

# Norm Cates' THE Club Insider<sup>®</sup>

## NEWS

*The Pulse of the Health, Racquet & Sports Club Business*

## Manufacturers Meet To Discuss Future

By Norm Cates, Jr.

A meeting was held in Chicago during the recent CLUB INDUSTRY Show in which over 40 people representing 30 manufacturers and vendors met to discuss a number of issues which are of importance to them and the club industry in general.

The meeting was called by Fitness Management magazine Co-Publisher, David Levy, so that industry vendors could: (1) Discuss their disenchantment with the Fitness Products Council on behalf of fitness manufacturers, particularly within the commercial segment. (2) Discuss the possibility of the formation of an independent trade group/association to serve their needs. (3) Discuss specific issues which are relevant to the above including:

- (a) Media relations
- (b) Risk management
- (c) Trade show costs
- (d) Equipment standards
- (e) Network marketing
- (f) Group purchasing for hotels, airfare and auto/truck rental

## Bally News

By Norm Cates, Jr.

There has been a lot of interest in the Bally "spin-off", the new franchise program and other things Bally has been doing. So, I contacted Mr. Mike Lucci, the BALLY TOTAL FITNESS CEO and President to find out the latest

SPIN-OFF - The stock spin off date of record is November 15, 1995. The Bally parent company is going to give stock holders a split, providing four shares of the new Bally Total Fitness stock for one share of the Bally Entertainment stock. The initial offering will happen 30 (See Bally page 26)

- Inside The Insider •
- Self vs Time Management
- Why Hospitals Are Buying Health Clubs
- The Senior Sizzle
- Attacking Hidden Expenses - Part IV
- Degrees vs Certifications

als.

The meeting was opened by David Levy who then introduced the appointed meeting facilitator, David Dinerman. David Levy and the Fitness Management staff departed immediately thereafter to allow for a closed meeting (without any press). Dave Levy and Fitness Management magazine should be applauded for his work in setting up the meeting and for arranging and paying for the meeting space and refreshments.

Contrary to a report filed by one club industry journalist, several specific results were obtained at the meeting: ACTION THE ATTENDEES WOULD LIKE TO SEE TAKEN

It was resolved by the group that Jim Trisler, President of Paramount and Ellie Ballew, Marketing Manager of Precor, would approach Greg Hartley of the Fitness Products Council and request action on several key items:

(1) Development of a comprehensive marketing communications effort to support manufacturers of fitness products.

(2) Development of an ongoing risk management program to reduce the cost of product liability insurance.

(3) Appointment of a full-time Director for the Fitness Products Council.

(4) Development of a dialogue with trade groups and other trade show producers to influence the number, location, dates, formats and overhead costs associated with trade shows.

The attendees agreed that if the above items could not be addressed to their satisfaction and/or in a timely manner through the Fitness Products Council, they would be inclined to create another association.

### FORMER TRADE SHOW PRODUCER REMEMBERS

During the Chicago meeting, one individual who formerly produced a very large trade show for the club industry commented: "I'm a traitor because now I am on the vendor side when I used to be a trade show producer. I can remember that we would

cringe when a meeting like this would be discussed, because what we feared most in the trade show industry was the manufacturers getting together for a meeting of this kind."

This writer would like to know..... could the fear described by the above former trade show producer have been caused by the potential loss of HUGE PROFITS being made by trade show producers at the unfair expense of the manufacturers and vendors?

### A WAKE UP CALL!!

This meeting and the results thereof, appear to be a loud and clear "WAKE-UP CALL" to the Fitness Products Council, IHRSA, Club Industry and other trade shows and associations who set the terms under which manufacturers and vendors market and display their products to the commercial club operators. What this "wake-up call" appears to mean is that the manufacturers and vendors want to be heard and represented because they have

not been in the past. A comparable situation happened in the 1980's when the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association was formed because the manufacturers were tired of being forced to pay the high cost of union labor and unreasonable space rentals in Chicago. The result? The Atlanta SUPER SHOW which now draws 130,000 attendees every year!

### THE CLUB INSIDER RECOMMENDS:

I believe that IHRSA, for example, is at great risk should the vendors decide to form their own trade association or align themselves with one show per year a la the Super Show.

That could lead to the development of a significant new and competing annual or semi-annual trade show owned and controlled by the manufacturers and vendors. To support that belief, consider that of IHRSA's 1994 annual revenues of \$5.24 million, \$1.82 million or 35% was derived from "Trade Shows and Meetings."

Therefore, this issue is FAR (See Manufacturers page 2)



Bally Total Fitness - Smyrna, GA

NOVEMBER 1995  
VOLUME II NUMBER 11

# THE INSIDER SPEAKS

## • EDITORIALS • "INSIDER MAIL" • COMMENTS •

### Manufacturers

continued from cover

more important to the club industry in general than a first glimpse might lead you to believe for a couple of reasons:

(1) IHRSA and its Trade Shows and the CLUB INDUSTRY Conference and Trade Show are the two premier club industry events in the United States. It is safe to say that IHRSA and the CLUB INDUSTRY Conference and Trade Shows have helped a great deal in the professionalization of the club industry over the past 15 years. The continuation of IHRSA, its Trade Shows and the CLUB INDUSTRY Conference and Trade Shows are very important to the future growth of and continued professionalization of the club industry.

If either of these organizations is faced with significant new competition in the trade-show and meeting arena, it could deplete their revenues, erode their resources and change the picture of what they are able to do dramatically. I believe that would be det-

rimental to all club owners and operators everywhere over the long run.

(2) No matter how you cut it, club operators are impacted by issues facing the suppliers of the club industry. Take for example: (1) Risk management/product liability costs for manufacturers/vendors (2) Annual trade show costs.

If the vendors must pay exorbitant insurance costs for product liability, guess who must pay in the long run? The commercial club owners who purchase the products and services. If the vendors must pay exorbitant costs for trade shows because of unions and less than competitive trade show space rentals, guess who must pay in the long run? The commercial club owners who purchase the products and services.

So, what should IHRSA and the CLUB INDUSTRY people do? They should RUN-NOT WALK to the nearest telephone and set up a meeting of their own with these vendors to hear and understand their collective grievances as soon as possible. A perfect time and place is already set - Atlanta, Georgia on December 7-10, 1995

at the 10th Annual IHRSA Marketing and Sales Conference. They should then take IMMEDIATE ACTION to begin to address the issues of the manufacturers group. And, I believe the vendors should proceed with these discussions with IHRSA and CLUB INDUSTRY at the same time as they pursue the thrusts outlined above so that the issues are being attacked from both ends of the spectrum at once. With the potential power that a new trade association controlled by the manufacturers and vendors would possess, nothing less will do.

The time is now for the manufacturers and vendors..... they have been tremendously supportive of every association and trade show out there and there are more than I can count. And, they have been very patient. They have not thought seriously about being organized as a trade association up until now and for that, they have paid more than their dues. They are concerned with the spiraling costs of increased product liability coverage, trade show and other costs and they want and need to stop the cost in-

creases and reduce their costs wherever possible. They want to give the club owners and operators the best products at the best prices, but unfortunately, the out-of-control costs end up being passed on to the club buyers because the suppliers have no choice.

It's time for a change and a "new balance" between the manufacturers/vendor group and the various associations and trade

shows who have been profiting from the "status quo". Lets "TELL IT LIKE IT IS!" And, lets get it right!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 20-year veteran of the health, racquet and sports club industry and the Publisher and Editor of The CLUB INSIDER News. Cates was a co-founder and the 1st President of IHRSA.)

## HOT NEWS FLASH!

The NSGA has sent a memo dated November 9, 1995 to all of its World Sports Expo Exhibitors in which they have announced:

(1) A Saturday start instead of Sunday, intended to reduce the set up costs for vendors by reducing overtime charges for late set up,

(2) For 1996, drayage costs (the transfer of freight from the point of arrival to the exhibit floor location) have been lowered substantially. NSGA is offering a 25% discount on straight-time

drayage to all exhibitors.

(3) Substantial discounts are available to exhibitors who order special services such as electrical, carpeting or furniture, if ordered by pre-determined deadlines. Also, NSGA has negotiated with Chicago labor unions to allow 10' X 10'(space) booth exhibitors to set up their own exhibits.

(CLUB INSIDER NOTE: This is the kind of action that needs to be taken by all trade show producers who serve the commercial fitness vendors! Hurray!)



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November 7, 1995

Mr. Norm Cates  
The CLUB INSIDER News  
P.O. Box 671443  
Marietta, GA 30067-0025

Dear Norm,

I wish to express my thanks for the quality and honesty of your publication. If the number of responses to our advertisement is any indication, we are not the only ones who feel that your publication is very reputable.

One of the most difficult goals for my business was to find out where our advertising dollars work for us. I have found The CLUB INSIDER News to be one of my best advertising tools yet. I have spent eighteen years advertising my businesses and have rarely met someone who's goal in life is to help others succeed. You clearly have that as your goal.

