

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings
Orlando NABC, November 2004

Orlando was outstanding and fun. We were at a new location, the largest Marriott in the World, where everything was under one roof. Once again it was proved that a great hotel with wonderful service, good playing conditions and an attractive location will bring bridge players. While we would have had even more players if it wasn't over Thanksgiving, it was a lot better and bigger (third largest Fall NABC ever) than being at two locations not over Thanksgiving.

Hospitality and entertainment provided by the local hosts were superb. Only in Florida do we get free coffee and orange juice continuously. Plus the food and entertainment at night was great.

Some people were concerned that the hotel was too isolated. It was not really possible to walk to another restaurant or even off of hotel property. While the hotel had five good restaurants plus a food court and a Starbucks, there was a concern about the need for transportation to other restaurants. However, between rental cars, taxis and friends with cars, everyone did just fine. The only complaint I heard was someone who said if they had known ahead of time, they would have rented a car.

I did play hookey from bridge the last few days and visit one of my favorite places — Disney World. One of my fellow Board members declared that I was the “biggest kid on the Board” because I do like it so much.

The meetings actually began two days earlier than usual. These two days were exclusively for a five-year planning session. We had an outside facilitator who was good but not very familiar with our organization. I was disappointed that we did not get specific enough and therefore, did not come up with a real plan. Management is to take our broad generalizations and strategies and come back with specifics. This meeting was optional; however, all except three Board members attended and it was undoubtedly too big a group to come up with a detailed plan.

As for the main meetings, the agenda was the smallest I have ever seen for a Fall meeting. The Tournament committee had only **three** items. This is the same committee that often has to meet after dinner to get through all the items before it. In recent years we have been holding conference calls of the committee in advance to get some of the work done so we would not have to have any late meetings. We didn't even have any prolonged “fights” over the budget and the meetings finished early.

Our Units and Districts have been concerned recently about the ACBL insurance coverage, particularly for elected and appointed officials carrying out bridge business and for clubs. We authorized funding a committee of Board, management and ACBL members to hire an insurance consultant or attorney to assist with reviewing current liability insurance policies and investigating purchasing affordable policies for our Districts, Units and clubs. Specifically they will:

1. Review all liability insurance policies available to cover ACBL and its districts and units and report to the BoD specifically on what is covered and not covered by these policies at each level;
2. Investigate avenues for insuring ACBL and all its districts and units and make recommendations for purchasing liability policies that will cover ACBL and all its districts and units;
3. Make recommendations about how ACBL and its districts and units should pay for these policies, with a goal of making the insurance affordable for all levels of our organization;
4. Review all liability insurance policies available to ACBL clubs and make recommendations about a method for offering affordable insurance for clubs;
5. Make a preliminary report to the Board of Directors at the Spring 2005 meeting in Pittsburgh with a final report no later than the Summer 2005 meeting in Atlanta.

We established a Distinguished Employee Award to recognize contributions made by an employee that dramatically change the nature of the Game or the way the League functions. Management has chosen the first recipient, Jim Lopushinsky, who created ACBL Score which certainly improved all aspects of scoring our game.

Some changes have been made to the Hall of Fame for this year. The main thing is that those who get to vote have been reduced from about 800 members to about 150. Some of us think that this is too drastic a cut. It will be reviewed again for the following year. The Hall of Fame Dinner will be on the first Saturday night at the Summer NABC instead of opening Thursday. This is possible because the prime time events in Atlanta will be 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. This should help attendance. I have not missed a Hall of Fame dinner and I think it is one of the best things the ACBL does.

Overall masterpoint awards will be given to all ACBL-Wide games as follows (official hand records must be used)::

Overall: First Place: 20 points Depth of awards: 10 places

District: First Place: 10 points Depth of awards: 5 places

Winners will receive the greater of the nationwide and the district awards, in addition to masterpoints won at the game itself.

The Mini Life Master's Pairs (now called Limited Life Master's Pairs) was made a permanent event on the Summer NABC schedule. There were some who wanted to make it a four-session event. This was defeated and it will be six sessions unless the table count falls below 60. The Mini Blue Ribbon Pairs was purposely a four-session event so it would never be held on Thanksgiving day.

There is an item that reads in total "The Director in Charge fee will be replaced with an across the board increase to Tournament director's session rates." This does not mean that the Director in Charge of a Tournament will no longer receive an additional sum for being in charge. It refers only to how the Tournaments are charged with the funds they remit to Memphis. I was against this because the bigger tournaments will now pay proportionately more money than the smaller tournaments. Guess where the Mid-Atlantic, District 6 and our Units fall. When you add this to the normal increase in Director's fees, the per session sponsor fee will be increased about 9%. To offset the catch-up portion of the raise in Director's fees, the Sanction Fees were reduced by about 4%.

Units will receive an increase in the rebate of full membership dues and Life Master Service fees paid by their members. The Units have not received any portion of a dues increase for many years. The original motion was for 50 cents out of the \$3.00 increase in dues and fees effective January 1, 2005, to go to the Units, but the Board did something even better. Units will receive 11% of the dues and fees, which not only gives the 50 cents now, but it will be automatic with future dues increases.

An ACBL Bridge in Schools Marketing Initiative was approved for 2005 with a \$200,000 budget. A company has been hired with the long term goals to familiarize a new generation of potential players with the game and increase membership and participation among junior players. Immediate plans include launching a BridgeisCool.com website with a 30-second video "Bridge is cool...check it out!" as a promotion to be shown on the Internet and elsewhere, obtaining celebrity endorsements, free media placements and creation of leagues and tournaments for Juniors. Most of this plan aims at getting young people's attention. My problem is that once you have someone's attention, there is no next step. Learning the game and playing the game are missing. There is no mention of schools and getting their approval. Perhaps someone will include that later.

Unit-Wide Championships regulations were consolidated with a few changes. These regulations now read:

Each club within the unit area is eligible to participate in a unit-wide championship that is scheduled on a session for which the club is sanctioned.

When a club is not sanctioned for the same session for which the unit-wide championship is sanctioned, the unit may grant the club permission to participate in the unit-wide championship.

For purposes of unit-wide championships, morning and afternoon sanctioned games are deemed to be the same session when there is not more than a three and one-half (3 1/2) hour time difference between the starting times of the games. If such is the case, permission of the unit to participate is not needed. A minimum of five (5) tables is required at each site in order to participate in the overall masterpoint award for unit-wide games.

A Unit may combine with another Unit to hold a combined Unit-wide game. The game will be charged against the quotas of each Unit.

Unit-wide championships may be conducted as stratified events.

Non-playing directors are encouraged but not required for games having not more than one section of 17 tables or less.

All sites must use identical hands.

The ACBL will recognize and convert masterpoints won in any country outside Zone 2 which has a masterpoint plan. You are limited to converting up to fifty ACBL masterpoints in a single year and they will be red points.

The motion to have a maximum age of 20 for campers attending any Junior camp in our Zone was defeated. Maybe someday when we have an abundance of young members, we can divide camps into over and under 21, but it certainly is not practical now.

The Bylaws had its second reading and was passed unanimously.

And finally, it is my pleasure to announce my Goodwill and Charity Committee appointments. New members of the Goodwill Committee are Barbara Moomy, Anne Duty, Lucy McCoy and Steve Forsythe. Appointed to the Charity committee are Barbara Ames and Carol Guy.