

**Club Sense Stinkers:
Building Community Through Anecdote**

Clubs, Community and Club Sense:

Club sense means demonstrating the right behavior for a given club---its members, staff, traditions, ambiance and facility. Someone with club sense understands and acts according to the norms of their club. Individual wishes are often curbed to accommodate the greater good. People with club sense would happily have their actions published on the front page of the monthly newsletter. Inevitably, some people have it and some people don't.

The vast majority of members and staff, when shown examples of "right behavior," will instinctively understand and appreciate those standards without needing lectures or House Rules or special mailings to be educated. Those standards become norms for the community.

Shared stories become part of the common culture. Those stories bind a community together by portraying both "the good" and "the bad." People remember good stories and learn without being taught about expectations, standards, dress, actions and decorum.

Therefore--- club members need "club sense;" people love hearing good stories about bad behavior; members learn good behavior by laughing at bad; and the best place to tell great stories for maximum impact is in your monthly newsletter.

Entertaining, Engaging and Educating with Anecdote:

People learn through experience, either observed, lived or discussed. Good stories that are current, believable, local---that is, within their own club---and entertaining tend to capture the attention of an audience. Before you can educate people about club sense, you need to engage them in a dialogue about club sense. But before you can engage them in the discussion, you need to entertain them. People look more closely at things that amuse them. Good stories about their club neighbors---scandals, rumors, innuendo---tend to do that.

I've discovered that members love reading good stories, they discuss them at length with their member friends and they tend to show members of other clubs the crazy types they rub elbows with on a daily basis.

The club-wide discussion of "stinker personalities" will slowly, over time, create a club sense culture that is clear about "the good" and is equally clear about "the bad." In this day and age, people tend to resist dictates from above, preferring to feel enfranchised and an integral part of any rules making process. In turbulent behavioral times like our own, when norms are being questioned, new norms established and recently accepted norms washed away, a process is needed that lets people speak out, dialogue and reach a consensus.

Serializing these "club sense stinkers" into some type of Club Sense Stinker column will go a long way toward creating that consensus and amusing you, your staff and the membership at one and the same time.

The Monthly "Club Sense Stinker" Column:

Before you start writing a "Club Sense Stinker" column in your monthly or bi-monthly newsletter, you need to remember that a novelist's skills aren't necessary. Believe me, the facts will speak for themselves

with little or no embellishment on your part. Just tell the story you know, disguising the characters enough to avoid lawsuits or riots.

Members will imagine they know who you're talking about and will twitter as they discuss those personalities over tea or their two martini luncheons. Don't be surprised when those who you're writing about don't recognize their own behavior. As a matter of fact, I'd be surprised if they did and even more surprised if they changed once they knew. They won't. Don't disappoint yourself by assuming they will.

To dramatize what I'm talking about, your editor needs to see a couple of examples to prime their own creative pumps. The following Club Sense Stinkers were recently published in our bi-monthly newsletter and are composites of several true stories identifying real world examples of diminished club sense. Members have found each of these stories entertaining, enlightening and frequently infuriating. They look forward to the next month's edition and laugh collectively about the Stinkers who were exposed. Members understand that the stories relate to members they know or have encountered, that each is based on a real world experience and that most are behaviors they have observed in others or themselves at one time or another. If the "good guys" had their way, real names would be used and Stinkers posted for all to see throughout the clubhouse.

If you want to add a little novelty to the Stinker column, you might find it entertaining to invite creative members to submit an essay on that month's Club Sense Stinker, asking that they explain in as imaginative way as possible why the behaviors noted qualify as Club Sense Stinkers and that they define right behavior. The winner should get something significant. Here at the Beach Club, I give the winner The Love Dinner--four drinks, two seashore dinners and a bottle of house wine. The winner's essay is published and their name touted for all to read.

The following relate to specific Beach Club members, issues and "norms"---not many country clubs will be worrying about boogie boards in the living room---but can probably be understood and appreciated by most readers. After all, you probably know all these characters anyway---different specifics but similar personalities!!! Enjoy the read-----