It is a pleasure to advertise in The CLUB INSIDER News and clearly my advertising dollars are being well spent.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Yurich  
President

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## Norm Cates' **Club Insider** NEWS

November 10, 1995

Mr. Gary Yurich  
BEST Lights, Inc.  
328 E. Sunnybrook  
Royal Oak, Michigan 48073

Dear Gary,

I received your letter dated November 7, 1995 and I want to thank you for the kind compliments and feedback about your advertising success with The CLUB INSIDER News.

In respect to your comment about my goal in life being to help others succeed. It was a high compliment which I am honored and pleased to receive. When I began the development of The CLUB INSIDER News, my advisors, the esteemed members of the Faust Executive Roundtable #1, heard me say that to help others in the club industry to succeed would be my primary mission. That was nearly three years ago. We have been in publication for two years as of our upcoming December edition. And, I can now say with confidence that with your help and the help of all of our advertisers and contributing writers, we have stuck to that basic mission.

I learned about helping others from my Dad, Norm Cates, Sr. And, in the club industry, my mission for The CLUB INSIDER News has been shaped and guided by Rick Caro, Dr. Gerry Faust and the other members of the Roundtable #1. I thank them for their advice and other assistance.

My commitment to my advertisers and readers is strong. With continued work, we will improve The CLUB INSIDER and we will hopefully provide all of our advertisers and readers with excellent results for many years to come.

Thank you very much for advertising in The CLUB INSIDER News and for your kind letter.

Very sincerely yours,

Norm Cates, Jr.  
Publisher and Editor  
The CLUB INSIDER News

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# •NORM'S NOTES•

**S**ANDY COFFMAN, one of the industry's true pioneers in the world of club programming, has recently been honored by the BODYLIFE Magazine in Europe with her receipt of the BODYLIFE EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD - 1995. This prestigious award comes on the heels of Sandy's being named "1995 TOP IHRSA CONVENTION SPEAKER IN BOTH CONTENT AND PRESENTATION", an award determined by the vote of the convention attendees. Both of these awards were in response to her seminar/workshop on Aerobics for Seniors. Be sure to read and carefully consider the information packed article in this issue entitled: "THE SENIOR SIZZLE"

**CORRECTIONS** - In the last two months issues I've made a couple of errors that need to be corrected. (1) **NEIL SOL'S** area code was incorrectly printed in the bio in the article. The correct area code is 713 - not 714, and the number is: 344-9909, THATS (713) 344-9909. Neil Sol, Ph.D., is the esteemed author of our monthly column, sponsored by **MICROFIT CORPORATION**, the company which provides the best fitness testing and prescription systems. In case you are a new reader, Neil's column is entitled: The Healthcare Connection. Sorry about the wrong phone number Neil! And, folks..... if you have ever considered selling your club, why not sell it to a hospital? Be sure to read Neil's column in this month's **MICROFIT'S** Healthcare Connection.

**JIM NASH**, formerly the General Manager of the Harbor Bay Club in California, has left the club industry to start his own company in the golf world. He has established a new business called

"**NEXT DAY GOLF**" which is a service that provides golf tee times to traveling golfers in the Phoenix/Scottsdale, Arizona area. In our September, 1995 issue, we incorrectly printed his new company name as: "Call Today Play Tomorrow" which is the new company slogan, not the name of the new business. The new "**NEXT DAY GOLF**" service in the Phoenix area will provide golfers with guaranteed tee-times on 190 area golf courses. Jim currently is in hot and heavy negotiations to expand his company nationwide. The number to call for a tee-time is: 1 - (800) TE-TIMES (800) 838-4637. Sorry about the error Jim and best of luck!

**BILL RICHARDSON**, is an old club industry friend of mine who owns the **TREEFORMS** Company which builds, among other things, beautiful lockers and lockerroom furniture. I've known Bill since the mid 1970's when we bought his beautiful Oak Treeforms lockers for our nine Southeastern U.S. clubs. Bill has just come on board with us as a new advertiser to introduce his new **SOLOS** Electronic Combination Lock. The new lock system will provide upscale clubs with a secure - easy - to - operate system which should be very popular. Knowing Bill, I can guarantee you he has done his homework and that customer satisfaction will be paramount. Welcome aboard Bill and Carol! Be sure to see their full page ad on page 7.

VICTOR AND LYNNE

**BRICK** are two of the true drivers and entrepreneurs in our industry. They produce a monthly **EMPLOYEE** newsletter for their associates at **BRICK BODIES** in which they continue to impress me with their "Team Spirit". This last month, Vic used his one-page column in the employee newsletter to tell the story of one of their new employees who had recently won the Mid-Atlantic Region Championship in her quest to compete in and win the National Aerobic Championships in Los Angeles in January. The event will be broadcast on national T.V. Vic's article was about **NIKKI HELT** and her quest for the National Aerobics Championships. Nikki had come to Vic and Lynne last January, '95 with a plan about how she wanted to enter the competition to win the National Aerobics Championships. Vic and Lynne agreed to support and help her with her goal. This is a great story to hear about, even if Nikki does not win the Nationals. Best of luck to you Nikki.... The **CLUB INSIDER** is pulling for you.... and we wish you the best. By the way, Victor Brick always closes his employee newsletter comments with very inspiration material which would motivate anyone. The following quote comes from Vic's November issue and is attributed to **MORGAN WOOTEN**, Head Basketball coach at DeMatha High School, Hyattsville, Md., who is the winningest coach in national high school basketball history: "THE ONE THAT HAS IN-



**Norm Cates, Jr.**

VESTED THE MOST IS THE LAST ONE TO SURRENDER".

**GEOFFREY DYER**, the President of the Tampa, Florida area **LIFESTYLE FAMILY FITNESS CENTERS**, has leased a former **BALLY** club which is 37,000 square feet. The facility had been operated by Bally for the past

five years and is one of three that Bally's **MIKE LUCCI** elected to shut down in the Tampa area as part of Bally's nationwide overhaul. Be sure to see the front page **BALLY NEWS**! Geoff will be doing extensive renovations to the facility. Additionally, Geoff has opened another facility, this one

(See **Norm's Notes** page 6)

Norm Cates'

# THE Club Insider

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# MICROFIT'S HEALTHCARE CONNECTION

## Why Hospitals Are Buying Health Clubs

By Neil Sol, Ph.D.

**D**o hospitals like us? Many club owners often wonder how hospital administrators and Boards of Directors perceive the value of health clubs. Club owner/managers typically believe that the healthcare institutions do not think much of health clubs and their contributions. This belief could not be further from the truth.

The evidence is before us!

In recent months, a number of U.S. hospitals have solicited, performed due diligence and have purchased established health clubs in

their communities. They have paid fair market value for the club and also hired the owner/manager to continue to manage the facility as a hospital employee.

Do hospitals think highly of health clubs, their management and their contribution to prevention?

Definitely. Enough for hospitals to invest significant capital to purchase and operate the club and make it the preventive delivery arm of the hospital/healthcare institution.

Why are hospitals buying health clubs? Here are some of the reasons considered in hospital board rooms:

•Health clubs help the

hospital expand its continuum of care (to include prevention) in a marketplace that is demanding prevention services.

•It is less expensive for a hospital to acquire an existing health club than to build a quality club.

•Hospitals are purchasing clubs inclusive of facility and equipment, but most importantly, to capture the club's professional management team.

•Hospitals wish to acquire the health club's established business, with established membership and revenue base. Profitable or nearly profitable clubs are most attractive to hospitals.

•Hospitals are purchasing clubs to avoid competing with an established community business, thus avoiding negative/adverse publicity in the community the hospital serves.

•Hospitals are purchasing clubs because they have a membership roster that includes potential new patients for the hospital.

•Hospitals are purchasing clubs because hospitals require delivery sites for the variety of wellness and rehabilitation programs they NOW typically offer.

•Hospital's are purchasing clubs because of their mission statement's commitment to improve the health of the com-



**Neil Sol, Ph. D.**

understanding or experience in how a club can compliment a hospital.

For a hospital-owned club/wellness center to succeed, it must contribute to the mission of the entire healthcare institution and it must be symbiotic with all other hospital departments.

While it is appropriate that hospitals continue to pursue the purchase of clubs, it is also important that club owners/managers reach out to contact and develop initial relationships with hospitals. It is from this mutual outreach that the healthcare connection can be made and the acquisition of the health club by the hospital can be accomplished.

Understanding how to merge into a healthcare system and having the ability to express how a club can integrate will enhance your club's appeal to hospital decision makers, thus increasing your chance of selling your club, "cashing out" and enjoying the security of becoming a hospital employee/administrator.

Do hospitals like us? The answer is YES! Why are hospitals buying health clubs? The answers are clear. The opportunity is now. The future is here.

(Neil Sol, Ph.D. is the President of Health Vantage, Inc., a Houston, Texas - based club consulting firm. Neil is one of the industry's leading experts in the field of health care as it relates to clubs. Neil can be reached at: (713) 344-9909.)

