

Facts from Phoenix

Report from District Director Margot Hennings

Margot10bridge@cox.net

Happily, the North American Bridge Championships (NABC) held in Phoenix this fall surpassed all table count estimates by over 2,000 tables, boosted by huge local attendance in Intermediate/Newcomer and regional events. The original estimate for Phoenix was 11,000 but then was lowered to 10,500 based on attendance at NABCs over the past several years. The final number of 12,565 surpassed even the last Phoenix NABC in 2002 by over 100 tables, and all NABCs were generally larger ten years ago. The local committee did a great job, so that despite the initial rain that greeted the ACBL Board of Directors when we arrived for our meetings five days in advance of the start of the tournament and the below-average temperatures that prevailed throughout most of the days we were there, the overall experience was a good one. Minor glitches were evident as hand records were scooped up by participants and observers alike after the national events and because of the huge attendance, many folks had to wait after the session for more to be made. Lines to purchase entries were not shortened as much as had been hoped for, with advance entries for three of the national events available through Bridgewinners.com but only for a \$5 surcharge. ACBL is working toward all entries for national events being available for advance purchase in the not-so-distant future, while hand records and results/recaps are already available very quickly following every session for all events.

Special Awards—Kitty Gottfried named the ACBL Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year

Every fall, ACBL Board committees select a Goodwill Member or Members of the Year and an Honorary Member or Members of the Year, and the ACBL President selects a Volunteer or Volunteers of the Year from the almost 167,000 ACBL members throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico for national recognition for their outstanding efforts to bridge in the areas of goodwill, volunteerism, and overall contributions. Last year, two hard-working members from District 6 (D6) were recognized for their superlative commitment to the game of bridge—**Joe Olivier** from Chesapeake, VA was selected as the **2013 ACBL Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year** and **Millard Nachtwey** from Silver Spring, MD was one of two co-recipients (together with Audrey Grant) of the national **ACBL Honorary Member of the Year** award.

Well, D6 has done it again—ACBL President Bill Cook selected **Kitty Gottfried** from Silver Spring, MD as one of two co-recipients of the **2014 Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year**. Many of you know Kitty, and those of you who don't, just think you don't, as Kitty has been the "silent partner" for over 40 years in providing hospitality at the Washington Bridge League (WBL) weekly Unit Games, WBL Sectionals, many 4th of July Mid-Atlantic Bridge Conference (MABC) Regionals, and the four NABCs held in DC from 1984 through 2009. Kitty never sought recognition for her tireless work behind-the-scenes, and yet everyone who attended any of these bridge events benefitted because of what she did. It is fitting that the ACBL President's Volunteer of the Year award, established in 2004, was re-named in 2012 for Nadine Wood, who was known nationwide for her volunteerism. Now, Kitty Gottfried, one of Nadine's long-time friends and devotees to the high standards of hospitality that the MABC has made famous, is a co-recipient of this award. Kitty, we are all very proud of you!

Kitty shares the award this year with Silvana Scotto of Long Island. Silvana was one of the most energetic of club owners when the ACBL and the Alzheimer's Association organized a joint fundraiser last summer known as The Longest Day. Her bridge club led the nation, raising nearly \$80,000 for the cause. The Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year for 2014 is Karl Dencker of Lake in the Hills IL, who has been involved in a variety of activities and administration in support of bridge for years. Jay Baum, former ACBL CEO, was selected as the 2014 Honorary Member of the Year. All four of these individuals will be honored at the Goodwill Meeting in Dallas at the Spring NABC.

Congratulations:

Yet again, D6 players excelled in Phoenix, most notably in many of the premier national events. Two national titles were won by D6 players, with Peter Boyd and Steve Robinson on the winning squad of the three-day North American Swiss, and Ed Lazarus of Baltimore winning the Super Senior Pairs for an unprecedented fourth time in a row—in fact, Ed has won the event, playing with three different partners, ever since its debut in 2010! Who was the player to carry Ed to his fourth title in this event? None other than Mark Laken of Glyndon, MD, who now has the distinction of winning this event two years in a row with Ed. Alan Sontag finished 7th overall in one of bridge's arguably toughest events, the three-day Reisinger Board-a-Match. Fred King, Bob Bell, Dave Ruderman and former DC-area resident David Abelow finished 3/4 in the National Senior KO playing four-handed, sharing that spot with Peter Boyd and Steve Robinson and their four teammates, while Peter Lesnik of Burke, VA and his teammates were 5/8. Peter Lesnik also placed 4th in the North American Swiss on the last day, rounding out an excellent tournament for him. A full list of players placing in the overalls can be found in the February/March 2014 issue of TableTALK.

Items of Special Interest

- Robert Hartman, ACBL CEO, and Sylvia Hardin, ACBL Human Resources Director, will attend the Williamsburg Regional on Friday, February 28 and Saturday, March 1. They will be conducting focus group sessions on Friday morning, will attend the D6 meeting Saturday morning, and will be available both days during the afternoon and evening for you to ask questions about ACBL operations.
- Robert will continue as ACBL CEO for another three years—2014 was to be the third and final year under his current contract, but he has now signed a contract to continue as our CEO through 2016.
- Phyllis Harlan from Oklahoma City was elected ACBL President for 2014. Phyllis replaces Bill Cook, whose term ends December 31. Many of you remember Bill from his visit to the Cambridge Regional this past fall—Phyllis has expressed an interest in attending the Bethesda Regional over the 4th of July, so I hope many of you will have an opportunity to meet her there.
- The ACBL Education Foundation is offering eleven grants for teachers who would like to sponsor Patty Tucker's super-successful *Learn Bridge in a Day?* (LBIAD?) program in their area—LBIAD? is an introductory seminar designed to teach the basics of beginning bridge to new students in a concise, concentrated five-hour class. If you are interested in applying for a grant, please go to <http://web2.acbl.org/hosted/edu/lbiad.htm>.
- ACBL is actively pursuing a partnership with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) to encourage ACBL-accredited teachers to teach bridge in colleges and

universities in which OLLI has established non-credit courses for seniors. Current NVBA President Ron Kral was active in teaching through OLLI for a number of years and is credited with bringing this program to the attention of the ACBL. Stand by for more information and how you can become involved and earn a small stipend for helping to promote bridge!

