

May, 2016

Reno report for District 12 Unit Board Members

From: Dennis Carman, District 12 Director

The Good: The weather in Reno was pleasant, and there were plenty of good restaurants available within the playing site hotels/casinos, that ranged from inexpensive to top drawer.

The Not So Good: Some complaints were made concerning smoke in the casinos, and complaints were also made about events that were spread out over four venues; e.g., National bridge events were held across the street from the three hotels that held all the other rated events.

Board of Director and Committee Actions in Reno

This year, I became a member of the Appeals and Charges Committee. Our first meeting was Sunday, March 6, which lasted from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. (with appropriate breaks, of course). Then continued for five more hours from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 7. We heard cases that included oral evidence, written evidence, and we listened to parts of a 58 minute recording during the course of the six appeals to come before the committee. We deliberated and voted on each case. Here are the results of these deliberations:

APPEALS & CHARGES COMMITTEE

Heth (C), Bagley, Carman, Fairchild, Hennings, Morse, Subeck. Staff: Whitten
Committee Report by Chairman

Item 161-01: Report on Hearings

Oral report on hearing pertaining to Bruce Blakely, ACBL #Q555893

In the appeal by Unit 543 regarding John Lyddon, ACBL #R087591, the Committee has vacated the rulings of both the Unit 540 Disciplinary Committee and the District 22 Appellate committee and remanded the case to the Unit for a new hearing due to procedural problems during the original hearing.

In the automatic review regarding Shakti Routh, ACBL #N186455, the Committee affirmed the Unit Disciplinary Committee decision to modify the initial one-year suspension to a one-year probation as per its agreement with the accused.

In the automatic review regarding Timothy Gardner, ACBL #Q565856, the Committee upheld the Unit Disciplinary Committee's findings and decision to expel Mr. Gardner.

In the appeal by District 7 regarding Chris Nicholson, ACBL #P714688, the Committee upheld the findings of the District 7 Appellate Committee and instructed ACBL Management to impose the mandatory two-year probationary period as per CDR 4.2.1.

In the automatic review and appeal by Art Brodsky, ACBL #O890636, the Committee has vacated the decision of the ACBL Disciplinary Committee and remanded this case to the ACBL Disciplinary Committee for a new hearing due to procedural problems during the original hearing.

These findings and other Board actions are published in the Board minutes which can be found at the following ACBL link:

<http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/2016RenoMinutes.pdf>

The Appeals and Charges Committee is scheduled to hear two high profile cheating cases in Washington, D.C. at this summer's nationals. The four charged players have been suspended from ACBL play regardless of the delays in their appeals.

I am also on seven other Board committees: Bridge, Tournament Oversight, NABC Schedule/Events, Finance, Bridge Integrity Task Force, Education Task Force, and I am the Chair of the Website/Bulleting Review Committee. In addition to this committee work, I am one of two Board members who are liaisons to the Conventions and Competitions Committee. Finally, I am a member of the Education Foundation, which listens to and approves most educational grant requests. (I promised Susan to keep my volunteer hand down for the rest of the year!)

A Board agenda motion, Item 161-40, to allow "drop ins" for the second day of the Open Life Master Pairs for those who had been eliminated from the championship flight of the Grand National Teams Round of 8, was withdrawn after much time and discussion with no clear decision reached. Robert Hartman, our CEO, offered to allow this as a "management experiment" this year. There will be further discussion in Orlando this coming fall. Here is that motion, as presented:

Moved that:

For the 2016 Summer NABC, the ACBL will allow drop-ins into the 2nd day of the Open Life Master Pairs from the Championship Flight of the GNT. Only players eliminated during the Round of 8 of the Championship Flight of the GNT are eligible to drop-in to the Open Life Master Pairs. Players eliminated from the Round of 8 of the Championship Flight of the GNT, may form partnerships with any player who was also eliminated from the Round of 8 of the Championship Flight of the GNT.

The DiC of the event shall determine the number of qualifiers for the second day of the Open LM Pairs pursuant to the Conditions of Contest for the event. Any pairs dropping into the Open LM Pairs will be added to those qualifiers for the second day. Pairs otherwise qualifying from play during day-one of the event may not be excluded. Those pairs interested in dropping in must notify the DIC of the LM Pairs as soon as it has been confirmed that their team has been eliminated.