## Leisure Sports Honored

San Francisco, Ca. - Leisure Sports, Inc., the club management and development company which operates CLUBSPORT athletic resorts, is based in Pleasanton, California. Leisure Sports has been honored by Arthur Anderson and Company and the San Francisco Business Times for having the best business practices in the area of customer satisfaction. The 1995 ENTERPRISE AWARD for BEST BUSINESS PRACTICES in the Bay Area, was awarded in early November.

Leisure Sports, Inc. is a

club management and development company with upscale CLUBSPORT athletic resorts, including facilities in Pleasanton, Fremont, Walnut Creek and Irvine, California. Leisure Sports, Inc. recently assumed management of the \$20 Million+ Sporting Club at Lakeshore Towers in Irvine, California.

Leisure Sports, Inc. was identified for its member services practices which are designed to develop employees and clubs that are committed to meeting member needs and expectations. Programs

include intense employee training, a designated member services department, bonus programs which are directly linked to customer satisfaction and company-sponsored member satisfaction focus groups and surveys.

Leisure Sports is also the 1994 and 1995 recipient of the Consumer ValueStar Award for outstanding customer satisfaction. Consumer ValueStar is awarded only to companies receiving very high marks in customer satisfaction as determined by an independent review panel from the University of San Francisco.

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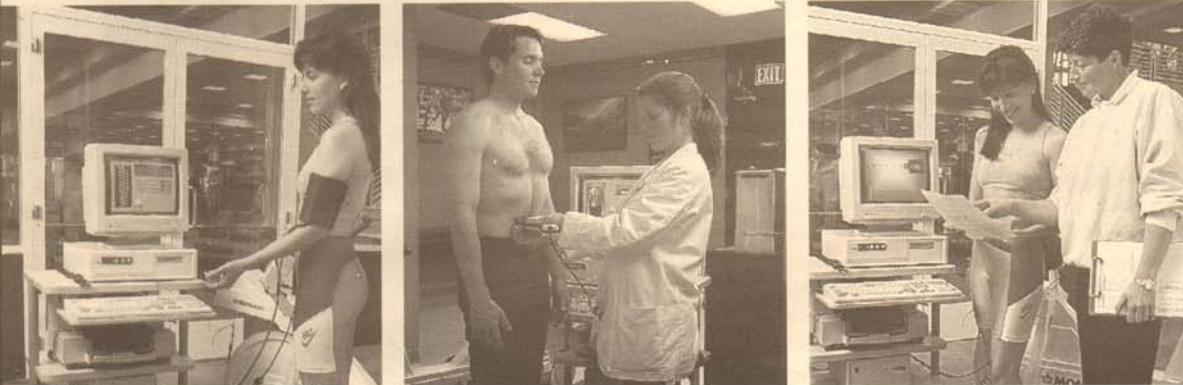
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# Self vs. Time Management For Greater Personal Fulfillment

By Richard I. Lyles, Ph.D.

**W**hen's the last time you said, "I didn't have enough time?" Was it last week? Yesterday? Perhaps it was as recent as earlier today. It's a statement most of us make from time to time.

But, it's a trick question. And all you have to do to discover the trap is answer a very simple follow-up question. Whenever it was that you last said you didn't have enough time, ask yourself "How much time did I have?"

If you're like everyone else, your answer will be the same. Yesterday you had twenty-four hours. Last week you had 168 hours. And, like everyone else, you had seven days last week and 52 weeks last year. And you'll have twenty four hours today and tomorrow, and seven days next week.

Time is different from all the other resources we have to work with, because it comes in fixed, finite quantities. Human resources, for example, come in all different sizes and shapes, but most importantly possess different levels of skill, knowledge, back-

ground, experience and capabilities. Capital resources can last longer or be used up more quickly depending upon how you care for, account for and maintain them. But time is different. No matter what we do, there will be sixty seconds in each minute, sixty minutes in each hour, twenty four hours in each day, seven days in each week, for fifty two weeks each year.

Which leads us to two important premises. The first is that the whole concept of "time management" is fraudulent. We can't manage time. We can't manipulate time. In fact, we can't do anything about time. Time just is. No matter what we do, time will continue to tick off at a steady rate. To focus on trying to manage time will be a waste of time.

The second important premise has to do with having enough time and the issue of personal responsibility. What is implied when someone says, "I didn't have enough time?" The implication is that it's time's fault be-



**Richard Lyles**

cause there wasn't enough of it. But the fact of the matter is that the person had just as much time as anyone else. If the person didn't complete a specific task during the time that was available, it was because a decision was made to do something else. Thus, if the person who says "I didn't have enough time" was really being honest, the more appropriate statement would be "I chose not to spend my time that way."

Which means the essence of personal productivity is not time management. None of us can do anything about time. The essence of personal productivity is self management in relationship to time. The only thing we can do is make responsible decisions about how we choose to use the time that is available.

**(Richard Lyles is an author, noted speaker and active management consultant with international clientele. He specializes in Executive and Management Development, Organization Development, Organizational Problem Solving, Management Decision Making and Executive Retreat/Conference Planning. Lyles has authored three books: PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING, SUPERVISION IN HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS, Co-authored with Carl Joiner and YOU'RE HIRED, Co-authored with Martha Lyles, in progress. Richard Lyles may be reached at: (619) 748-8517.)**



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An industry legend & president of Club Marketing and Management Services, Mike is one of the leading club marketers in the U.S. He is a contributing author to numerous fitness journals, and is the guest lecturer for such organizations as IHRSA, Club Industry and BodyLife. Mike has been in the club business since 1965, during which time he has been involved in every level of the club operations, including a prestigious stay at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Along the way he has owned and operated his own clubs. As a consultant, Mike has been involved in the development or management of over 1500 different clubs worldwide. He is quite simply the supreme educator who will transform your approach to club marketing and management.

You will also have the opportunity to learn from other industry leaders and guest faculty.

### ...Norm's Notes

*continued from page 3*

12,000 square feet, in North Lakeland, Florida. These two additions will put Geoff at six Tampa area locations. Good on you mate!

O.J. walks! Now, won't it be fun to watch and see if orange juice sales plummet over the next year?

**STAIRMASTER**'s new owners, the Troy, New York based **GARDEN WAY, Inc.**, are rolling out lots of new innovations including a deal to add the **QUINTON** Treadmills to their product line.

**JIM EVANS**, one of our contributing writers, provided the article in the October issue entitled: "Artificial Intelligence: A Substitute For Employees?". In a note preceding the article, I mentioned that it was not an advertise-

ment and I didn't even know the name of the company or their phone number at press time, but I would get the information. For anyone who is interested, the company name is: INTELLI-HEALTH, the number is: (310) 230-3394 and the contact name is: STEVE GUMMINS.

**ED GAUT**, is Vice President of **WILLOW CREEK PUBLICATIONS** and a nationally known personal trainer and fitness author. He has agreed to serve as a contributing writer and column co-ordinator for our new **CLUB INSIDER** Personal Trainer column which will be launched in next month's edition. Ed also wrote this month's article entitled:

"Computer Fitness". His company, Willow Creek Publications is one of our "Charter Advertisers" whose sponsorship, along with our other esteemed advertisers, has allowed us to expand our circulation nationwide to over 12,000 clubs each month. Be sure to check out the ad for Willow Creek Publications on page #21 of

this edition. Also, if you want to reach Ed, call and leave a message at: (800) 823-3488.

**SUE AND MIKE PEMBERTON** are to be congratulated as they have just acquired the Norton Pines Tennis and Fitness Club in Spring Lake, Michigan! Sue will continue in her role of the last seven years as General Manager. The club was recently named the Western Michigan Tennis Association's 1994 Club of the Year, so additional congratulations are due!

**JILL AND JOHN KINNEY'S** company in San Francisco, **CLUB ONE**, was listed in a recent issue of **INC. MAGAZINE** as being #119 out of 500 in annual revenue growth in America. Way to go guys! And, just think about this. During the same time they have grown their company, they have also had two children and a third one is on the way!



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# Attacking Hidden Expenses - Part IV

By Rick Caro

In each of the previous three articles, the key goal was to identify expense savings where all of the benefits flow to the bottom line and where the member never sees any change in the club's operation or level of service.

Part I dealt with Workers Compensation issues and Part II with Unemployment Benefits. Part III addressed several areas, including Credit Card Fees, Bank Charges, Disability Insurance and the Cost of Employee Recruiting.

This article will discuss a series of other categories worth attacking.

## POSTAGE

Most clubs accentuate their use of first-class postage whether it is for monthly bills to members, club newsletters, mailings promoting member referral campaigns or special events. The savings for varying types of postage are enormous, as shown below:

TYPE	COST	% SAVINGS
Regular 1st Class	\$ .32	
Pre-Sorted 1st Class	\$ .274	14.4%
Zip-Code +4 (1st Class)	\$ .305	4.7%
Bar - Coded 1st Class	\$ .295	7.8%
Regular 3rd Class	\$ .226	29.4%
Zip Code +4 (3rd Class)	\$ .216	32.5%

Some post offices will

even assist a club in its attempt to convert to "Zip-Code+4." If time is adequate, the use of Third Class is still viable. In a large mailing, the pre-sorted savings are certainly significant. Some clubs have recently saved \$5,000-\$6,000 per year by taking advantage of these different categories.

