

## **Observations from Orlando District Director Report**

**CEO News:** First and foremost, let me address the news that ACBL CEO Robert Hartman has submitted his resignation, effective July 31, 2017, at the conclusion of the Toronto Summer NABC. His statement can be found under “News” on the ACBL website. The Board (BOD) was well aware that Robert would not stay on in this position indefinitely, and contractually, he was only required to give us 30 days’ notice of intent to resign. He will remain in Horn Lake full-time until the end of March, and then will alternate between Headquarters (HQ) and his new residence in FL in the conduct of his full-time duties as CEO until the end of July. A Search Committee is already actively working to market this position. In addition to the five Committee Members of the BOD CEO Review Committee, Bob Blanchard and Sylvia Moss have agreed to be part of this very important search. Bob and Sylvia are very successful in both business and bridge and bring a combined perspective and skill set that will be very valuable as we move forward. For those who are interested in details, you can read the CEO Succession Plan that is available online in the Codification, Chapter II, Business Management; Section B.5, Employees and Consultants at <http://www.acbl.org/about-acbl/administration/acbl-codification/>. If you know anyone qualified to apply for this position, please encourage them to do so.

**Quick Orlando NABC Overview:** The Fall NABC was a study in contrasts—great, well-lit ballroom space, plentiful restrooms, and a decent room rate but limited and more-expensive-than-usual on-site options for food and frustrating parking at the host hotels for those who chose to stay off-site. In addition, yet again incorrect “over-reporting” of overall results through ACBL Live and in the Daily Bulletins left many national event players feeling frustrated. Prevalent in several NABCs preceding Orlando, this is something a number of us on the Board of Directors (BOD) have asked specifically to be fixed before the Spring NABC in Kansas City, and I am hopeful that during this next NABC, this dissatisfaction will no longer be an issue. I have been on the NABC Advisory Committee most of my years on the ACBL BOD and I can assure you that we try to understand everything good and bad about each site we contract with for an NABC, and it is a frustrating and usually thankless task. It never seems to turn out the way we all hoped—the local Volunteers work so very hard and always do a great job, while site or technology missteps do much to mar the finished product. But it never is for lack of informed intent and weighing the often not-so-good alternatives. Back to this in a moment...

**New ACBL President:** One of the key actions at every Fall NABC is the election of the ACBL President for the coming year. For 2017, this position was won by our neighbor to the south, Bob Heller, from District 7. A long-time friend of mine, Bob is also a long-time friend and tireless worker for our Mid-Atlantic Regional Tournaments. Many of you know him and I am sure wish him well in what promises to be another challenging year for ACBL. You can plan on offering him your ideas and support in person when he attends our D6 Memorial Day Regional in Richmond—Bob and his wife Barbara will be there for the final four days.

**ACBL Goodwill, Volunteer, and Honorary Member of the Year Awards:** The ACBL Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year Award for this year goes to Eldon Clayman, who many of you know from our Mid-Atlantic Bridge Conference (MABC) Regional tournaments through the years. Eldon and his late wife Susie were instrumental in setting the bar for hospitality at

regionals, particularly in D7, as well as being a fixture at the Partnership Desk at countless Regionals, chairing that function with great proficiency. Nancy Erickson from District 22 is the 2017 recipient of the *Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year Award* for 2017. I have had the pleasure of getting to know Nancy through my attendance for the past three years at the Palm Springs Regional in December. Nancy is a pure delight, the quintessential embodiment of a devoted behind-the-scenes Volunteer in the mold of our dear local D6 Kitty Gottfried, who received this award in 2013. It is terrific to be able to recognize Volunteers who do what they for the sheer love of the game and with the goal of making the players happy, and Nancy does this so well. The *Honorary Member of the Year Award* this year goes to Eddie Wold, a truly fine player, winner of multiple NABC and several world championships, 2016 inductee into the Bridge Hall of Fame, and one who has given much of his time to the advancement of the game through, among other things, his perseverance in getting bridge on the college curriculum in his home town of Houston.

**2017 Tournaments Task Force:** Among his many talents, Bob Heller has been a conscientious tracker of tournament attendance—both sectional and regional—throughout ACBL, and also an active voice in NABC Site Selection for the BOD. Every year, it is the President’s prerogative to assign BOD members to committees and create task forces to address critical issues. This year, Bob has created two special Task Forces—one to look closely at ACBL Clubs and the other at Tournaments, and he has asked me to lead the latter. The Tournaments Task Force (TTF) is already hard at work with D6 President Shawn Stringer having provided a lot of insight into the questions that need answering, and D6 (non-voting) Board Member David Rodney involved in formulating what data is needed to answer these questions and how that analysis should be performed. David is a formal member of the TTF along with well-known Gatlinburg Tournament Chair Pete Misslin (yes, the annual Gatlinburg Regional WILL take place despite the recent tragic fires), and David Lodge, Tournament Manager and former District President from San Diego and Palm Springs. These three non-BOD TTF members will work closely with five BOD members from across the country plus myself, who together provide broad geographic representation for tournaments of all sizes, along with many years of experience in running and attending tournaments at all levels. Key to our research and analysis this year will be understanding what makes tournaments successful and that satisfying customers regardless of tournament size is what is most important.

