

This is my first report to you in my new role as your District Director. It's a great honor and privilege to represent D25 on the board. Thanks for the unit board members across the district for their overwhelming show of support in the recent contested election. These are challenging times for bridge. I hope I can I will be able to have a positive impact. I'll give you some very brief overall comments about this tournament, our own players' achievements, and summarize as quickly as I can some of the more significant board discussions and motions that were quite extensive and spanned over four very full days of Board of Director's meetings.

Feel free to contact me directly with any questions, comments or concerns that you may have.

The 2016 Spring NABC was held in a spacious complex in Reno, NV that houses three casinos. The playing sites were quite adequate, there was lots of great places to eat late into the night, and for the gamblers, certainly lots of action. Attendance in Reno (11,402 tables) was quite good for a Spring NABC by today's standards but it was still actually 20% lower than the average of the previous four NABC's in this location.

KUDOS!

From start to finish, New England bridge players did extremely well in Reno across all levels of competition. Don't forget that there are games for all skill levels during the 10 day long NABC's. If you have ever been concerned that you might be a bit over your head in competing at the NABC level, think again! The competition across all flights that you will find at our New England regionals is second to none. Just make a habit of frequenting our great regionals – starting with the upcoming Senior Regional and Open Sectional in Hyannis at the end of April, and the summer regional in Nashua, NH in June. You'll find yourself competing with and against some of the finest bridge players not only in New England, but in the entire world! Build up your confidence at our regionals, then make plans to demonstrate your competence at the upcoming 2016 NABC's in Washington, DC in July, and Orlando, FL in November.

Here were the top 10 Masterpoint winners from D25:

1) Allan Graves, Saint Johnsbury, VT	252.57
2) Phyllis Fireman, Chestnut Hill, MA	141.10
3) Arthur Crystal, Fairfield, CT	119.05
4) Walter Lee, Sudbury, MA	112.50
5) Franklin Merblum, Bloomfield, CT	110.78
6) Adam Grossack, Newton, MA	107.14
7) Sheila Gabay, Newton, MA	92.88
8) Zachary Grossack, Newton, MA	83.60
9) Karen McCallum, Exeter, NH	79.06
10) Cenk Tuncok, Amesbury, MA	77.45

Here's a list of those who finished in top 10 of NABC events:

- 1) Allan Graves - Jacoby Open Swiss 1st; Vanderbilt KO Teams, 5/8
- 2) Phyllis Fireman - Silodor Open Pairs 2nd
- 3) Arthur Crystal – IMP Pairs 2nd
- 4) Walter Lee – Kay Platinum Pairs 3rd
- 5) Franklin Merblum – Kay Platinum Pairs 4th
- 6) Karen McCallum & Cenk Tuncok – NAP Flight A 4th
- 7) Richard Zeckhauser, Cambridge, MA – Silodor Open Pairs, 8th
- 8) Paul Cohen, Rutland, VT & Andy Avery, Jamaica, VT – NAP Flight B 4th

The following New England players fared well in 299er and Gold Rush games:

- 1) David & Lorraine Cliff, Wayland, MA (Sunday AM 299er Pairs), 1st
- 2) David & Nicole Gardner, Sudbury, MA (Wed AM 299er Pairs), 2nd
- 3) Alan Peterfreund, Amherst, MA (1st Sat Eve 299er Pairs), 3rd
- 4) Alan Peterfreund & Michael Ramella, Northampton, MA (1st Fri 299er), 4th
- 5) Harold Nordstrom, Reading, MA & Susan Lincoln, Boxford, MA (Tue AM Gold Rush), 3rd

Here's a list of top finishers in regional and sectional rated events:

Bob Bertoni, Lucia Enica, Pat McDevitt, Don and Sondra Caplin, Doug Anderson, Alan Godes, Joshua Kuschner, Faye Marino, Larry Lau, Barry Margolin, Bob L, Geoff Brod & Simon Kantor, Brad Mampe & Steven Willner, Allan Graves, Phyllis Fireman, Debbie Benner and Arthur Crystal, Sheila Gabay, Zach Grossack & Lew Gamerman, Bob Lavin, Richard Zeckhauser, Cenk Tuncok, Susan Collinson, Diana Dozier

The first event of the Reno NABC was the NAP Flight A. The event features one of the toughest cuts of any competition. Only 28 of the original 72 contesting pairs across 25 districts qualified for the finals, but all 3 of our pairs (Kate McCallum-Cenk Tuncok, Adam Grossack-Jim Streisand, and Sheila Gabay-Pat McDevitt) made the cut and McCallum and Tuncok actually finished 4th overall. Later in the week, Vermonters Paul Cohen and Andy Avery finished 4th in the Flight B NAP.