## COST OF CLUB INVENTORY

There are a number of clubs which operate their

own pro shops and restaurants/snack bars. Rarely does anyone stop and analyze the "real" costs of operations. The use of club staff who have other functions but assist in the pro shop is seldom studied. Staff may be used in the buying of merchandise, checking it in, sending it back, marking it up, displaying it, etc. None of this time is truly allocated if their primary function is a front desk/receptionist or some level of management.

More importantly, the club fails to calculate the real cost of carrying the merchandise. If the inventory level is \$30,000 and the cost of interest if the club were to borrow is 10%, the "real" cost of the inventory is the out-of-pocket cost plus this carrying cost. In this case, it might be \$3,000.

However, there are other costs which prevent the club from achieving a planned return on inventory. There is the theft factor, which applies to both club pro shops and restaurants. There is the spoilage and waste element - mainly applicable to the restaurant. Finally, there is the loss of value due to the clearance factor and the need to rid the club of less popular items. Often, the greatest failure clubs experience is their delay in not having that sale early enough.

## EMPLOYEE ABUSE/THEFT

No one ever likes to admit that certain employees take for granted that club-owned items are available for the taking. One club years ago administered lie detector tests to the entire staff (15 were full-time and 60 part-time employees). All but four admit-



**Rick Caro**

cated re-classification opportunities for clubs with the utility rates. All of these companies receive their compensation in the form of utility savings - generally, 50% of each month's calculated savings.

## COLLECTION AGENCY FEES

Most clubs now do an adequate job of dunning those members who owe money. Most clubs either do their own dunning with a series of 2 or 3 letters, generally 30 days apart to account receivables, or use an outside company to perform the same function. Once clubs decide that a member will not pay his previously billed account, they seek out collection services from an outside agency. Clubs generally can best handle this step by turning over the account directly to this outside firm and distancing themselves from the process. This is important since collection agencies threaten to harm an individual's credit rating, possibly seek a judgment against that former member and maybe, put a lien on his house or garnish his wages. All of these threats and actions are distasteful and ones clubs want to be as removed from as possible.

The collection agency will negotiate its fees. Generally, 50% is the most it should receive for its efforts, although some clubs only offer 40%. When a case gets near trial, some agencies want the club to pay the legal fees (lawyers, court costs, etc.) However, all of these extra fees associated with any litigation are negotiable. Perhaps, the more important issue than the fees paid to a collection agency is to select an effective firm who adheres to laws and will work hard for the club, even on small accounts.

The above completes the hidden expense territory. If all four articles (reprinted in August thru November, 1995 in **CLUB INSIDER**) are implemented, substantial savings are available - and can be projected with confidence.

(Rick Caro is President of Management Vision, Inc., a consulting company to clubs and an acknowledged expert in club finances, operations, valuations, feasibility studies and club sales. Management Vision, Inc. can be contacted at (800) 778-4411.)



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# Cecil Spearman Sells Woman's Club

Laguna Niguel, Ca. - Linda Cole, the Aerobic Coordinator of The Woman's Club La Mesa and her husband, Terry, have purchased the club from Spearman Industries and assumed operation on November 1, 1995. Linda has been involved with the club since it opened on Jan. 1, 1990. Her duties in recent years included aerobics coordination, aerobics instructor and pro shop owner/manager.

Cecil Spearman commented, "We have had several offers to buy The Woman's Club due to the great location and outstanding aerobic programs. We sold to Linda and Terry because of her great relationship with the members and her dedication to fitness as a way of life. She will be a great club owner and general manager and the members will clearly benefit from this change in ownership."

Cecil Spearman has now completed the sale of two clubs and the acquisition of one in the last three months. In September, he sold his John Wayne Tennis Club in Newport Beach, California to Ken Stuart and weeks later acquired the beautiful Monarch Beach Tennis Club overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Monarch Beach, California.

Spearman has merged the membership of the Monarch Beach Tennis Club with that of his flagship Laguna Niguel Tennis Club to provide the joint membership with two great clubs for the price of one: offering 23 tennis courts, two swimming pools, fitness and aerobics areas, massage and bar and restaurant facilities. The Monarch Beach acquisition gives Spearman a virtual lock on commercial tennis fa-

cilities in the South Orange County, California area. These recent sales will allow Spearman to focus on his South Orange County tennis facilities, and it is anticipated that he will announce in January or February, 1996, a major new thrust into management of hospital-based clubs.

The CLUB INSIDER congratulates Linda and Terry Cole and Cecil Spearman on the completion of this sale!

## Australian Body Works Grows By 50% In '95

Atlanta, Georgia - Australian Body Works (ABW), an Atlanta-based health club company, has signed an agreement with German investor, Walter Schmidt, to take over management of The Northside Athletic Club. The Northside Athletic Club offers tennis, swimming, fitness, aerobics and catering facilities situated on a beautifully wooded 14 acre North Atlanta site only 10 minutes from downtown and the 1996 Olympic

Games. ABW had previously managed the fitness facility component at Northside Athletic Club before leaving four years ago. Larry Dyke has been appointed General Manager and Tracy Frick the Club Manager.

The new deal marks a 50% growth rate in 1995 for Tony deLeede, the Founder and President of Australian Body Works, as he has increased his number of Atlanta facilities from 10 to 15 in

the past 11 months. ABW is now the largest health club chain in Metropolitan Atlanta, providing fitness in the metro area through 11 full-service, coed health clubs, the first CardioTheater Express and three ABW Women's Fitness Centers, all featuring CardioTheater. The Northside Athletic Club will serve as the "Premier Club" for Australian Body Works. CardioTheater, the exercise entertainment system

now being distributed worldwide by Australian Body Works, will immediately be installed in the fit-

ness facility within the club. Other renovations will take place in the next six to twelve months.

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## SALES MAKERS Tip Of The Month

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- 2) A guest of a current member.
- A) No cost - if they have a prearranged pass from a membership advisor.
- B) Charge - if a guest is with a member and does not have a guest pass.
- 3) A walk in guest that would like information about the club.
- 4) A guest with an IHRSA passport membership card or other special plan. They will pay only applicable fees (usually 50% of guest fee).

In all of the above cases a guest waiver will be completed at the control desk by the guest. The guest waiver book is kept at the control desk and it is the responsibility of the desk staff to have each and every guest who enters the club to fill one out, clearly printing their name and phone number. While they are filling out the waiver, the control desk should notify a membership advisor.

The membership advisor will then greet the guest and tour them. If the person is planning to use the club, the membership advisor should simply welcome them, offer any assistance if necessary, and follow-up with them the next day.

If the guest has a guest pass and that particular advisor is not available, the front desk will give the waiver to the next available advisor. These waivers (leads) are like gold, each prospective member's name and phone number costs the club approximately \$40 if not followed up.

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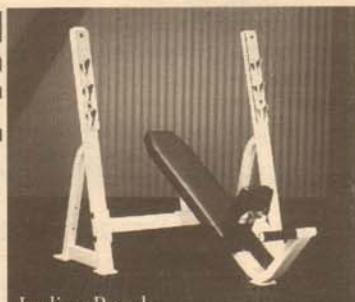
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# Degrees vs. Certifications: Another Perspective

By James M. Evans

In the early days of the fitness industry most health club employees did not have college degrees and certification programs did not exist. Health club owners usually developed their own training programs in an industry which was still in its infancy.

Those early training programs were surprisingly uniform in many ways because so many of the owners were part of a close fraternity of industry pioneers who shared a common vision of what the health club business could become. Ray Wilson was one of those visionaries and he continues to make a significant impact on the industry today. There were others, too, who made a difference: Bob Rice, Ken Melby, Don Wildman, Roy Zurkowski, Bill Hubner, Vic Tanney, Les Workman, Bob Delmontique, Charlie Tartella, Skip Peterson and more.

Many of these industry forerunners came from similar athletic backgrounds in bodybuilding or wrestling, for example, and used their athletic experience to spawn workout facilities which became the standard of the day. Ray Wilson and the Melby Brothers were professional wrestlers and Bob Rice and Les Workman were bodybuilders. They did not have sophisticated exercise equipment and machines in those days, so they designed their own from years of experience in weight training. Most of them did not have college degrees either, but they were entrepreneurs who earned veritable Ph.D.s through trial and error and a powerful ambition to succeed.

Exercise programs were developed for the basic goals of building, reducing or general conditioning with usually a set amount of weight and a predetermined number of repetitions for each particular objective. This was an early at-



**Jim Evans**

tempt to standardize programming in a burgeoning industry which was changing rapidly. Training techniques were usually based on the experience of the owners which might not compare favorably with today's modern techniques, but it was all that was known at the time. The educational community was not yet in sync with the needs of the industry to be of much help.

When I started in the health club business more than 28 years ago it was often a standing joke if we hired people with physical education degrees because we usually had to train them all over again from scratch. Most had little or no knowledge of exercise prescription and worse, had no knowledge of how to use our exercise equipment. They had no business, accounting, management, sales or other skills indigenous to our day-to-day operations even though they might be able to recite the names of every muscle group verbatim. They were taught to work primarily with youngsters within the context of recreation or team sports - the perfect scenario for someone working in an educational environment but not applicable to the adult commercial or corporate fitness industry. We were forced to continue developing our own

training programs to meet the demands of our business. Certifications became a natural extension of many of those programs.

