

February, 2017

Orlando Report for District 12 Unit Board Members

From: Dennis Carman, District 12 Director

Orlando's host hotel, The Dolphin, was ablaze with holiday decorations on a scale that put me, an adult, in awe. If I had been an eight year old, I would have thought this was paradise. (Caveat: I had never been to Disney World.) November and early December in Florida had very pleasant temperatures and fewer snowbirds than was true of my many trips to Florida in February. Less humidity and fewer people made for an enjoyable time. Nightly fireworks, an occasional spotting of a Disney character, and free bottled orange juice almost made up for the high food costs at the resort. The high cost of food was a common complaint from attendees at this tournament; higher than any previous nationals I had attended.



Table count in Orlando was expected to be 13,000; but, in fact, was down about 20% from expectations. The actual count was 10,592. My feeling is that the number of Florida regionals around the dates of the nationals contributed to the local players not turning out as had be expected.

On a national basis, club and sectional table counts are flat compared to last year. Regional table counts are down 4.5% across the league; but SOMBA, our Western District, and MBA regionals were all up in 2016 compared to 2015 numbers. SOMBA's regional was up about 60 tables, from 777 in 2015 to 836 in 2016. The Western Unit was up 248 tables; 723 in 2015 compared to 971 in 2016. MBA was up 67 tables; 778 in 2015 and 845 in 2016.

Average table counts at STaCs were up 2.62% across the ACBL, and the Board reduced the STaC fee from \$7.00 a table to \$6.00 a table which should be welcome news to club owners.

Board of Director and Committee Actions in Orlando

Our newly elected ACBL president, Bob Heller, has reduced the number of standing board committees to eight (8) and two (2) task forces. His goals of:

- Fewer committees, we had 25 last year,
- Fewer board members on committees; i.e., smaller committees,
- More work between face-to-face meetings at nationals via emails and conference calls,
- And, fewer meeting days at nationals,

should result in savings on board expenses.

This year I am member of the Appeals and Charges Committee, the CEO Review Committee, and I am on the Tournament Task Force. The five (5) members of the CEO Review Committee all agreed to work with Mr. Heller plus two (2) non-board members as a Search Committee to replace Robert Hartman, our CEO, who tendered his resignation in January with an effective date of July 31, 2017. On our ACBL website you can find a CEO job description for this position, and we will be running a full page ad in the March Bridge Bulletin.

The Education Foundation, of which I was a trustee, has had a by-law change that allows it to break away from the ACBL and have a professional manager and selected trustees, not elected trustees, as I was. See the February Bridge Bulletin article on page 33.

The Competitions and Conventions Committee, on which I have been a liaison from the Board of Directors for the last three years, discussed the elimination of "Stop" and "Alert" cards and creating new team games similar to the Vanderbilt (held in the spring) and the Spingold (held in the summer) for the fall nationals. The current proposal would include a two day Swiss qualifier, which would pay partial platinum points for each Swiss win, followed by a five day knock out. I am in favor of this proposed event and plan to sponsor a motion in Toronto to add this to our fall schedule. This event should add tables to the third national of each year and will give players another choice of events in which to play.

Appeals and Charges Committee – In an automatic review, we affirmed the actions of the Ethical Oversight Committee regarding the convictions of Claudio Nunes, Fulvio Fantoni, Loton Fisher, and Ron Schwartz. They are permanently expelled from the ACBL. More detailed information is in the Orlando minutes.

Minutes from the Orlando meeting can be found here:

<http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/163OrlandoBoDMinutes.pdf>

District News

The District Grand National Teams has been moved to May this year with the qualifying session on Friday, May 12, and the finals on Saturday, May 13, 2017. Winning teams in the A, B, and C flights receive \$1,200 to help defray costs of participating in the GNT event in Toronto this summer. They also play free; i.e., no entry costs, for the first two days if they qualify for day two. The open teams receive slightly more from the ACBL, but must pay their own entry fees. Conditions of Contest, General Information, and Registration Forms can all be found on our District 12 web site: District12bridge.org.

Some Positive Notes

My appointments to the 2017 ACBL Charity Committee are: Neil Taylor of Holland, MI and Marilyn Nathanson of Farmington, MI. Both promoted the ACBL "Longest Day" event with proceeds going to support a search for the cure of Alzheimer's disease.

My appointments to the ACBL Goodwill Committee for 2017 are Cheri Abbe and Henry Williams, both of Kalamazoo, MI. These players have been tireless workers over the years for the Kalamazoo sectional and regional tournaments.

Richard Temkin of Farmington Hills, MI and Jonathan Fleischmann of Bloomfield Hills, MI are my other appointments to the 2017 Goodwill Committee. Richard was the Michigan Bridge Association president last year and is currently Chairman of the Board. Jonathan is currently the MBA president. Both have been active in promoting bridge and have given many hours of their time for our league and district. All are listed on page 66 of the February Bulletin.

As your District Director, I have had the pleasure of receiving notification when members of District 12 reach masterpoint milestones. I've been able to congratulate these people and ask them for a story or for suggestions on how the ACBL can improve their bridge experience.

