

April 2009

**Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings**

**Houston NABC, March 2009**

Unlike the last NABC held in Houston, this one was held at the best facility possible for our needs -- sufficient hotel rooms and plenty of playing space that was very compact and near elevators. This was a new hotel built after we were there in the spring of 2002. The hotel was downtown and accessible to everything. There were plentiful restaurants of all types, but they could have been closer for me. There was only one I could walk to which was directly across the street. Others were at least three blocks away, but it really wasn't a problem. There were tournament buses making continuous runs in two different areas plus the taxis; the fare anywhere in the downtown area was just \$6.00. Almost every place I ate, I thought the food was above average in quality.

Other pluses included good weather (so it rained a couple of days, it wasn't snow!), basketball arena (home of Houston Rockets) next door and Rodeo in town and close by. The main thing, as I wrote in 2002, was the "well-organized outstanding local hosts—no matter the time or place, I invariably saw at least one of the three chairmen working away," same chairmen and their outstanding workers.

Unfortunately the attendance was slightly (5%) below what was estimated or expected. We need to do more to make it attractive for players to come to an NABC and not take away things of interest. For example, watching a vugraph show for the finals of the major knockouts with commentary from knowledgeable entertaining panelists was always a big draw. Watching online just isn't the same. However, this summer, here in Washington, we are featuring vugraph, on a big screen, with panel, for the last three days – finals of the Women's Knockouts and semi-finals and finals of the Spingold. Edith McMullin used to tell her newcomers that their lives would be severely harmed if they did not attend the NABC.

"As for the Board meetings, it was one of the lightest agendas we ever have had." Another quote from my 2002 report, but basically true again. There were some committees that met and had no motions on the agenda, but did have good discussion about future areas or things that should be considered.

One of the best things we did was scrap the proposed changes in the schedule of nationally rated events at NABCs that appeared in the *ACBL Bulletin*. Clearer heads prevailed and the only changes we made were to add the new Platinum Pairs event to the spring schedule on the first Friday, Saturday and Sunday and move the Vanderbilt to begin on Monday and end on Sunday, as does the Spingold. One more change (I wish I had thought of earlier) that came up at the Competition and Conventions meeting is exchanging the IMP pairs on the second

Thursday and Friday with the Open Pairs on the first Friday and Saturday. This will be brought up at the summer meetings in plenty of time before the new schedule takes effect next year.

The qualification for the Platinum Pairs event has been amended to include all players who have attained the rank of Platinum Life Master or Grand Life Master. The first time this event will be played is at the Spring NABC in Reno.

The Appeals and Charges Committee reported on the appeal of the District 6 Appellate Committee's decision to vacate the decision of the Unit 147 Disciplinary Committee. They found:

1. The decision of the Unit 147 Disciplinary Committee is reinstated.
2. The evidence presented against Alfred Steinberg at the Unit 147 Disciplinary Committee was clear and convincing and supported the finding of guilt.
3. The procedures and process were consistent with the CDR.
4. The discipline imposed was appropriate; therefore the one year suspension imposed by the Unit 147 Disciplinary Committee was affirmed with credit for the 97 days served. The remainder of the one year suspension is to be effective April 1, 2009.
5. The committee's removal of all masterpoints earned by Mr. Steinberg from August 2006 through January of 2008 was affirmed.

The Appeals and Charges Committee also made several (I would say minor) changes to the Code of Disciplinary Regulations that were passed. They are proposing a major revamping of the disciplinary sanction guidelines that will be voted on in the summer meeting in Washington. In general the penalty range is being increased.

In Boston, we passed a motion to allow online clubs to hold club championships but they had to be 18 boards in length. At their request, since their games are generally only 12 boards in length, we decided that they could hold either regular (18 boards) or shortened (12-17 boards) games. The overall awards for shortened are 60% of regular club championships and the overall award is capped at 4.50 masterpoints. The regular club championship is capped at 6.00 masterpoints.

Stratified pair events held at local, sectional and regional tournaments, at sponsor option, may be based on average masterpoints of the pair. Take note that this is not for flighted or StrataFlighted events. This is only for stratified events where everyone is playing together and the fields are just divided up for masterpoint purposes. Using average masterpoints for stratified swiss teams is already permitted, at sponsor option.

Unit-wide games are no longer required to use identical hands at all sites unless the sponsor requests it.

Since we are approaching the time when the new rules for achieving Life Master status go into effect (2010), we passed a motion to help out those who missed paying their dues. Former members who pay their dues within 90 days after their paid through date, will have their masterpoints recorded free of charge with no break in membership recorded.

Progress is being made on acquiring a site for a new headquarters. It is probably going to be in Mississippi about 10 minutes from current headquarters. If all goes well, they could be in it by the end of the year.

One of the main reasons I object to price increases at the fall meeting when the budget is passed, is because we don't need the additional money. Once again when all the numbers were finally added up for last year, there was an excess of revenues over expenses of \$890,000 (over \$200,000 higher than that forecast in Boston). Do we really need another \$100,000 from increasing the entry fees at the NABCs. There was a motion to reduce the fees for the I/N games at the NABCs from \$15 to \$13. It was defeated, of course, but at least we had nine affirmative votes.

Let me finish by putting in a plug for this year's Hall of Fame banquet. I have not missed one since we set up the process of electing players into the Hall of Fame and choosing recipients for special awards. This year we are honoring two of our own. Peter Boyd will be receiving the Sidney Lazard, Jr. Sportsmanship Award and Jerry Machlin, who was chosen last year for the Blackwood Award, will be inducted here. I hope that his widow, Trudy, will be able to attend. Receiving this year's Blackwood Award is Aileen Osofsky, our very popular Goodwill Chairman, who was rendered speechless by the Hall of Fame Committee chairman, Steve Robinson--yes, we claim him also--when he made the announcement in Houston at her own meeting. In case you have forgotten, there is a very worthy player, Mark Lair, who was elected this year and will be inducted, even though I haven't found a way to claim him. The banquet is one of the good things we do, and I would like to see a good turnout from District 6. It will be on Thursday, July 23. Don't worry, we always finish in time to play bridge in the evening. Other information, including price, is in the June *Bulletin*.