In recent years we have seen the proliferation of new and more exacting degrees such as exercise science and exercise physiology, but graduates in these studies are often no better prepared for employment with us than were their early predecessors in physical education. Many of them who have attempted to become certified to enhance their degrees and improve their prospects for employment are unable to pass some of the certification exams despite their college education. While this does not diminish the value of their education, it does emphasize the difference between what they have learned and what is needed in the real health club world.

I recently interviewed a woman who was applying for a management position at a well known fitness center in the Midwest and during the course of our interview I inquired about her Master's degree in health management. Specifically, I asked her about what previous experience the instructor had in health club management and she replied that he had never worked in the industry before but that he had written a book about it and was, therefore, "qualified" to teach the course. Enough said.

Debating the merits or demerits of certification compared to a college degree is only divisive and creates unnecessary antagonism between educators and the purveyors of certification programs. Some people imply that certification programs are the inferior and illegitimate offspring of greed, but most certification programs would not exist if there was not something lacking in our educational institutes in the first place. If our educational institutes can adapt to the needs of the industry, certifications may one day be-

come redundant. But, for the present, they play an important role in the growth and increasing credibility of our industry and provide us with a ready supply of qualified employees. There is a need for both.

At the same time, let us not forget to draw on the experience of those industry veterans who may have neither degree nor certification, but can still contribute to our overall knowledge. Degrees and certifications are not the only valid credentials in today's workplace - practical experience counts for something too.

*(Jim Evans is Executive Director of Heartland Health Center in Boone, Iowa and President of Evans and Associates Consulting since 1984.)*

*(Editor's Note: This article illuminates a club industry issue which impacts virtually all club operators: how to go about recruiting and hiring the right people for the right positions. One excellent tool comes to mind. It is an evaluation system called PREP which tests applicants for various job descriptions and provides ratings as a tool for the operator to evaluate a person's personality and traits for the specific job description (such as program director). The PREP results serve as a tool to be used as part of the hiring process. The program is produced and marketed by PREP Profile Systems in Bend, Oregon. Information can be obtained by calling JoAn Mann at (503) 382-1402.)*

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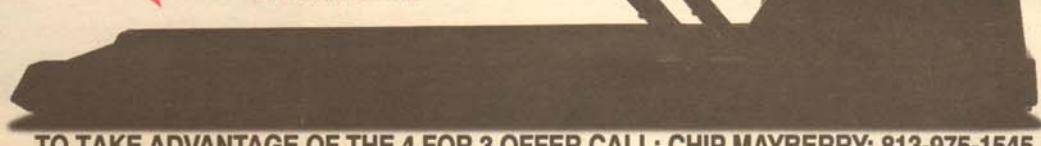
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Those who have seen the view from Villa de Papagayo call it one of the most spectacular in the world. With parrots and monkeys in nearby trees one soon realizes he or she is in a nature's paradise.



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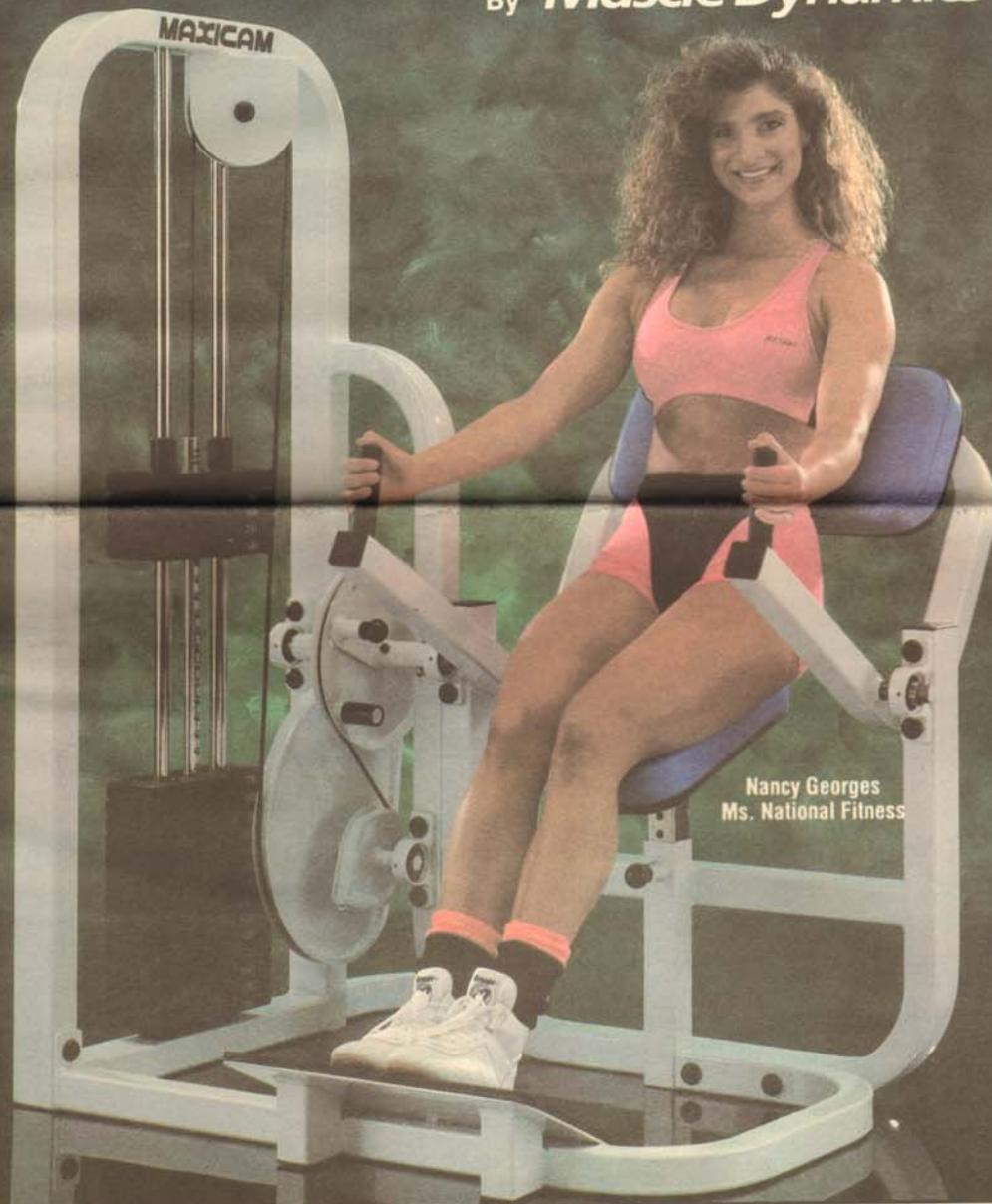
The villa has four bedrooms, including three master suites with ocean views, private terraces, air conditioning, overhead fans and full baths. A fourth bedroom has a full bath and bunkbed.



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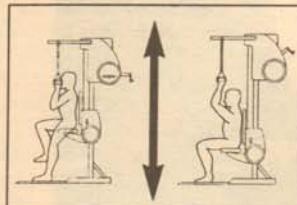
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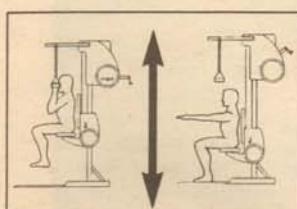
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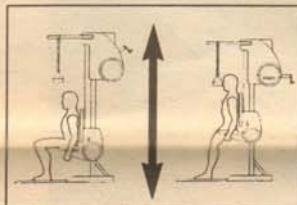
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# The Body Pump: The Unfolding Story

By Albert Mroz

**S**peculation about the fitness industry future:

**QUESTION:** Do public expectations and new scientific data signal a paradigm shift from high stress to lower stress exercise?

**ANSWER:** Exercise clearly is moving to lower stress..... the walking boom is a perfect example.

Now, AEREX Corporation brings you the BODY PUMP. The Body Pump is based on a technique used in physical therapy called "unloading", incrementally reducing load on the body during rehab. Supporting from 5 to 250

pounds, the user performs smooth, rhythmic strokes in a wide range of motion, conditioning all major muscle groups while effectively engaging the cardiovascular system. Low stress squats, stepping, leg lifts, pull ups, lat pulls and more are all combined in one. Virtually anyone can use this machine, from athletes to the extremely deconditioned, injured, arthritic or elderly.

"When we started this project we wanted input from experts at the highest levels as well as average people, so our beta test units went to both", says AEREX President, Peter Zappel. Prototypes went to Mark Grabiner, Ph.D., internationally recognized researcher in biomechanics at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Ray Wilson, legendary fitness industry vision-

ary, Jerry Yost, recipient of the prestigious President's Council Silver Eagle Award, and to John DeLuna, consultant to Dr. Kenneth Cooper's Aerobic Center and Pritikin Longevity Center. "We also worked extensively in clubs with all kinds of people," Zappel says.

