

March 2002

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings

Houston NABC, March 2002

The ingredients that make for an enjoyable, successful NABC? We found most of them in Houston. Good weather, plentiful restaurants of all types, a huge mall with more stores than anyone could want, large city easily accessible by air with other attractions and events, well-organized outstanding local hosts--no matter the time or place I invariably saw at least one of the three chairmen working away--first class hotels and reasonable playing conditions were all there. Unfortunately, there was one fatal flaw. There were three separate hotels and playing sites.

Had the playing space been sufficient in the two Westin hotels (it was an easy walk through the mall to get from one to the other), it would have been okay. But having to use the third hotel (which housed all the National events) made it a different ball game. It was across a wide busy street and was at least a ten-minute walk for joggers. Consequently, we were confined to one spot and had no interaction with the rest of the tournament. As our membership continues to age, more and more we want and need a single-site location.

As for the Board meetings, it was one of the lightest agendas we ever have had. I knew something was out of order when I noticed that my purse weighed more than my bag with the journal. We did manage to fill our time, confirming the old adage that the amount of time it takes to complete a task is equal to the amount of time allotted for it.

Since we had plenty of time, we had several people outside of the Board making presentations. The American Duplicate Gin Rummy organization founders returned and reported, along with our Management, on the progress of ACBL providing record-keeping for tracking the standings and accomplishments of their online duplicate gin rummy membership. Mike Passell made a presentation on allowing Tournament Directors to handle all bridge appeals including sectionals and regionals. John Wignall, WBF Executive Council member from New Zealand, visited us as the WBF Chairman of the Laws Commission. They are beginning work now on revising the laws (a two to three year project) and want help from the ACBL Laws Commission.

The Executive Director of Bridge at Schools, Beth Refaie, gave a presentation on their progress so far. Frankly I am very impressed with how much they have done in the short two months they have been in business. Unfortunately, Beth got put on the firing line by some project detractors -- forgetting they have been working only two months, not two years. The biggest problem was after the meetings were over, a rumor was spread that Bridge at Schools had stolen the Educational Foundation's tax exemption number to obtain a grant. Yes, it is true that we applied for a grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation. Some of the documents they requested, history and financial statements, we could not supply since we had not been in business long enough. So with the permission of the Educational Foundation we explained and attached their statements as our "parent" organization. This also included the IRS tax determination letter so they could see that the Foundation was a legitimate charitable organization. Our statement that Bridge at Schools tax exemption is pending was also included. In fact the whole application was over a hundred pages. As I point out to everyone, if Freddie Mac uses the Foundation's number, then they will write the check to them as well. It is all a big red herring.

As long as I am on the subject, let me include a short summary of Bridge at Schools (to answer questions you may have and to pass along to others). It is proactive marketing of bridge education programs to schools, especially primary and middle schools. We are working actively to secure an official endorsement from the Department of Education. This will be the cornerstone for an effort to roll out nationally. To get the endorsement, we are aggressively obtaining comparative and direct research to prove claims that bridge improves academic achievement and social skills. Some of this research will be based on the pilot programs we are developing and planning to put in place in selected areas.

The Fall NABC in 2004 is scheduled for the Peabody in Orlando. We contracted with them on condition that the additions to their property--more playing space and hotel rooms--would be complete. They were supposed to start construction a year ago, had some delays, and then when 9/11 came they put it off for now. The alternative of using the Peabody with another hotel and/or convention center, when that did not work well in the past, was rejected for a better offer. The Marriott Orlando World Center, which has more than enough rooms and playing space to be a one-site location, made a proposal for this NABC. The Board authorized our meeting planner to finalize negotiations even though their dates include Thanksgiving. I have long been a proponent (at least 20 years) of not holding NABCs over Thanksgiving. However, going to a one-site location takes precedence over other considerations. And I expressed this to the Advisory Committee **before** I went to Houston.

This year the Fall NABC in Phoenix begins on Thanksgiving day which means that in the normal course of business the Board would be meeting on that day. Most of the Board did not want to do that so we had two choices. Meeting in Phoenix two days earlier so those that wished could go home on Tuesday or meeting much earlier in Memphis with a promise that we did not have to stay in the horrible hotel near the office but could stay in the nice one 30 minutes away. Memphis got the required 13 votes (mine was not one of them), so we will be holding the meeting there probably the end of October.

In my last report, I told you about the proposal for changes in Senior events and that I had forgotten to state that it was a proposal in my report in the District 6 Supplement to the February *Bulletin*. There were two parts to the proposal and they were both voted on in Houston:

1. Senior events may be stratified by age (55-65-75) or masterpoints but not both. If stratified by age, the masterpoint awards will be 80% for 55+ and 70% for 65+ and 75+.

This did not pass.