**Congratulations to D6 Members on Top-20 NABC Event Finishes:** Continuing their winning ways, Beth Palmer and Sylvia Shi teamed up with Li Yiting and three non-D6 women to win the NABC Marsha May Sternberg Women’s Board-a-Match (BAM) Teams. In addition, in order of the days on which the events were played, the following D6 players finished in the Top 20 in nationally rated events: Ai-Tai Lo and Bill Pettis—5<sup>th</sup> in NABC+ Nail LM Pairs; Sylvia Shi—14<sup>th</sup> in NABC+ Nail LM Pairs; Daniel Korbel—2<sup>nd</sup> in NABC+ Mitchell Open BAM; Ed Lazarus—4<sup>th</sup> in NABC Super Senior Pairs; Steve Robinson and Peter Boyd—5<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> in NABC Baze Senior KO Teams; Paul Benedict and Lynn Jones—6<sup>th</sup> in NABC Senior Mixed Pairs; David Rodney and Rusty Krauss—15<sup>th</sup> in NABC 10K Fast Pairs; Mark Dahl—8<sup>th</sup> in NABC+ Keohane North American Swiss; and Steve Robinson—3<sup>rd</sup>, Barry Ko—6<sup>th</sup>, Ellen Cherniavsky, Gene Kales, Beth Palmer, and Bill Cole—12<sup>th</sup>, Sylvia Shi—13<sup>th</sup>, and Zeke Letellier—19<sup>th</sup> in NABC+ Mixed Swiss.

**Significant Cost-saving and Budgetary Measures:** The 2017 operating budget showing a projected excess of revenue over expenses of \$234,283 and the 2017 capital budget of \$355,750 were presented to the BOD in Orlando and will be formally approved (with minor changes, as always) in Kansas City this Spring. The capital budget includes substantial monies for a long overdue overhaul of ACBLscore, focusing on usability and reliability. Among the key components included in the operating budget are the following:

- **Membership Dues:** Member dues will increase \$10, effective April 1, but only if you renew for just one year. A three-year renewal will enable you to renew at the current rate now in effect. This decision was based on a marketing strategy used by most membership organizations, whereby the time and energy spent by staff in annually sending out notices of one-year renewals can be put to much better use providing customer service to all.
- **Change in BOD Meeting Process:** Beginning with the Summer NABC this year and scheduled to continue for the Spring and Summer beginning in 2018, the BOD will not meet until the Wednesday or Thursday (start date dictated by the amount of business needed to get done, with the motion to strictly limit meetings to three days defeated 11-14) preceding each tournament. This motion was brought by the Finance Committee and focused on cost-savings, but its passage (18-6 with one abstention) precludes BOD members from playing in any events until Sunday afternoon at the earliest since meetings will last through the first Saturday. If we want to play in a national event, this means waiting until Monday in the Summer. Although I voted in favor of this motion based on financial considerations and lacking any good immediate alternative, I remain convinced there is a better way to realize cost savings and yet allow BOD Members who volunteer significant chunks of their time throughout the year (and who are, after all, bridge players!), to play in our NABCs from the outset. As Vice-Chair of the Governance and Board Operations Committee this year, I will be looking into ways to find a cost-effective process solution to this, as well as many other process-related and operational issues. President Heller is committed to starting the Spring and Fall meetings a minimum of one day later this year, compressing our “face to-face” time and emphasizing even more electronic “meetings” in advance of each NABC. A motion to have the Board hold its Fall meetings at Headquarters outside Memphis instead of just prior to the site of the Fall NABC failed, 10-15—I was one of the 10. At its meeting on Sunday following the conclusion of the BOD meetings, the Board of Governors directed that this motion be sent back to the BOD in Kansas City for reconsideration.
- **Pre-tournament Hospitality.** By a vote of 15-10, the BOD eliminated the requirement for the locals to provide tours, lunches, and other hospitality for the spouses and Significant Others of BOD Members. Some local hosts enthusiastically embraced this requirement, seeing it as an opportunity to introduce their city to others, while others saw it as an extra responsibility that simply compounded the overall Volunteer burden of an NABC. Add this latter trend to the fact that by doing away with pre-tournament hospitality (paid for by ACBL), we could save the League \$7500 a year, I happily voted to eliminate this.

