

Golf Service Bureau of Pittsburgh

By Lois Miller

In March, 1926, a committee from the larger golf clubs in and around Pittsburgh organized the Golf Service Bureau of Pittsburgh, to be similar to bureaus then in existence in Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York, Boston, and elsewhere. The membership of the bureau is now 28 golf clubs in the metropolitan Pittsburgh district and 4 clubs located more than 50 miles from Pittsburgh. It is open to any golf club in western Pennsylvania. The annual dues are \$100 for 18-hole courses and \$50 for 9-hole courses; for clubs beyond 50 miles from Pittsburgh the dues are reduced one-half. Its object is three-fold; cooperative purchasing of golf course materials for its member clubs, disseminating information on golf course maintenance through correspondence and bulletins, and keeping the records of the developments of the two Green Section demonstration turf gardens established at Pittsburgh. The regular meetings of the board of directors are in January and July; additional meetings are called as necessary. The annual meeting of the bureau, which is attended by chairmen of green committees and greenkeepers, is held in July at either the Oakmont Country Club or the Allegheny Country Club turf garden. At this meeting a dinner is served, officers are elected, reports are made on membership and finances, and a talk on the turf garden work is given by a representative from the United States Golf Association Green Section. The total income to the bureau during 1929 was \$2,475. Its total expenses, consisting of office rent, secretarial service, postage, and stationery, were slightly less than the income.

During its first four years the bureau purchased approximately \$151,000 worth of seed, fertilizers, sand, tractors, mowers, fungicides, insecticides, hose, sprinklers, landscape materials, and miscellaneous equipment used on golf courses. The orders received from the clubs for materials are pooled early in the season for the purpose of obtaining the lowest wholesale prices on the best materials available. The bureau acts only as an agent in the purchases, all accounts being charged direct to the clubs. A club is free to designate from whom the goods should be purchased. Many of the clubs consider the services of the bureau also a great convenience and time-saver for the chairmen of green committees and the greenkeepers. It is hard to estimate in dollars and cents how much the bureau saves its member clubs. Although at the time of the organization of the bureau, few of the clubs were ordering their supplies like seed and sulphate of ammonia out of retail catalogues and paying high retail prices, nevertheless some were doing it, and one of the greatest benefits that has resulted from the activities of the bureau has been the stabilization of prices for golf course supplies. The bureau endeavors to get the same discounts on purchases as the largest manufacturing plants in Pittsburgh receive on their purchases. It tries to keep in touch with the purchasing departments of some of the largest corporations in Pittsburgh in order that it can check up from time to time the discounts that it is obtaining. Even in such things as pipe, picks, shovels, tools, and hose it believes it is getting the best discounts obtainable. Seed is an important item in the upkeep of golf courses, especially new ones. In its first four years the bureau purchased 68,391 pounds of seed. All is purchased under guaranteed specifications for purity and germination. It stands to reason that the purchaser of such a quantity

of seed can obtain better prices than a single club using only 1/32 of the total quantity. The chairmen of green committees of clubs constantly using the bureau in making their purchases are satisfied with what it accomplishes and feel that clubs may save their dues many times.

The bureau's activity in disseminating information on the care of golf turf is regarded by the board of directors as of vital importance. The bureau keeps in close touch with the research work of the United States Golf Association Green Section, with the work of four other service bureaus, with the course of instruction in greenkeeping at the Pennsylvania State College, with the national and local greenkeepers' associations, with the Allegheny County Agricultural Association, and with such other research organizations of the kind as are engaged in studies applicable to the care of golf courses. It maintains a file of technical information of value to greenkeepers and chairmen of green committees. Member clubs cooperate with the bureau by giving it information regarding the handling of their particular problems which may be of value to other clubs. In disseminating information of this kind we strive to avoid giving any opinion of our own, but rather to refer those asking for advice to sources competent to give it. The bureau has had a representative at each of the greenkeepers' conferences held at the Pennsylvania State College and at the equipment demonstration held at the Highland Country Club. Bulletins are sent out from time to time to its member clubs regarding the pooling of orders for spring and fall requirements, changes in market prices, and the results of the turf garden experiments.

The bureau was instrumental in establishing at Pittsburgh two demonstration turf gardens of the United States Golf Association Green Section similar to those in other sections of the United States. It was felt that soil and climatic conditions were so different at Pittsburgh from conditions at the Arlington turf garden that it was highly important to establish these local gardens. It was therefore determined at the annual meeting of the bureau in July, 1928, that two turf gardens, to be supported by the member clubs of the bureau, should be located in our district, one at the Allegheny Country Club and another at the Oakmont Country Club, one representing soil conditions typical of our shaley hillside courses and the other representing soil conditions typical of our flat level courses. Each garden contains 60 plots, 10 by 10 feet in size, which were prepared, seeded, and fertilized under the direction of the United States Golf Association Green Section. The plots are cared for by the greenkeepers of the respective two courses, and records of developments which are kept by the two greenkeepers and by the Golf Service Bureau are sent monthly to the Green Section at Washington. These turf plots have aroused much interest among greenkeepers, players, and even the general public.

The board of directors elected at our last annual meeting in July are as follows: Chairman, J. E. MacCloskey, Jr., Longue Vue Club; vice-chairman, Wm. K. Frank, Westmoreland Country Club; directors, J. H. Baily, Longue Vue Club; Grant Dibert, Stanton Heights Golf Club; William Frew, Fox Chapel Golf Club; John Graham, South Hills Country Club; Dr. J. L. McBride, Shannopin Country Club; Edward E. McCoy, Longue Vue Club and Oakmont Country Club; J. Bernard Rose, Allegheny Country Club.

The headquarters of the Golf Service Bureau are at 1101 Farmers' Bank Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.