Club Sense Stinkers: Mamma Bears

Suzie Q arrives at the club with her three small boys. Each has toys or a boogie board. They sweep through the lobby and straight into the living room, exiting out the south porch past four tables of bridge. Mamma opens the sliding glass doors, exhorting her kids to hurry up and exits to the beach without closing the doors behind her family. She heads out to her equipment near the swings and settles in. Expecting three other families as guests, she stays alert to the paging system. Her book consumes her and it's not until the third page that she realizes they're calling her. She notices that two of the three children are missing. She panics. Management goes on "Red Alert" and finds the two children on the third floor of the Ladies Locker Room throwing a volleyball they found on the "A" court. When she returns to her spot with her guests and children in tow, she notices a hose running full blast and a cluster of three parents around two screaming children. She doesn't see her youngest. The parents approach her, point out that each of them got sprayed by her youngest while they were trying to rescue their own children from a drenching by the now missing third son. She

screams at the parents telling them never to discipline her child again and exits in a fit over the intrusiveness of these “new members.” Remembering that she’s still missing her youngest, she panics and has the management team declare another “Red Alert.” The child is found running naked through the Men’s Locker Room, crying hysterically, having abandoned his now soiled clothing at the base of the locker room stairs.

Not a good day for Mamma and her kids. Any club sense issues here worth exploring???

Club Sense Stinkers: Mr. Entitlement

Mr. Entitlement arrives at the club on the Fourth of July weekend. His wife arrived earlier---this was witnessed by the lot attendant, who happens to know them both quite well---with the parking lot pass (one to a family!). Mr. Entitlement arrives without his, angrily saying that he never got one since management was, as ever, incompetent. He drives to a handicap spot, proudly displaying his handicapped pass. He leaps from the car and races inside, ignoring the questioning gaze of the attendant. He breezes by the crowd waiting to sign in and get their wrist bands for the weekend, making some sort of comment under his breath about non-members and the quality of the new members. He goes straight to the bar where there’s a line of members and staff waiting to be served. He takes out a free drink coupon---one of five he received on his birthday--- and demands a drink. The bartender, knowing that he’s an obnoxious vocal type of personality, pours him a drink from the two point five ounce, auto pour bottle. Mr. Entitlement complains, demanding another shot for his free drink coupon. The staff object silently but pour it to keep him quiet. He leaves, angrily asking if they’ll charge him for the stir stick he’s been given. He drinks with his “authentic member” friends, criticizing the whole time about new members and their guests. He finishes his 11:30 a.m. drink and goes to the Grill for lunch. Again, Mr. Entitlement goes to the front of the line, demands service from Cesar, orders a half salad full-up with lettuce. He tells Cesar that it’s a half salad and he better be charged half salad prices. Cesar makes the salad as ordered to avoid the public chastisement which might follow the refusal to accommodate. Mr. Entitlement finishes his salad then goes onto the porch to play gin with his friends. He gets a “Gin Buck”---five of which are needed to get a free drink--- at 3:30 but continues to play with a second group of gin players until 7:00 that evening. Mr. Entitlement goes to the front desk demanding another “Gin Buck” since he “never got one for playing.” He exits out the front door, returning to his handicap parking spot, starts up the car and leaves, happy to have been one of the better members of a club now admitting inauthentic members.

Is there something wrong with Mr. Entitlement’s club sense???

AClub Sense Stinker: The Car Guy

It's Fireworks Night of the Fourth of July Weekend. The biggest club event of the year, parking lot packed, one car allowed per family, people squeezed into cars, all trying to car pool so that every member family can park their one car in the club's parking lot. A car drives up, no Beach Club blue sticker but a parking pass hanging in the window. The parking attendant stops the car, notes the absence of sticker to the driver then hears a B.C. member---a woman and frequent user of the club--- in the back seat say that they all jammed in the car since they only had one pass for the weekend. The attendant, who recognized the member, thanks them for car pooling and lets them pass. Ten minutes later another car arrives, this time with a blue sticker but no pass. The car is stopped and the attendant is about to tell the driver that passes are required, one car per family, when he notices that the driver is a member, the husband of the lady in the back seat of the previous car having a pass but no sticker. The attendant, knowing this, says they can't park in the lot since the rules are clear about the pass. The member gets furious and demands admission. The attendant, brow beaten by the irate member, lets him pass.

Did these characters have club sense? Should we name names???

When You Write Your Novel There Will be no Fiction:

People learn through examples that are personal, local, current and entertaining. Good stories provoke discussion and people learn about "right behavior" by remembering stories dramatizing the good and denigrating the bad. Communities are built through shared experience. People may read the House Rules but they tend to forget them as quickly as they're read. But good stories are forever and members will recall when so and so did such and such and got this or that as a result. Club Sense Stinkers will be remembered because they're real (though disguised!!!) and they're fun and they're about behaviors affirming "the good" within a given club. Believe me when I say that "stinker types" at the Beach Club would become "stinker types" at your own club within a couple of days.

Build community, tell stories, teach others and entertain---start your own Club Sense Stinkers column and enjoy writing the novel that has no fiction!