Each pair dropping into the Open LM Pairs shall receive a carry-over equal to the carry-over received by a pair closest to the 33.3 percentile of the qualifying field.

Motion Item 161-157, which I co-sponsored, moved that:

“ACBL Tournament Directors shall hear and rule upon all appeals filed at North American Bridge Championships. NABC+ appeals shall be heard by Tournament Director Panels in a manner similar to regional appeal hearings (Ref: 983-02,992-02). All Conduct and Ethics or Disciplinary matters shall continue to be referred to and heard by the NABC Tournament Committee or to its assignees.

Effective July 2016.

Estimated cost/savings to be determined.

This motion passed with 14 aye votes, 9 nay votes, 1 abstention, and 1 Board member not available to vote. We may revisit this in a couple of years after seeing how it is working. This approved motion gives Tournament Directors final authority in appeals and removes player panels that have been in use for years.

The Board also unanimously approved the creation of an Anti-Cheating Commission:

Section 6 – Anti-Cheating Commission (ACC)

6.1 The ACBL Anti-Cheating Commission (ACC) will be composed of at least five expert players appointed by the ACBL CEO. The CEO may replace a member with or without cause. The CEO may add members.

6.2 Each player selected for the ACC will have a long history of success in NABC+ events, while maintaining a superior standard of ethics.

6.3 The purpose of the ACC will be to provide written opinions to the ACBL National Recorder's Office that evaluate Player Memos and other materials with a goal of identifying collusive cheating, including by developing investigatory protocols, mathematical models, and forensic criteria for reliably differentiating collusive cheating from random or innocent occurrences.

6.4 As needed, the ACC as needed may investigate any situation where collusive cheating is or may reasonably be suspected. The investigative team assembled by the ACC may engage experts in any field to assist the investigation. The ACC must notify the ACBL National Recorder in writing prior to commencing any formal investigation. Any expenditures must be approved by the ACBL National Recorder.

6.5 The ACBL National Recorder may submit evidence or Player Memos to the ACC for evaluation or recommendation. The National Recorder will regularly provide any relevant ethical player memos or other evidence to the ACC. The ACC may utilize additional experts as needed.

6.6 All ACC opinions will be provided to the ACBL National Recorder in writing.

Decisions regarding filing formal complaints against specific players shall be at the sole discretion of the ACBL.

6.7 All ACC Members and additional experts utilized by the ACC must sign a mandatory ACBL Confidentiality Agreement. Confidentiality applies to any evidence reviewed by the ACC, written opinions, and the existence of an investigation.

6.8 The ACC shall provide a copy of any evidence received to the ACBL National Recorder.

Collusive cheating simply must be eradicated from bridge, and I am in favor of harsh penalties imposed on those caught.

Though we continue to age as a bridge playing population, our membership numbers are at a ten year high, 168,744 as of April 7, 2016. The average age of our members is 72 years old. Our membership is 62.77% female and 37.23% male.

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

Barb Ferrera earned her Regional Master status last year and says:

I have played bridge since I was about 12 years old. I wasn't even aware that organized play was available, so I only played with friends and family until I found the wonderful world of duplicate bridge. I started playing in Texas in 2006, and was doing quite well for the 6 or 7 months I played. Unfortunately, family health issues made it impossible for me to continue my journey.

I returned to Michigan in 2008, but was again in a caregiving relationship with my mother who had Alzheimer's Disease. After her death, I returned to duplicate bridge at Ford World Headquarters and fell in love with game again. I am not sure if I am dedicated or addicted (one letter difference, an extra e), lol! I am either playing, taking lessons, studying or thinking bridge strategy and defense. I definitely have accepted the challenge to become the best I can be.

Congratulations, Barb, on your milestone!

Chelane Priller became a Club Master in 2015. She writes that her "...greatest learning goal at this point involves defensive play. In November, I played at the Jackson tournament in a Swiss 7 x 7. We won the C strat for over 2 points."



Chelane Priller

Shiv Tangri also earned his Club Master status in 2015. He writes: "I think I would never have achieved except in the District, which has organized the game very well. It gives me more stimulus to improve my game further, (this most wonderful brainy game of bridge)."

