

December 2003

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings

New Orleans NABC, November 2003

New Orleans is such a fun, wonderful city that it is a shame I had to spend most of my time at the bridge table and at meetings. There are so many interesting places to visit -- Preservation Hall, Pat O'Briens, Cafe DuMonde, plantations, mansions, Mardi Gras World, river boats and casinos -- but unfortunately I didn't have time to do any of it. New Orleans is best known for its fabulous restaurants and I did manage to frequent a lot of them. In many cities restaurants come and go and you won't necessarily find a favorite some years later. Not true in New Orleans. All of the ones I frequented or knew of are still there, they just add new ones.

The attendance was outstanding to begin with and seemed headed to exceed estimates by 1500 tables. Then came Thanksgiving and the attendance dipped more than usual. This time, however, it wasn't the holiday that made the difference. It was the Grambling vs. Southern University football game on Saturday at the Superdome that took over the town and kept commuters home. From Friday to Sunday morning it was one big party. We did wind up slightly ahead of original predictions.

As for the Board meetings, as usual there is some good news and some bad. It was good that the Board officially accepted Management's recommendation to host the 2009 Summer NABC in Washington, D. C. It was also good that most of the planned fee increases for next year were not needed and not implemented. It is bad, in my opinion, that the one increase passed by the Board was an increase in NABC entry fees of \$1.00 per player per session across the board. It may turn out to be good for the District and the Mid-Atlantic because those who play in Regional events can attend our tournaments and pay \$10 per session instead of the \$14 which will be charged for Regional events at the NABC. (NABC+ events will be \$16.50.) At least 25% of the entry fee increase will be directed toward the per table fee to the local NABC hosts.

In addition to approving the 2009 NABC in D. C., Management also proposed Philadelphia at the Marriott, site of this past Spring's NABC, for the summer NABC in 2012. Summer in Philadelphia is so much better than March -- there is no snow and cold in July. One more NABC site that was approved by Executive Committee at the end of 2003 is Seattle for the Fall of 2011 at the Sheraton and Convention Center (where we were in the Fall of 1993).

We approved one more Regional to be added to the schedule. This one is awarded to the USBF to be held in a District of their choice for the purpose of supporting teams in international competition. The District and the USBF must agree on the specifics.

The Club Appreciation Team Games held during the month of October have been approved for another year. We need another year to evaluate this event especially since there are probably clubs that are just now finding out that it exists.

We made some changes in the North American Pairs for next year. At the club level, the sanction fee will be reduced from \$7.00 per table to \$4.00 per table which means that the players will only have to pay an extra \$1.00 instead of \$1.75. Clubs may now hold up to two club qualifying games per flight for each session sanctioned. The requirement that partnerships must include one member of the host unit is rescinded and if there is no Unit final, a four session District final is not required. A multi-unit single-site Unit final prior to the District final may be held. In addition, Management will promote this event more extensively. We hope the above will breathe new life into the event.

A couple of things are going to be experimented with at next summer's NABC in New York City. (1) The game times for the Spingold and Women's Knockout will be 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., except when screens are in use in which case the second session will begin at 4:30 p.m. The Mini-Spingold will be at the normal times of 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. until the round of 8 when screens will be in use. Then game times will be at 10:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (2) On the first Thursday, July 8, there will be a two-session Regionally rated stratified pairs game for

the benefit of the International Fund and the ACBL Educational Foundation. The entry fee for this event is \$35 per person.

In Long Beach the team entries for the Spingold and Women's Knockout were much smaller than usual. This resulted in eliminating about 2/3 of each field in one day. We now have a new schedule of initial round pairings so that it will take two full days to get to that same point.

Donna Compton, who has been running the wonderful child care program at NABCs for the past several years, has been supplementing the program out of her own pocket so that there will be a reasonable per-session cost to the parents. We passed a motion to not only provide space for the program, but to provide a guest room for the coordinator and funds for supplies and administrative expenses.

At the Atlanta regional, the opening knockout, an old-fashioned seeded, not bracketed event that normally draws at least 25 teams which necessitates scheduling five sessions, only drew 16 teams this past Labor Day. For planning purposes, the fourth session was in the afternoon and the fifth and final session was in the evening. Now, when there were only four sessions because of the number that entered, teams in the finals wanted to play in the morning so they could enter a new event at 1:00 p.m. Otherwise, there was nothing for them in the evening. Management would not allow the teams to enter a new event at the 1:00 p.m. time even if they actually played the match in the morning. Anyway, I made a motion to allow finals to be played at a time other than that scheduled if there were fewer sessions required than originally scheduled, and it passed.

Another motion I made did not fare as well. I had a suggestion from Steve Robinson that ACBL should get another 800 number which would be devoted to giving bridge information to non-members in the callers' area. Bridge columnists could then add a sentence in their newspaper columns to call for further information. Others could use it also. It was soundly defeated because the basic premise was that it would be answered by a human, not a machine, and Management did not think it was necessary and didn't want to devote an employee for this task. Also, some pointed out that our members would get wind of this number answered by a real person and use it instead of the MAD line. I thought the only problem would be to find a person knowledgeable enough to answer all the inquiries.

Now Goodwill Committee members who lose their Goodwill pin can get it replaced at no charge.

There is a proposal, which we deferred to Reno, that the stratification of a pair in a stratified pairs game would be determined by the average masterpoint holding of each pair. In addition, the stratification level of a team would be determined by the average masterpoint holding of the top four masterpoint holders on each team.

Special Standing Rules as a supplement to the ACBL Bylaws were established. These rules take a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors to amend, suspend or rescind. The following regulations (already on the books) were designated Standing Rules:

Banning of employment in any capacity to a member of the Board of Directors or a candidate for such position.

Prohibition of employment of former Board of Directors members until at least one year after leaving the Board position.

Forbidding a District Director from serving on a committee hearing an election protest or appeal from his own district or voting on any such appeal that comes before the Board.

Items considered and acted upon by the Board may not be reconsidered at that meeting or the next subsequent meeting until it is first approved for reconsideration by a 2/3 vote.

The Bylaws committee is still at work. I have a wonderful committee, all workers, and we are proposing a complete revision. We plan to have the first run-through with the Board of Directors at the Spring meeting with a report to the Board of Governors. We will then tidy our work up with a formal presentation and vote by the Board of Directors in the summer. Then there will be another vote by the Board in the Fall, a vote by the Board

of Governors in the Spring, and then a presentation to the membership in the summer of 2005 (Atlanta). This is if all goes well. Changing Bylaws is very time-consuming.

And finally, we have two new things for Juniors. (1) A Junior pair event at the summer NABC (the first one will be in New York next summer) which will be a stratified two session event open to any Junior and (2) a Youth Challenge Cup Competition between our Zone and Zone 1 (Europe). The first competition will be at the New York summer NABC. Three teams from Europe will represent Zone One and will play against Zone Two, represented by two teams from the USA and one team from Canada. There will be three session of play and the cup will be awarded to the winning Zone. In this case Youth eligibility for this tournament is defined as being born in 1983 or later. Now if we could just get some more young people playing.