The IMP Pairs immediately followed the NAP A and CBA's Arthur Crystal finished 2nd Overall.

Next was the prestigious Platinum Pairs – unquestionably the toughest pairs game in the world. The final day usually hosts a veritable “Who's Who” of bridge stars from around the world, and this year was no exception. Amazingly enough, however, 6 pairs of the 28 who made it to the 3rd and final day were from our district! EMBA's Walter Lee finished 3rd, and CBA's Frank Merblum finished 4th.

Phyllis Fireman finished 2nd in the Silodar Open Pairs, and Richard Zeckhauser finished 8th. You may have heard of the pair who finished just ahead of Phyllis – Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell!

Towards the end of the tournament, VBA's Allan Graves continued to build upon his already impressive track record of accomplishments with a quarterfinal finish in the Vanderbilt, and a win in the Jacoby Open Swiss.

Congratulations to all! Keep up the great work in DC and Orlando later this year!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ("BOD") MEETING REPORT

Strategic Planning The Board devoted a couple of hours to reviewing our goals as compared to what was agreed upon 3 years ago, reviewing what has changed and what needs to be updated either through adding new goals or reprioritizing current goals. During the formation of the Strategic Plan 3 years ago, the Board adopted a Mission Statement for the ACBL: The mission of the ACBL is to promote and sustain the game of bridge and to serve the bridge-related interests of our Members. At this meeting, we added a Vision Statement to guide and inspire all who work to fulfill our mission: Bridge is regarded as the World's most rewarding and enjoyable card game.

ACBL Board of Directors Priorities

With the guidance of the Strategic Review Committee, the Board agreed on the following summary of its Four Strategic Priorities:

1. Increase Membership Acquisition and Retention.
2. Develop and accelerate tournament director training and recruitment.
3. Build confidence of ACBL members by dealing effectively with cheating and maintaining financial health.
4. Upgrade technology and secure our infrastructure while establishing the future architecture of ACBL Score.

(As you are aware I am passionate about opening new and younger markets because an organization whose average age of new members is 66 and whose overall average membership age is 71 and rising is simply not sustainable. I specifically requested that this be added as a separate objective, but our management is understandably focused on the here and now, and the most cost-effective near term strategy of target marketing the baby boomers. The board supports the management and agreed to keep the priorities as stated, keeping opening new and younger markets as a subset of the first priority.)

Board Composition Committee (“BCC”) In response to recommendations made last year by Bob Hamman and Paul Street, the board authorized the creation of a BCC in Denver and counts 3 BOD members, 2 Board of Governors (“BOG”) members, 2 members-at-large and 2 Management representatives as its members. This committee is chaired by Bob Heller, BOD D7, and it has been chartered to take a hard look at the current composition of the current 25 district structure which includes Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda. Recommendations are expected by our Fall Meetings in Orlando.

Finance - Extensive efforts by management and the board were made to find ways to reduce costs. The Board reviewed a number of cost-cutting measures. All were not approved, but a total of \$163,000 was trimmed from the operating budget that was approved in Denver for 2016. The net impact was a budget that had shown an excess of expenditures over revenues of (\$61,534) being changed to reflect a new budget showing a net \$101,486 excess of revenues over expenses.

- It was voted to allow the Host NABC Committee to decide whether it wanted *either* a Volunteer Dinner (with reduced BOD attendance) held the night before the start *or* \$5000 in cash to recognize its volunteers in any way it wished passed.
- A motion to cut the ACBL President’s budget passed.
- The amount paid by the ACBL under the Cooperative Advertising Program was reduced to 50% from 75% of the cost of the ad with a cap of \$500 reduced from \$750.
- A motion to not subsidize the Board members for stay thru the Board of Governors’ meeting, and a motion to eliminate all organized entertainment for significant others of Board Members failed.
- A capital budget of \$497,000, largely for IT infrastructure improvements, was also approved.

The huge losses in 2014 associated with ACBLScore+ and the termination of the pension plan have weakened our financial reserve. But for the short term, recently approved fee increases to clubs and players and above average revenue expectations for Reno, DC, and Orlando in 2016, the financial picture appears to be manageable for the short term. To help offset the losses due to ACBL Score+ cost overruns, the board approved several revenue generating cost increases in Denver and the following in Reno which as a modification of a Denver motion:

For team events held at an NABC in which all team entrants receive full overall masterpoint awards, entry shall be charged on a per person basis. For team events in which the overall award is calculated as a percentage of a players participation, entry fees shall be charged on a per team basis at a rate equivalent to four players on that team.