Flora Parker, from Kalamazoo, MI, became a Club Master over a year ago. She says,

"I find bridge very relaxing. When I play bridge I forget everything else that's going on outside the bridge center. Alan is a wonderful Director, and I can't think of anything else he could do to improve things."

Cathy Bolton, from Ann Arbor, MI, became a Junior Master over a year ago and shared the following story with me:

"Long, long ago my parents taught me the basics of bridge using a game called "Bridge for Juniors," which used fruits as the suits. I also remember my father telling me that "a peek is worth a thousand finesses." I played poorly in college and then socially over the years. I did get a Charles Goren bridge book via the Literary Guild. Only after retirement did I get serious about bridge."

"I live in Ann Arbor which has a rich bridge culture. I started in the Recreation and Education Department with a conventions class with Ray Gentz. Realizing that I needed more basic knowledge, I took Ray's beginner classes via the Ann Arbor Senior Center, where he used the ACBL Bridge Basic series "Bridge in the Twenty-first Century." As a

senior, I am more of a 20th century girl, and it has been a challenge to learn a new system, remember the damn conventions and apply them appropriately!”

“Through classes with Ray, Jan Stephens, and Stacy Tessler and supervised play, my partners from the Beginners cohort and I began to play better, venturing into the Brave New World of sanctioned games. After a few humiliating experiences, we found games where we were comfortable. Bridge Base Online is a great way to practice and get points from the online tournaments. I read the Bridge Bulletin carefully as well as Audrey Grant's daily Better Bridge column and her magazine. The Vu-Bridge beginner and Expert quizzes help me with my bidding, although the columns on what to lead still stump me. I have quite a collection of bridge books from writers like Larry Cohen and Marty Bergen. At 66 the battle is to remember what I have learned.”

“Bridge keeps me on my toes. As we have read, mental activity is so healthy as we age. The social connections I have made through bridge are also very important. When I bid correctly and make my contract, I am filled with a sense of accomplishment. It feels great to play good defense, knowing which card to play because I've counted almost all the suits correctly.”

“Compared to all the Life Masters, my measly Junior Master is laughable but to me, it is something to celebrate!”

“Thanks for the opportunity to play and share my story.”

Thanks for your story, Cathy. No bridge accomplishment is too small to celebrate! I'm glad you are enjoying the game.

Lakshmi Vora, a member of SOMBA, became a Silver Life Master last fall and tells us about her journey into bridge:

“My friend, now my husband, introduced me to the game of Contract Bridge in the early 70s and gave me Edgar Kaplan's book to study. I loved the game immediately and still have the book. Over the years, my passages of life took their usual stages of cultivating my career, marrying, having children, watching my children graduate and marry, welcoming the arrival of grandchildren. A full life, but little time for me to develop my Bridge skills.”

“As I was about to retire from Ford Motor Company, Ellen Silverest, a friendly Bridge director who is now a dear friend, introduced me to Ford Bridge Club and Duplicate Bridge. She gave me lessons on duplicate protocols and fended off aggravated opponents when I forgot to use the bidding box and said my bids out loud!”

“I loved the competitive spirit of Duplicate Bridge, being able to compare my play with other teams to improve my game. As I was learning the conventions and bidding methods for duplicate bridge-- which were very different from my Edgar Kaplan days-- I was fortunate to get a call from a then-acquaintance and now-friend and mentor, Vishwas Gadgil, an expert duplicate player who graciously partners with me often.”

“I have now been playing duplicate bridge for over four years. I am absolutely hooked on the game. I find it meditative when I am focused on playing a hand with full concentration and joyful when I have played a hand well. The companion themes in

Bridge to “start where you are, use what you have and do what you can” and “do all this with good communication with your partner” provide a powerful metaphor for living my life outside of Bridge as well.”

“The ACBL has done a remarkable job of creating an ethos of fairness, embodied in due processes so that we enjoy the game properly. And the SOMBA Bridge Clubs I play in have been most welcoming. These days when people are talking so much about “building walls”, I’m happy that I am building my own bridges with so many kind people I have had the pleasure of playing with. Bridge has become much more than a game to me. It offers me the opportunity to have truly enriching experiences, both in terms of the intellect and in the diverse human connections it has fostered.”

“I now have the honor of being a SOMBA board member and have an opportunity to promote this fantastic game of Bridge, especially to our younger generation. I hope to teach my grandchildren.”

“I thank each and every one of my new-found friends in the Bridge community for this gift, this JOY, of competitive Bridge and look forward to more games and friendships.”

Thank you, Lakshmi, for your service on the SOMBA board and for contributing your talents to the game we all love.

Karen Allen, of Kalamazoo, MI also became a Silver Life Master last fall. She writes:

“I started playing bridge in 2009. I took a series of beginning bridge lessons with Valerie at the Bridge Center. I’ve met hundreds of people and travelled thousands of miles and visited many states since then, all for the sake of master points. Bridge is a great adventure, or misadventure at times.”

Congratulations, Karen, and safe travels as you chase those points!

The Spring Nationals are in Kansas City, Missouri next week. I hope to see many of you in Kansas City from March 9 to March 19, 2017.

Dennis Carman, District 12 Director