- The ACBL smoking policy was amended to include prohibiting electronic smoking devices in the playing areas at NABCs.
- New Zero Tolerance signs have been designed and will be sent by ACBL in early 2014 to clubs and units so they can be displayed at club, sectional, and regional games.
- A Youth Protection and Abuse Prevention Policy has been approved and will be distributed in early 2014.
- ACBL will continue its partnership with the Alzheimer's Association (U.S.) and the Alzheimer's Society (Canada) and support a second Longest Day fund-raiser again on June 21, 2014.
- Unit-sponsored clubs as specifically defined in the Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR) are subject to the rules of the CDR as of January 1, 2014. Except for CDR 2.1.1(d) and unit-sponsored clubs, the units, districts, and the ACBL have no original jurisdiction over *behavior* at club-sponsored games.

Conventions, Masterpoint Ceilings, and GNT Flight C Second Team

Regarding conventions allowed on the General Chart: Item #12 of the ACBL Mid-Chart, "Opening two hearts or two spades showing a weak two bid, with a four-card minor" will be moved to the Opening Bids section of the ACBL General Convention Chart. This convention requires an alert.

The Micro-Spangold NABC KO Teams is currently restricted to players with fewer than 1500 masterpoints. The motion to increase the masterpoint limit to include players with fewer than 2000 masterpoints failed. I was one who voted against this motion based on the argument that this is the only NABC-level event left with such a low masterpoint ceiling, and if we want to continue to encourage newer players to come to NABCs and play in events in which they will not feel intimidated, this particular event ceiling should not be increased to 2000.

The discussion among Board members to allow a second team to participate in the national finals of the Flight C GNT was fairly split with a few more dissenters than advocates. The reasons are many and complicated, but the prevalent argument was that many districts have trouble fielding even one team much less two, and monies to subsidize even one team are not adequate as it is. It is difficult for us here in D6 where the GNTs and the NAPs have always been popular events (due in large part to the long-time efforts of Bill Cole, our district coordinator for both) to imagine that clubs in some districts refuse to hold club qualifiers because their players do not want them and geography prevents many players from traveling long distances to play in a district final when no enthusiasm has been generated at the "grass roots" club level. So, for now at least, this concept is on hold.

A New Schedule of Events at NABCs?

The Board of Directors (BOD) is not only trying to make NABCs special and fun with the introduction of multiple new national events geared to players with fewer than 10,000 masterpoints, we are toying with a rearrangement of the schedules at the three NABCs to help plug "holes" in the schedule and provide events for everyone regardless of gender or age or masterpoint holding—a tall order, I assure you. For anyone interested, please contact me and I

will gladly send you the proposed new schedule for your review and comment. I will also have copies of this new proposed schedule at some D6 sectionals and all regionals between now and March, when the Board will vote for a provisional trial of the new schedules beginning in the Spring of 2015.

Elections

Having run unopposed for the position of District Director from D6 for another three-year term, I along with two returning Board members and three new Board members, were duly certified by the ACBL Board in Phoenix. One of the new Board members—Jay Whipple from Florida—is a name many of you may recognize. Jay is the creator of Fast Results, an online Partnership Desk, and the Common Game—three programs that are in use in many districts already and ideas that ACBL has used with Jay’s help to begin developing an implementation strategy for ACBL as a whole. And, speaking of technology.....

ACBL Technology News

CEO Robert Hartman has assembled a talented, hard-working team at ACBL HQ and progress is being made on many fronts, including not only Fast Results and advance entry-purchase as noted above, but also development of the new ACBLScore+ software that will provide a much-needed update to the current program used by club and tournament directors to run and score their games. You will soon notice a new web design when you go to the ACBL home page with many new features that will be easy to use. New mobile web applications are also in the works. Finally, the infamous TourneyTRAX program, where sectional and regional schedules are now required to be entered, is continuing to be improved, slowly but hopefully surely. There is a cadre of new directors working under Dan Plato, long-time tournament director from Atlanta, who are now responsible for data entry and a process has been set up for Tournament Chairs and Coordinators to review the data for correctness. The process is tentative and still has a long way to go, but 2014 should be a much better year for local tournament organizers than 2013 was in this regard.

ACBL Finances

The Finance Committee projects a change of just under \$6,000 in its net assets for 2014. Due to the amounts needed to continue improvements to the ACBL technology infrastructure, a substantial director training and recruitment program, and the commitment to marketing ACBL to all age groups, there will be a \$1 increase in membership dues starting in April 2014, as well as a 1.5% increase in sanction fees beginning in 2014.

For specific information about any of the items presented in summary form above, please go to www.acbl.org/about/bodmeetings, and then click on the name of the city where the NABC was held—in this case, Phoenix.

As always, I welcome your feedback—my email address is at the top of this report.