Management requested and was granted a one year exemption from any changes in our Masterpoint formulations so as to help allow the IT department to catch up on badly needed repairs to the existing software.

I think we are going to have to keep a very close eye on the progress of some of our technical and administrative program costs over the next several months.

Legal - The Legal Services Review Committee recommended that on August 1, 2016 that the position of League Counsel be eliminated upon Peter Rank's retirement, in favor of hiring a full time In-House Counsel reporting directly to the CEO in Horn Lake.

The standard of proof in cases involving severe discipline was changed from "preponderance of the evidence" to "comfortable satisfaction". This was explained in detail by our lawyers on the board, and it really doesn't sound like it will weaken in any way the rights of the accused or impede that ability of the league to carry out sanctions.

Attorneys will now be permitted in hearings at the Appeals and Charges level, but not in Unit or District hearings.

Management was granted authority to suspend players for a variety of reasons.

NABC+ Appeals ACBL Tournament Directors shall hear and rule upon all appeals filed at North American Bridge Championships. All Conduct and Ethics or Disciplinary matters shall continue to be referred to and heard by the NABC Tournament Committee or to its assignees. The issue of whether top players should be judged by their peers or by professional TDs remains controversial, but the above motion passed with my support. *(This decision was subsequently reviewed by the Board of Governors and upheld.)* It is due to take effect in Washington, DC.

Limited or Invitational Games The motion passed in Denver and submitted for reconsideration by the BOG stating that clubs that run Limited or Invitational games may not convert those to Open games during STaCs passed again. There are ways to comply with the regulations, get your games declared as Open and still participate in the STAC, but the majority of board members felt that this created an unfair competitive disadvantage for our regularly sanctioned open games. If this affects you directly and you have questions and concerns, please contact me directly.

Election Procedures Several detailed and technical changes were made to election procedures. The biggest change is that the Director of Elections is now required to keep the Unit votes confidential in a District Director election. Some smaller units had complained that making the Unit vote public essentially violated the privacy of individual voters.

Newcomer Games - At the discretion of club management, players in newcomer games may ask for advice, refer to notes and have help on any hand.

Junors/Youth A motion to allow for High School Championships was defeated solely because it lacked sufficient details. Nothing is preventing from interested districts in sponsoring their own High School Championships, but an ACBL-wide contest is going to require a lot of planning and preparation. After consulting with many young players and 2016 Volunteer of the Year Debbie Rosenberg, there were some minor changes made to this year's Intercollegiate Championship, but a major rewrite of the Conditions of Contest for 2017 has been requested and the sense of the board is that we would like there to be 8 teams competing in the finals as compared to the 4 that currently are sent to the finals.

NABC KO Conditions of Contest The ACBL KO Conditions of Contest for the Spingold, Vanderbilt, Senior KO, and Wagar Women's KO is modified starting April 1st such that every team member must play at least half the boards of each match, exclusive of playoffs, in order to continue on that team for the remainder of the event. In the case of a 4-way, each match will be treated as a separate match and a contestant must play half of the matches. The team captain may request an exemption.

Soloway KO – A motion to create a new 7 day KO event at the Fall NABC (starting in 2017) was nearly voted down, but at my request, the board voted to table discussion until Washington. I have been appointed to serve as a BOD liaison to the Competition and Conventions Committee (“C&C”) which had unanimously and strongly supported this new event. I have requested supplemental input from C&C with respect to the schedule impact on our Senior KO, other NABC+ events as well as the new 0-10,000 events.

Vulnerability Inserts – A motion for reconsideration by the Board of Governors to require vulnerability inserts in all boards was defeated – primarily due to labor cost and time implications.

Slow Play - A motion for reconsideration by the Board of Governors failed that would have required that after the Director has been called twice for a slow pair and the clock is at 12 minutes or less, a third call about the same pair shall result in an automatic procedural penalty. There was widespread support for enforcement of slow play penalties, but the advice of Head Director Sol Weinstein was that the details of this motion would be difficult, if not impossible to enforce, and other means will be looked into on how to alleviate some of the ongoing slow play concerns. One thing Sol suggested that directors are reviewing is the time that scores are being submitted at the end of each round. For chronically slow N-S players this can provide evidence needed to mandate penalties.