"As information came in during two years of testing, we soon became convinced that the BODY PUMP represented a new paradigm, opening up new possibilities for clubs, physical therapists, athletic trainers and other fitness specialists". Ironically, for that reason, we knew we had a problem. Radical change does not always receive instantanous acceptance," Zappel explains. History shows that while incremental improvement to an accepted idea is readily embraced, the acceptance of a fundamentally different approach (a paradigm shift) is never automatic. Truly new ideas always threaten the status quo. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer said it best when he wrote, "First, the new idea is ridiculed. Second, the new idea is violently opposed. Finally, the new idea is accepted as self-evident." Witness HealthRider, the biggest exercise machine sales success in history. In the beginning, that ground breaking product was not nearly as successful as it is now.

One of life's most vexing challenges is change. The human mind clings to the "comfort zone". But, according to Zappel, when it comes to exercise machines, the public, unlike in-

dustry insiders, have no accepted "comfort zone", no commitment to existing equipment or ideas, no loyalty whatsoever! In fact, just the opposite. Club members welcome change, new innovative ideas and equipment.

Enter the BODY PUMP. The birth of the BODY PUMP occurred in 1992 in the mind of a fitness industry outsider with back trouble. He also happened to be a prolific inventor. "My wife and I couldn't find a machine we could both use for aerobics. With my back and her foot problems from a car accident, nothing seemed to work," explains Joe Zappel, a mechanical engineer who runs a successful R & D consulting company specializing in automation systems for numerous Fortune 500 clients.

Joe Zappel arrived penniless in 1958 with wife and young children from war-torn Hungary. Although he possessed an advanced engineering degree, Zappel initially took low paying jobs while he studied English at night. He landed a job with Boeing and later FMC where he worked for 20 years as a project manager. In 1985, Zappel retired to start his own engineering consulting company called AEREX. In 1992, Zappel mentioned his idea about a new exercise machine to his son and general manager, Peter. "I didn't give it much thought at first, but after a while, this idea of a machine buoyantly supporting weight wouldn't go away. The more we thought about it, the more we liked it".

Now, AEREX sees the BODY PUMP as the perfect tool for clubs to respond to the massive demographic shift which is taking place. They believe the biggest marketing opportunities for clubs now and in the future will be the over 40 group. And, since those over 40 are often deconditioned when they join a club, they feel the BODY PUMP is perfect to satisfy their needs.

For example, Jerry Yost, director of fitness development at the Robson Communities in Sun Lakes, Arizona, is using the machine as part of a pioneering effort by the Arthritis Foundation and the Robson Communities. Over 80% of our people are using it. It's extremely safe and gives you unlimited programming capability", he reports. It is an important part of the national model MAXLIFE Program developed by Yost.

Encouragement from club industry elite such as Ray Wilson, Shelia Wilson, and experts like John Rude, Jerry Yost, John DeLuna and others, many who have worked with AEREX from the start, gave us motivation to continue. "We knew we had science on our side", Peter Zappel explains. (Editor's Note: Be sure to see the AEREX ad for the new BODY PUMP in this issue!)

(Albert Mroz is a professional magazine writer and author. His new book, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of American Trucks and Commercial Vehicles*, will be out by Krause Publications in Spring, 1996.)

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## NACA Leaders Open New Fitness Center

**V**ancouver, Wa. - The Cascade Park Fitness Center, a new 26,000 square-foot fitness center was opened the week of October 9, 1995. The new state-of-the-art facility was developed in partnership by Northwest Athletic Club Association leaders, Wayne Westwood, the Eisenzimmer Family and Bob Breckenridge.

The facility features 16,000 square feet for strength training, two aerobic rooms and

a state-of-the-art cardiovascular center. The facility will feature Healthlinks corporate wellness services, fitness evaluations and orientation for new members, personal training by Body Balance, nutritional consultation, a children's center, snack bar, massage therapy and tanning. Membership prices will range from \$26 per month to \$45 per month.

The new facility brings the club count to four for the Eisenzimmer family with the 130,000 square-foot Cascade Ath-

letic Club in Gresham, Oregon leading the way. Wayne Westwood owns and operates the Griffith Park Athletic Club in Beaverton, Oregon. The group has been instrumental in building NACA into one of the premier regional club associations which serves many Northwest Region quality clubs.

Good Luck to Wayne Westwood, the Eisenzimmer Family and Bob Breckenridge on their new operation!

# THE SENIOR SIZZLE

By Sandy Coffman

**I**t's "HOT, HOT, HOT!!!!!"

We all know the statistics by now. "In less than 30 years the 50+ market segment will increase by 74%; the under 50 segment will increase by 1%!"

Those statistics refer to our business, our industry. The club business is positioned perfectly to make positive changes in the lives of more than 76 MILLION mature adults entering our market as potential members of our clubs. They need us, we need them and together we can change the world and grow our businesses at the same time.

But, this isn't "new" news. It's been nearly 10 years since our industry has known about this market and should have been preparing for it. In 1989 IRSa devoted an entire issue of CLUB BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL (CBI) Magazine to identifying this market for us and challenging us to get it. That challenge is as alive today as it was then. Most clubs have a "senior program" included in their agenda. For the most part, it consists of a few classes a week that have been established one, two or even three years ago and has seen little, if any, growth or diversity. It usually consists of a group of older individuals who have found security in a club (a location), a schedule, an activity, and perhaps one staff member on board who they have come to trust and respond to.

## 1996 and BEYOND

**A**fter having the opportunity of presenting with John Rude and Associates at his recent symposium held in Eugene, Oregon, entitled: MIND, BODY, SPIRIT: Tapping the Potential of the 50+ Market, I have become increasingly aware of how much we have not done to date. In preparing for our next symposium in February at the Gainesville Health and Fitness Center in Gainesville, Florida, I've interviewed several club owners, equipment manufacturers and other health care providers, such as wellness centers, retirement communities and nursing home facilities, trying to get to the real reasons why we aren't more successful. Well, my observations are quite simple; not "easy", but

"simple."

"Simply put", I think we have put all our emphasis on trying to educate the mature market on the benefits of exercise and asking them to come to us, but we have neglected educating ourselves first on understanding the complexities, diversities, needs, wants and perspectives of this enormous and growing population. Because we haven't taken the time to learn about the variables of this market, we have seen only the tip of the iceberg in respect to the potential health of older consumers and financial rewards for the industry. The first step to success in business is to learn everything you can about your market before you promote your product.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't educate people. I'm suggesting that we must educate ourselves FIRST. I'm suggesting that there are several steps to take in order to achieve an end result. A step not taken dilutes the results.

## OUR GENERAL ATTITUDE AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

**L**et's first look at our perspective of the market. Let's look at the word "Senior". What does that mean to you? Who are you talking to? I remember when we first put a "senior division" in our racquetball tournaments. It meant "over 35 years of age". Then IRSa put out a publication called the 40 Plus Market. We then jumped to targeting age 65 and older. There even was a period where we used words "senior" and "deconditioned" synonymous. Clearly, we all know many fit, active, older people who would not care to respond to an invitation to the deconditioned.

We recently seemed to settle in on 50+. Well, 50+ is ME you are talking about, and I don't consider myself a "senior" in the sense that most people refer to one. I am proud of reaching this age. I don't feel "old", "painful", "tired", or "bored." I'm becoming aware of a few limitations, but find them challenging. I have a renewed commitment to overcoming some of those limitations and have found many friends who feel the same way. I'm actually taking up new activities and finding new ways to enjoy old ones.

On the other hand, there are many older people who are inexperienced as members of fitness clubs; petrified by a club's expectations, uninterested in a fast paced 30 minute workout and/or intimidated by a 90 minute power quest. They haven't spent the last 20-30 years in this industry and indeed may not ever have engaged in organized exercise routines or recreational activities. They probably don't have a group of friends eager to jump into a new language, physical challenges or strange environments. They probably don't feel comfortable

thinking that they have to work towards wearing a muscle shirt or a thong to feel successful.

First, let's check your readiness or general attitude towards dealing with older adults. At your next staff meeting have everyone list one or two words that immediately come to mind when describing the "senior population". Take note of how many words listed are negative rather than positive. This may be an indication of why there isn't a higher degree of success or growth in your program.

The two most important characteristics in a leader are "empathy" and "energy". A good leader can create a positive environment within 60 seconds if he or she sincerely enjoys and understands his/her audience. The mature adult audience, more than any other, offers the exciting challenge of the true, pure, wholistic need. The social and psychological benefits of health, fitness and wellness have never been so clearly defined as with this population. Fit bodies will not exist without fit minds; and minds are made more fit by fit bodies.... So, let's examine some of the basic principles - the positive principles to guide our leaders.

Hire the right staff and seek out staff training to develop special leadership skills to effectively communicate, teach and develop progressive exercise programs for the mature adult. The best performer or the most knowledgeable employee may not be the best teacher. Communication skills, teaching skills, selling skill, and the ability to relate to all types



**Sandy Coffman**

of people are qualifications that can be learned. Professional training by knowledgeable, experienced people in dealing with and programming to the mature market is essential before beginning a senior program - if you are looking for success.

## IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENCES

**T**he mature, older, adult market did not "grow up" within our industry. Most feel foreign or not accepted as the population that belongs or is even invited to participate in our programs. Therefore, more than any other group, they look to the leadership for guidance, acceptance and sincere appreciation of their being. None feel as though they can or should be labeled as an "age" or "condition". The mature adult niche, (senior, if you prefer), is actually a niche within the niches.

We have no problem looking at our "general" membership (ages 0-50) and providing programs for them based upon their:

\*Age (Under 20-30), (30-40), (40-50)

\*Interest In Fitness - Cardiovascular or Strength Training, Aerobic Classes, Court Sports, Swimming

\*Ability: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Experienced, Inexperienced, Fit, Unfit, Athletic, Uncoordinated

Yet, when we ask most clubs about their "senior program" or "older adult" program, we find that we talk about the par-

ticipants being somewhat slow, disabled, apprehensive, negative, cranky, ignorant, senile and/or arthritic. Many clubs feel the pool is the only source of exercise appropriate for the mature market.

This is not to say that water exercises aren't good. They are fantastic! But, I'd like to challenge you on the marketing capabilities and programming opportunities not yet tapped.

## The Marture Market "NICHE"

\*Age (40's, 50's, 60's, 70's or 80's)

\*Interests: The mature adult is eager to learn new things, accept new challenges and have new experiences. Most of which may have to be introduced and taught for the first time.

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\*Abilities: Beginning.... Continuing.... Strong.... Limited.... Younger...Older... Fit... Deconditioned.... Experienced..... Inexperienced.

These are the differences within the market. Let's examine some similarities.

Generally speaking, you will find the mature adult market to have a penchant for learning. They enjoy new challenges and take pride in accomplishments and personal achievement. But, we must learn how to approach them using language that they understand and respond to and create an initial environment that will make them want to learn more.

Mature adults are generally very sociable and talkative. They have an unequalled sense of humor in that they have gained the confidence to laugh at themselves and with each other. They are proud of their achievements and respond, like no other population, to recognition from their leader or teacher. They like to tease and laugh. They find true joy in movement and activity. They like competition, as long as everyone wins.

(See Coffman page 22)

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# COMPUTER FITNESS

By Ed Gaut

If you are like many in the fitness industry, you are more than a little apprehensive about computers and computerization. After all, you are a fitness professional, not a computer professional. Reps and sets you know; bits and bytes are another matter. Even so, computers are becoming an indispensable part of all businesses, fitness facilities included. If your organization is not yet computerized, you will probably be adding a computer system soon. And, with the fast pace of change in computer technology, if you are already using computers, chances are you will be upgrading or replacing your computer system sometime soon. Here are a few tips to make the process of adding or upgrading a computer system a little more manageable.

**1. SET GOALS.** The first mistake fitness facilities make when computerizing is buying a computer system without first understanding what they hope to accomplish with it. You would not create an exercise program for one of your members without first determining his or her fitness goals. Similarly, you should not buy a computer system without first determining your computerization goals.

Your goal for adding a computer system might be to reduce the amount of time you or your staff spend checking in members. Or, it might be to manage your facilities' finances better. Or, it might be to increase retention by targeting members with promotional mailings. Whatever your goals for adding a computer system, be sure that you have a clear idea of what you hope to accomplish with the system before you purchase it.

**2. DETERMINE YOUR CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS.** Once you have established the goals of adding a computer system, it is time to determine what criteria you are going to use to judge the success of computerization. To continue the fitness analogy, if you are setting up an exercise program for someone whose goal is to lose weight, your criteria for success would be a target weight he or she hopes to achieve. Similarly, if the primary goal of adding computers is to reduce the amount of time spent checking members into the facility, your criteria for success might

be to reduce the number of front desk staff by one.

**3. CONSULT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES.** Once you have established goals and criteria for success and before you start evaluating actual computer systems, consult with the employees who are going to be using the new computer system. These front-line workers deal everyday with exactly the problems you are trying to address by using computers, so their input is invaluable when selecting a system. Be sure to include at least one of these employees when visiting club management software vendors and viewing demonstrations of prospective computer systems.

The ultimate success of computerization will depend as much upon the people who use the computer system as it will upon the actual system you purchase. By involving your staff early in the process of selecting a computer system, you will reduce the chance that employees will feel you are forcing computers on them or worse, replacing them with the computers. Getting your employees excited about computerization will go a long way to ensuring success.

**4. TALK TO OTHER FITNESS FACILITIES.** Once you know what you hope to accomplish by computerizing, it is time to begin comparing actual computer systems. Contact club management software vendors and request information and demonstrations. Most of the major fitness facility publications have advertisements and listings of club management software companies.

While club management software vendors will provide you with a wealth of information, you should also contact other fitness facilities who are using computers. If possible, find facilities similar to yours who are doing the kinds of things with their computer system you want to do with yours. For example, if you want to automate personal training scheduling, finding a facility which is simply using a computer system for front desk check-ins is not going to be very helpful. You need to find a facility which is scheduling personal trainers. Fitness facilities will give you information about computer systems which you will not get from even the most honest

and knowledgeable software salesperson.

**5. PURCHASE SUFFICIENT TRAINING.** To reduce the cost of acquiring a computer system, facilities will often dispense with training on the premise that people can just read the instruction manuals. This is a prescription for disaster. Do not even think about purchasing a computer system without getting adequate training for you and your employees. How knowledgeable your employees are about how to use the software is as important a factor in determining the success of your computerization as the quality of the software itself.

**6. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO CALL.** No matter how good the club management system you purchase is, problems and questions will always crop up. It is at these times that you will need to call your vendor's technical support staff. Pay attention to the type of support your computer system vendor offers. Do they offer on-site support or only telephone support? What hours is support available? If you are buying not only the software, but also the computer equipment from the vendor, do they offer replacement equipment while yours is being repaired?

Support is one area where club management software vendors are frequently willing to negotiate on price. It is not uncommon for a vendor to throw in several months of free technical support as an inducement to purchase their system. Once you have decided on a system, be sure to get the best deal you can on technical support.

**7. BE WARY OF BELLS AND WHISTLES.** Computers can be very seductive with lots of fancy sound and graphics. Club management systems are no exception. When evaluating a computer system for your facility it is important to not get carried away with the bells and whistles and instead keep focused on your goals.

This is difficult. Club software salespeople love the bells and whistles. With so many packages on the market, the showy features are one of the easiest ways that many companies



Ed Gaut

have of distinguishing themselves from the competition. "We have full-color member photo at front desk check-in", a salesperson will tell you. "Just run the member's card through the scanner and a beautiful full-color photo of the member will appear on the screen." And it is beautiful. Just looking at the sample screen in the brochure makes your mouth water.

But ask yourself, do you really need full-color member photos? How much will it cost? How much space will all these full-color photos take up in your computer? Wouldn't a black and white photo be just as useful at a fraction of the cost? Maybe. Maybe Not. The important thing is to keep asking yourself these sorts of questions.

## 8. ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME.

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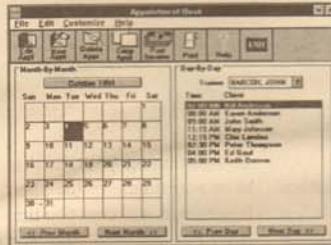
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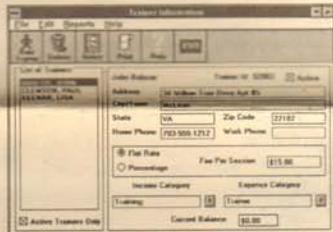
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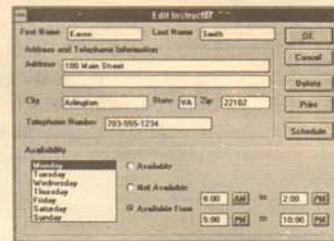
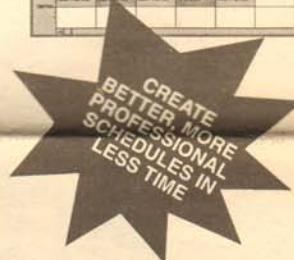


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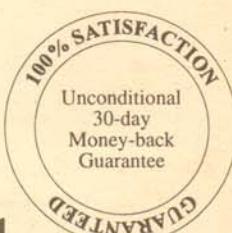
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**...Coffman**

continued from page 18

The simple answer.....  
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For example, I may not be as fast in the racquetball courts as I used to be, but I now take a little more time with my shots and I find I can play smarter. Some of my friends and I have recently discovered that a long volley does not mean you are a poor player. We tend to appreciate our stamina, enjoy the exercise and laugh at the funny bounces the ball takes. Is that okay? We think so. It makes us want to come back and play more instead of being discouraged.

I'm getting more and more people my age to play at that level and on those terms. It's only a new - additional - way of looking at the sport.... or marketing it....and, of course, teaching it. New, different, additional training may be a key. Racquetball: Try it again, for the first time!