Junior Master status was conferred upon Mitzi Weinberg. She says that, "After lessons at TCH with Ed Bloom, I've played at Bridge Connection. The staff is supportive of new members, giving lessons and encouragement to all of us."

A very special bridge story was sent to me by Marilyn Collins, who became an NABC Master, and she has agreed to let me share this with you:

Bridge was, simply, a lifeline for me. In June 2007, I retired after 30 years of teaching music and signed up for bridge classes that would start in the fall. On August 28, 2007, our son, Sgt. James S. Collins, was KIA in Iraq. I decided I would not go to the bridge classes but my wiser husband said, "I think you should try it, you don't have to go back if it doesn't help".

What I discovered was a game that demanded such concentration, focus and effort that all other thoughts were blocked out . . . at least for the length of each hand. I have since found that many people (unaware of my own story) have come to bridge in the same way . . . dealing with their own stresses and difficulties and finding relief at the bridge table because of the demands of the game.

Those classes I attended were taught by Judith Skellenger and for the next two years I studied a variety of offerings including defense, 2/1, play of the hand, conventions etc. Judith was a drill sergeant who made sure I had all the basics sorted out securely.

I also started (with a partner) a weekly two-table learning bridge game that included discussing hands that came up. We brought those confusing hands right back to Judith for help. Another bridge bonus I didn't expect was that I found 3 ladies in that game who have become close friends and confidants and we continue with a monthly learning game that I hope never ends!

When I decided to venture into the world of duplicate bridge, I was lucky enough to find the "Bridge Connection" in Southfield. This local club owned by Grant Petersen and Michael McDonald has become a haven for bridge players. The game is played in a spacious, sunny room. The lunches are wonderful. There are a great variety of game levels and lots of free lessons. The atmosphere is welcoming and encouraging no matter what the level of play.

I have two great mentors at the club in Willy Winokur and Linda Golumbia who teach weekly classes prior to the games. Their lessons are totally different and equally valuable! They encourage emails about a hard bid or a difficult hand to play. I have found in the open games, experienced players with thousands of points are happy to encourage and help intermediate players like myself - I think because they love the game so much and welcome new fellow devotees!

So bridge for me was a lifeline; it is an endlessly fascinating, totally challenging brain exercise; it is a chance to partner with fellow lovers of the game and to make friendships (including JOYFULLY my own daughter, Joanna!); it is a place to go and spend a few hours in a lovely place where competition is fierce but gentle; and it has taken total possession of me!

WHAT IS IT about this game that is so addictive?

I recently read a book by Edward McPherson with the cumbersome title "The Backwash Squeeze and Other Improbable Feats A Newcomer's Journey into the World of Bridge".

McPherson has his own explanation of why it becomes such a passion to play bridge: "Bridge is a battle between fate and chance mediated by skill. To play is to try to rationalize the irrational, to outwit chaos. . . The game is a mix of probability and psychology, rigorous in its uncertainties, mathematical in its mystery. . . To its most serious adherents, bridge offers a manageable microcosm, a fantasy of control. It is life reduced to a parlor game."



Sgt. J.S. Collins in Iraq



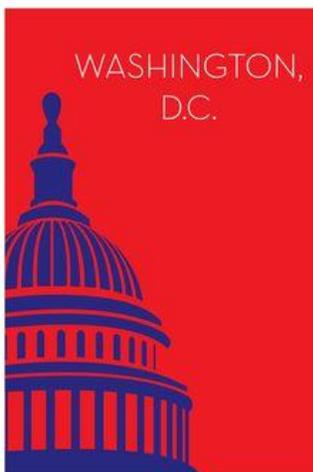
Marilyn Collins at a bridge banquet in Florida

Marilyn, the District 12 bridge community thanks you for sharing your story. The loss of your son was clearly a devastating event, but I am grateful to learn that bridge became your “lifeline”.

Closing Notes

I am a declared candidate for re-election to the District Director position I currently hold and, if re-elected, will continue to work hard for the members of District 12 and for positive outcomes for the ACBL.

Hope to see many of you in Washington, D. C this summer, July 21-31, at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel.



Dennis Carman
District 12 Director