***Bridge Regulations:***

- Orlando saw the narrow passage (14-11) of a motion that now restricts *hand records used in NABC+ and concurrent events* only to those events, beginning with the first session played. I was one of the 14. Until now, final day sessions had separate hand records, but the qualifying sessions in NABC+ events used the same hand records as NABC and

regional events that were held at the same time. It was always fun to compare with your friends what was done at different levels of the game, but the desire to reduce the possibility for cheating through earlier finishing of the non-NABC+ events and the potential for overhearing conversations about boards outweighed the desire on the part of many to continue using the same hand records throughout.

- By a vote of 5-20, a motion to *eliminate online points from the Lifetime Masterpoint Lists* failed. I voted not to eliminate.
- Due to continuing disappointing participation in nationally ranked women's events, both the *Machlin Women's Swiss Teams at the Spring NABC* and the *Wagar Women's KO Teams at the Summer NABC* were removed from the schedule. Starting with this Summer in Toronto, a four-session nationally ranked Wagar Women's Pairs was added, beginning on Monday. All carried unanimously.
- A motion to create and include a *seven-day KO event* named in honor of Paul Soloway in the schedule for the Fall NABC beginning on the first Friday of the tournament was defeated, 6-19. If it had passed, the motion stipulated that the Senior KO would move to the first Sunday of the Fall NABC, after the qualifying period for this new event was over. I voted against it until more time had passed from the changes recently implemented, so that the effect of these on attendance could be better estimated.
- Due to the many overlaps of one event with another, world bridge championships have long allowed "drop-ins" from one world event to another for those who failed to qualify in the final sessions. ACBL is currently experimenting with this concept, but a motion that *drop-ins not be allowed from team events to premier pair events* passed in Orlando 17-8. I voted to continue to allow them. Drop-ins from pairs to pairs is still allowed under the current experiment.
- Under the capable leadership of Jay Whipple (BOD from D9 plus developer of Fast Results and creator of The Common Game), Management will continue to experiment with holding *online events at Regional tournaments*. Specific Conditions of Contest were approved for these tightly controlled games.
- A new "*electronic devices*" policy was passed almost unanimously, differentiating penalties by event levels, frequency of infractions in the same session versus across different sessions of the same event and across all events. D6 is putting in place a policy for its regionals that echoes these penalties, and I encourage sectional tournaments to do similarly, so that there will be consistency for players as they move from tournament to tournament. The ACBL policy can be found in the Minutes for Orlando under Item 163-07 at <http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/163OrlandoBoDMinutes.pdf>.
- In very close votes, with my voting for the former and against the latter, motions to allow participation of extra B and C teams in the GNT for those Districts with a minimum of eight teams participating in their District and to provide subsidies to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place NAP teams both failed.

***Education and Charity Matter!*** For many years, there have been two separate foundations *associated* with ACBL, one for Charity and the other for Education. D6 and all other districts are frequent beneficiaries of the funds raised by these two foundations.

- ***The Charity Foundation*** gives each district \$1000 annually to be donated to a 501c3 charitable organization; for the past six years, I have donated that money to Fisher House, a kind of Ronald McDonald House for the military. Since Fisher House has so many

locations throughout D6, it was a perfect choice! Then, every six years, the Charity Foundation gives each of four districts in rotation \$30,000 to be given to 501c3 charities of their choosing who are special to their district. This year, D6 was a beneficiary of this \$30,000—please see the Norfolk Regional Minutes online on the D6 website ([districtsixbridge.org](http://districtsixbridge.org)) for a list and description of the organizations chosen by the eight D6 units to receive these monies.

- ***The ACBL Educational Foundation*** is a 501c3 organization, which means that it allows you to make tax-deductible donations to it. It is a membership organization comprising the ACBL BOD, with three of its nine trustees required to be BOD members and others elected by the BOD from the ACBL at large. D6 has been a beneficiary from this organization as well, with funding for the Reston *Learn Bridge in a Day!* (LBIAD) program held in July 2015 and the off-shoot Williamsburg LBIAD run under the same license as Reston in early 2016. However, this Foundation was fairly small-scale, run by Volunteers, and receiving most of its monies from fundraisers such as “Ed Foundation” games at clubs, sectionals, regional, and the NABCs, and its individual grants were not large. An exciting change was enacted in Orlando when the BOD voted to make it independent of the BOD. The reason for this change was to enable the Educational Foundation to employ a skilled professional staff who would eventually embrace all of bridge education and raise significant monies to be used for that purpose—read: big projects! This is a major change and one that the BOD hopes will help solidify the future of our game.

As always, contact me with any questions at [margot10bridge@cox.net](mailto:margot10bridge@cox.net). Hope to have seen many of you at the DC NABC by the time you read this! .....**Margot**