I got a bit tired (and sore) from years of teaching high impact aerobics, but have recently gotten renewed energy and an exciting "high" on introducing new, creative, fun, sillier, easier exercise routines and classes. Oh yes, they are progressive and effective, too. They include props, hats and costumes. They include equipment, apparatus and creative weight training and stretching devices. They include group formations, routines and games.

They include music (beyond "In the Mood").... and laughter. You shouldn't run a program without laughter.

Yes, there are many of you that are doing a good job. Roger Grady's club in Newport, Rhode Island, was running a fabulous program for mature adults - at all levels - 10 years ago and has continued to grow the program. The Courthouse in Salem, Oregon, had a regular racquetball round robin group instructed by a 62-year-old lady that drew more spectators than the 20-year olds in the wallyball court. You can't get a court at the Westbay Athletic Club in Bradenton, Florida on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings unless you want to join the seniors doubles competition and drink



your share of coffee. They are there from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The e3 (pronounced e cubed) - Exercise, Experience and Expedition program (designed by John Rude and Associates) at the Downtown Athletic Club in Eugene, Oregon, is an immensely diversified pro-

gram with participants who were eager to share their "experiences" with the Symposium (Mind, Body, Spirit) audience this past July.

Anyone would have a tough time keeping up with the aerobic class at the Courthouse in Florence, Alabama. It's a packed room, ranging in age from 50-90! Although they reach a high intensity level in their floor routines by the end of class, they still prefer to use the first half hour to warm up, stretch and secure their balance while exercising on chairs. (They used to only be able to exercise on chairs.) One lady takes class wearing white gloves and a hat because she gets chilled, but she's always in attendance.

There are many other success stories. But, not enough.

We're getting support, too! Keiser has made a major commitment to sponsoring our MIND\*BODY\*SPIRIT - Tapping the Potential of the 50+ Market Symposiums in 1996. LifeFitness, NuStep, Microfit and MedX have committed to furthering education and training for this market as well.

I think we can learn a lot from the mature adult population, too.

Maybe we have to take the time to learn how to fit into their world instead of them fitting into ours. Then we can take the next step - to use our knowledge, expertise, resources, clubs, equipment and creativity to teach, guide and encourage the mature adult to live a long, happy, healthy, quality life. No one wants or needs it more than they do and no one is better positioned to give it to them than we are. We need to educate the educators and train the trainers.

**A NEW BEGINNING****C**

reating a healthier, more independent aging population is in everyone's best interest. Let's begin again to look at older adults in a whole new light so we can better understand their wants, needs and contributions. By incorporating these new perspectives on aging, we will have a clearer direction on how to effectively serve the mature market..... it's the SENIOR SIZZLE, it's "HOT, HOT, HOT!"

(Sandy Coffman, a 20-year club industry veteran is the club industries most experienced trainer and teacher of programming for member retention. Her company, PROGRAMMING FOR PROFIT, is based in Brookfield, Wisconsin. Sandy may be reached at: (414) 782-5490)

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continued from cover

days from November 15th at a \$5 per share price. The stock will trade on the NASDAQ Exchange under the title: BFT.

**FRANCHISE PROGRAM**

- Tom Vitacco, the Bally Franchise Program Director, has now obtained Bally Franchise Licensing rights in every state in the U.S. except for two and Lucci expects those states to be licensed in the near future. Lucci indicated that there has been a lot of interest in the new franchise program with over 250 inquiries to date. From those 250 inquiries, they have received 150 applications and 25-30 of the applicants appear to meet the Bally Franchise financial requirements after initial review. Interestingly, they are receiving a great deal of foreign interest in the franchise program.

**ACE CERTIFICATION**

They are proceeding with the ACE certification training program and it is going well. Lucci mentioned that they are attempting to incorporate their new "FRIENDLY OASIS CONCEPT" into the training.

**NEW SALES TRAINING PROGRAM**

- They now have 14 trainers who are traveling the country retraining the Bally membership sales people. The objective is to retrain every single employee within the company.

**LEGAL BATTLES** - I asked Lucci his feelings about the recently imposed \$300,000 fine and requirement for restitution to affected Bally members imposed by the State of Massachusetts in settlement of a lawsuit filed against Bally by the Massachusetts Attorney General. He responded that they were disappointed, but it was just something they would have to deal with. He also mentioned that he replaced the entire management

group in the Boston Bally clubs.

**CLUB CLOSINGS** - I mentioned the three recently closed clubs in Tampa and one in Atlanta. Lucci explained that they are in the process of removing some of their clubs which are no longer competitive and are replacing them with new-up-to-date products. He said, "Our goal is a quality product in everyone of our locations." He has brought in Dave Tolmie, formerly with U.S. Health, Inc. to assist in the new location process. He explained that they have about \$30 million on hand to work with to upgrade the quality of their clubs and they are having to "pick our spots". He indicated they will have opened 12 new clubs by years end.

**BALLY CLUBS FOR SALE?** I inquired about a rumor floating in Atlanta about selling off two or three of the clubs in our area. He explained it was not true, but that they would consider selling off some of the clubs in smaller markets where they might only have a few in each city.

**A CLUB INSIDER COMMENT**

**A**t the end of our conversation Mike Lucci and I were discussing the challenges he is facing with this massive turn-around effort. He quipped, "This is not like a ski boat which will turn on a dime." He was referring, I think, to a previous conversation which I had with him in which I used an analogy about the challenge he was facing. I compared the giant Bally Total Fitness Company with

18,000 employees to a 1,200 foot long oil tanker out in the ocean.

My comment was that on a huge ship such as that, the Captain might turn the ship's steering wheel to head on a new course, but it would be a while before the turn would actually develop and the ship would turn to the new desired course. In the case of his challenge, the efforts of his management team and their new training thrusts will not cause immediate identifiable differences in the reputation or performance of the company. It will take time and it will not be easy. I think Lucci agrees with that and I might add, the thought ought to be helpful in keeping his eye on the target.

I am sure those of you who compete head to head with Bally Total Fitness every day would like to see the Bally ship sink to the bottom of the sea. I know how you feel because I used to be in your shoes. On the other hand, if Lucci and his team's efforts fail and their ship does not go onto a successful course, what then? How much damage would it do to the health club industry to have millions of Bally's members put into the street - empty handed - and with nothing to show for the money they spent to be a Bally member? I think the answer is: A hell of a lot of damage would be done! The health club industry's reputation would be set back 10 - maybe even 20 years. It would be a black eye on our industry the likes of what we have never seen. And, it would not be pretty.

Therefore, at the risk of angering some of my readers who

must compete with Bally everyday, I am going to tell you I am pulling for Mike Lucci and his management team to accomplish their goals. I think if they are able to bring the level of their operations up in the area of ethical advertising and sales practices while at the same time, provide their members with great results due to the impact of the ACE training, then all club owners will be winners in the long run. When you realize that there are still over 250 million prospective members out there in America who aren't health club members and who could and should join, then you will feel better about the idea of the Bally Total Fitness clubs being successful in their efforts to improve their operations and reputation. For those of you who have been reading The CLUB INSIDER News since we began publishing two years ago, I know you realize that I have been on Bally's case in a major way. I published what I published over a year ago because it was the truth and because I knew then and I know now that Bally was hurting the health club business for all of us when they would have to go to court and the press would report it to all of those potential members out there. Now, I feel that Mike Lucci and his Executive Committee have developed a good plan and Mike is giving his very best effort to this challenge. And, just between you and me, since I am a former football player too, I would not bet against him. Determination is one thing those of us who played the game learned very well. Good luck Mike!

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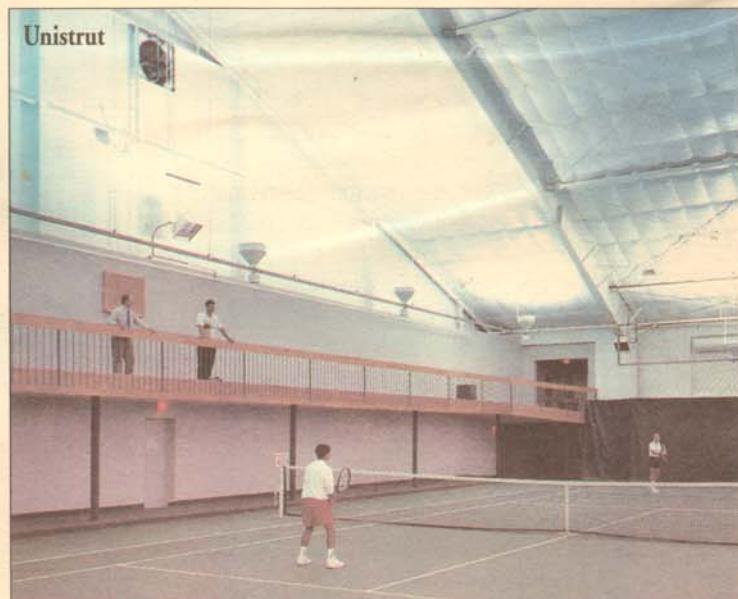
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