World Bridge Federation (WBF) – Al Levy BOD D24 gave a very informative presentation on the WBF. In light of the financial challenges in the ACBL, there is a lot of concern about the cost to the ACBL membership for supporting the WBF. The ACBL contributes \$1 per member annually to the WBF as dues (approx \$165,000) and sends 5 reps. The CEO attends all World Championships. Al showed what all member countries contribute and their membership. The ACBL does pay a disproportionate

amount in dues, but Al was quick to point out that countries like China contribute literally millions in other ways such as promoting education programs and sponsoring tournaments. There are some strong pros and cons on this topic. *I'd be very interested in hearing from you and your perspective. There was one motion allowing the Presidents of the WBF Zone 2 National Bridge Organizations (CBF and USBF) to propose motions to the BOD. This passed, and I voted for it, but after talking with Howard Weinstein, President of the USBF, I've changed my mind as Howard is opposed to this and he feels that the President of the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) can get motions to the BOD thru any of the 4 Canadians on the board.*

Bridge Integrity Task Force Committee – Recently formed by CEO Hartman, this group has created the ACBL Anti-Cheating Commission (ACC). The ACC will be composed of at least five expert players appointed by the ACBL CEO. The purpose of the ACC will be to provide written opinions to the ACBL National Recorder's Office that evaluate Player Memos and other materials with a goal of identifying collusive cheating, including by developing investigatory protocols, mathematical models, and forensic criteria for reliably differentiating collusive cheating from random or innocent occurrences.

School Bridge Program – Effective immediately, the school bridge program is modified as follows: The ACBL will provide materials needed to run School Bridge lessons under the following guidelines. Students must be under 26 years of age. Students who have graduated from high school must be enrolled full-time at a two year or four-year college. There must be at least four students, and it is recommended that all classes have at least 12+ students. Students may not be charged for teacher's time.

Other Business - There was a review and status update of outstanding Conduct and Appeals hearings by the committee chair, and the following elections, appointment, and ratifications of appointments were made:

ACBL Treasurer - Claire Jones, BOD D18, was elected for a one-year term

Competitions & Conventions Committee - Kit Woolsey, Danny Sprung, Will Ehlers, Jeff Goldsmith, Jeff Meckstroth

Ethical Oversight Committee - Robb Gordon, Eddie Wold, Jon Brissman, Bruce Ferguson, Hendrik Sharples

Disciplinary Committee - William Schreiber, Chris Moll, Chris Benson, Jan Martel

Laws Commission - Peter Boyd, Al Levy, Howard Weinstein

Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Committee Co-Chairs - Sandy Arlinghaus (Midwest), Carol Hamilton (South), Joo-Hee Janicki (Eastern Canada), Janise Saul (Southwest), Vacant* (East) (Sandy DeMartino is the Chair), Janice Anderson (Western Canada) and Marilyn Vilhauer (Northwest)

Last but not least – GNT/NAP/Special Events – This was a very large committee that I was selected to chair (a rather unusual position for a first year board member). I compiled figures from ACBL raw data that reveal that our NAP qualifying games have

been extremely successful, having generated more than 90,000 tables this year – a 126% increase over the past 10 years. Here’s the data for our district:

NAP Club Qualifying Games 2006-15

Distri ct	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	%Chan ge 2006-15
25	1612	1858	1924	2328	2745	2807	3686	3966	3969	4605	185.6%
Total	40559	46422	48342	54107	69502	75153	80586	82922	87507	91840	126.4%

Only motion we had was to change the timing for the disbursement of Grass Roots Funds. Our district will receive a check this month for \$6,300 for last year’s participation in Grass Roots games, and we’ll also start receiving annual checks starting this August. We can and should be able to generate a lot more to help our grass roots games (NAP and GNT) (D7 is getting \$31K this year!). Our biggest opportunity is at our sectionals. Each sectional can designate up to two sessions as Grass Roots games. These cost \$4/table to the sponsors and ultimately to the players, but they provide approximately 40% more masterpoints, and the lion’s share of the revenues generated go directly to our district treasury to help our grass roots programs.

D9 (Florida) is experimenting with face to face Flight B and Flight C NAP qualifying games scored across all clubs with the games played on-line at the clubs via electronic media and with the cooperation of BridgeBaseOnline. Sounds quite interesting! – I’ll keep you posted.

Robert Hartman, ACBL CEO, will be visiting us at our Nashua regional in June. If you have any topics you would like to be made part of a formal discussion agenda, or if you would like me to help arrange a formal personal introduction, please let me know.

Thanks,

Mark