants must be approved by the board of governors before they are accepted for membership. If any one of our members resigns, or for any other reason he is no longer a member, we purchase the stock, paying par (\$100.00) less the amount, if any, he may be indebted to the club for dues or supplies.

"Of course the success of a drive of this kind depends entirely upon the interest the members take in their club, and the supervision and pep that is put in it by the chairman and captains."

Get List of Friends

The team drive proposition has the virtue of assuring that the new members are friends of those already in the club. Another way of getting this assurance is that employed by the Bonnie Briar C. C., Larchmont, N. Y. When that club needs members, so H. K. Hutchens, chairman of the membership committee advises, a circular letter is sent to all the members. On the backs of these letters spaces are left for the names and addresses of friends the members wish to propose.

Prerequisite to regular membership in Bonnie Briar is the owning of six shares of stock in the holding corporation of Bonnie Briar C. C., price \$1,500 for six shares, plus the tax, \$150. The holding corporation has pegged the price by exercising its option of two years and 10 days on the stock of any resigning member. This option is clearly defined on the stock certificate.

Membership transfers are made in order of priority, except that if a member secures his own purchaser he jumps to the head of the list, providing, of course, the purchaser is acceptable as a member of Bonnie Briar.

The club has never reduced the price of membership but has reduced the number of shares prerequisite to membership from ten to six. It has, in the past, allowed memberships to be paid for on time, but does not do so any more.

One of the bothersome competitive aspects of the membership situation in some cities is the practice of a few private clubs not being operated on a "closed" basis. Guest cards that can be picked up at local hotels are responsible for a good part of this difficulty as they make it unnecessary for any local player to incur any capital or dues expense.

In some cases the prize inducement works well in getting new members. The Olympic G. & C. C., Seattle, Wash., gets \$35 in golf merchandise from the club.