2. Senior events may be held with age restrictions of 55, 65 or 75 and may be stratified by masterpoints. Any two age limited events may be held simultaneously. The masterpoint awards will be 80% of an open event for 55+ (current) and 70% for both 65+ and 75+. This passed effective immediately.

We reconsidered the motion regarding Junior/student coupons that we passed at the previous meeting. The portion that changed the eligibility for those using the coupons--those who have not had their 22nd birthday or those that have offered proof that they are full time students and have not reached their 26th birthday--was given an additional restriction. Only members residing in our Zone may use these coupons. Originally, the value of the coupons was changed to be a \$5.00 discount from the regular per session entry fee instead of paying \$5.00 for the entry. Now we changed it back so that the entry fee using coupons will be approximately 50% of the NABC regional entry fee. For 2002 that comes to \$6.00 per session.

Since the mini-Spingold was so successful in Toronto last summer and we are sure it will be this summer in Washington, starting in 2003 in Long Beach, we will hold two Mini-Life Masters' Pairs each Summer for a two year trial. These will run concurrent with the six-session Life Masters' Pairs. One event will be LM to 1500 masterpoints and the other will be LM to 5000 masterpoints. Except for the masterpoint restrictions, the conditions of contest will be identical to the unrestricted Life Masters' Pairs. If either event attracts fewer than 60 tables, it will be reduced to a four-session event.

Since there is no longer room for the Red Ribbon Pairs at the Summer NABC, starting in 2003 it will be held at the Spring NABC on the second Thursday and Friday (concurrent with Open Pairs II).

Starting this summer the elections for the office of ACBL President will be held at the Summer meeting. This is going back to the way it was before 1993. At that time the Board voted to have just two meetings a year and cut out the Summer meeting. The Presidential election had to be moved since there was no Summer meeting. Not holding a Summer meeting did not work out well and they voted it back in. For some reason they did not move the elections back -- I think just because nobody thought to put it on the agenda until now.

Clubs may now hold regular open games (not any special games awarding extra masterpoints) with a minimum number of boards of 12 to a maximum of 17. The masterpoint award for these games will be 80% of the award for open games.

There will be an amnesty program beginning June 1, 2002 and ending December 31, 2002 for anyone whose membership has lapsed or whose service fees haven't been paid for at least 12 months. Any pertinent reinstatement fees are waived. In addition new members will also be given a break as follows:

	<u>1 year</u>	<u>2 year</u>	<u>3 year</u>
New member	\$24.00	\$48.00	\$72.00
Reinstatement NLM	\$32.00	\$58.00	\$84.00
Reinstatement LM	\$29.00	\$53.00	\$77.00
75 Years or Older	\$24.00	\$45.00	\$66.00

A team or teams wishing to play up in a Bracketed KO will be accommodated unless the upper bracket is full (e.g., 16 teams playing in a four-session KO). We have had this particular provision in our Mid-Atlantic knockout conditions for some time.

We approved a comprehensive education, training and certification program for all ACBL tournament directors. The program will be developed this year and instituted in 2003. Each Director will be certified in accordance with their rank with a separate certification for tournament directors handling appeals at NABCs. (Actually, we've needed a program like this for decades.)

Management is authorized and encouraged to develop and implement a program to subsidize teachers who need assistance in order to properly and efficiently instruct new duplicate bridge players and students. This is in place of the rebate program given to teachers and others for signing up new members and getting their renewals in the second and third years.

Next year, overall masterpoints will be awarded in Continent-wide charity games and in continent-wide international fund games that use hand records and for which national and district winners are determined and published in the ACBL *Bulletin*. In addition to District overall awards, Continent-wide overall winners will be determined and overall masterpoints awarded.

We clarified the responsibilities/relationship between the ACBL and the USBF with the following:

1. The USBF will preside over the selection of all USA teams including Open, Women's, Juniors and Seniors (including instances where the Senior Team is allowed to be transnational within Zone Two).
2. Any discipline imposed by the USBF at a USBF event sanctioned by ACBL will be referred to the Ethical Oversight Committee for cases of alleged cheating or serious breaches of ethics, or the District Disciplinary Committee in whose geographical area the USBF event was held for any other cases of discipline.

As usual we had our share of items deferred to the next meeting -- this summer in Washington, D. C. These are:

- Developing a sliding price scale (so large users pay less) for providing membership names and addresses to affiliated arms of ACBL.
- Specifying membership entitlements, or not, for ACBL members who are not citizens or residents of a country under ACBL's jurisdiction.
- Considering that a person must be a member of ACBL or, if a Life Master must have service fees paid up, in order to participate in any sanctioned play at an NABC, Regional or Sectional.

- Deciding whether to set a policy that allows non-English speaking ACBL members to opt out of receiving the *Bulletin* with a corresponding decrease in their annual dues.