



February 2020 NEWSLETTER



ANNUAL ELECTION

Our annual election is currently in process. Our voting members are selecting two of their peers to serve as Board of Directors members. Ballots, and voting instructions, are currently available at the Club. The voting period will end at the conclusion of the Annual Membership Meeting on January 29th, 2020. **Our By-Laws define voting members as those who have paid their 2020 Membership Dues prior to the Annual Membership Meeting and have played at the Croft House six times since the previous annual meeting.**

There are four nominees for the Board of Director positions, Sherry Buck, Christine Gasperini, Yancey Paschall, and Greg Roberts

If you have not yet voted and wish to, you have until the end of the Annual Membership Meeting on January 29th, 2020. So, hop to it.

- Awarding grants for bridge education programs and camps
- Partnering with the ACBL for digital bridge promotion
- Supporting players at the Collegiate Bridge Bowl

I am pleased that the ACBL has added this “Fund” to its program. This appears to benefit the game of bridge by spreading the word about our great game. Some of the other “Funds” seem to benefit only the bridge elite who do not need our financial support.

Additionally, we will have the following:

Sectional Tournaments at Clubs (ST@C's) – February 3rd, 5th, and 7th – This is your first 2020 opportunity to win silver points at our club.

Dirty Dozen Team Game – Friday, February 14th – Dirty Dozen handicapped format. **Note: Let's try to do a better job following the format. Dirty Dozen is not the same as Baker's Dozen.**

THANK YOU

Thanks for so graciously welcoming the kids from Mead Hall during our Friday game. They are an incredibly well mannered group. I was glad to see so many of us interacting with them. I hope they had a good time and learned a little bit about our great game.

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

The ACBL has added an additional “Fund Month” to its calendar. Just as January was Junior Fund Month, February is now Educational Foundation Fund Month, with \$4.00 per table being donated to the Educational Foundation. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports and promotes bridge education.

Some of the work this organization does include:

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Game Schedule - February 2020		
Monday 1:30pm	Wednesday 1:30pm	Friday 1:30pm
3-Feb ST@C	5-Feb ST@C	7-Feb ST@C
10-Feb Open Pairs	12-Feb Open Pairs	14-Feb Dirty Dozen Teams Handicapped
17-Feb Open Pairs	19-Feb Open Pairs	21-Feb Open Pairs
24-Feb Open Pairs	26-Feb Open Pairs	28-Feb Open Pairs
First Week in February = ST@C Games All Other Games Educational Foundation		

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Our By-Laws require an Annual Membership Meeting in January of each year. This year it will be held on Wednesday, January 29th prior to our usual bridge game. The primary purposes of the meeting are to elect new Board Members and for the current Officers to present to the membership a summation of the "State of the Club." The rest of this article will constitute that summation and is part of the Annual Meeting by reference. Thus, the Annual meeting will consist of questions and/or comments from our members and answers from your current Treasurer and Manager. Immediately after the meeting, the results of the election will be announced.

SUMMARY

Well, thanks to the support of our members, the incredible work of all our volunteers and the leadership of our Board of Directors, we had an amazingly successful year. We reached new highs in membership, table count, revenue, surplus of revenue over expenses, and number of junk food calories consumed.

AND most important to me, we moved forward on our path to nicest bridge club on the planet. That's OK, feel free to snicker, roll your eyes, laugh out loud, or even roll on the floor laughing. BUT I am convinced that our collective efforts to be kind, understanding and non judgmental of behavior we deem eccentric has made this club a very, very nice place to play. We have not had a Zero Tolerance complaint in over three years because even those of us who can be a little edgy at times are making an effort to accept everyone else and dull their own sharp edges.

To me, your efforts in this area are why we have been successful. Are we perfect? HELL NO! I will continue to do my part to work with those who don't get it, and hope you will do your part by not being one of them.

DETAILS

MEMBERSHIP

At the end of 2019, we had 135 members, an increase of about 27% from the prior year. Membership numbers had been somewhat stagnant for a number of years, so this is a significant increase. And, of course, more members mean more tables.

TABLE COUNT

Upon being elected Club Manager four years ago, I set a personal objective of increasing table count by 100 per year. I felt that by making the club friendlier we would increase attendance. The first two years were promising with a total increase of 188 tables. The third year, we had a disappointing increase of only 35 tables.

This past year was beyond my wildest expectations. Total table count for 2019 was 1863, a 20.4% increase of 315.5 tables. In the last four years table count has increased by 538.5 tables, a tad more than 40%.

However, the real question is if this is good, bad, or indifferent. In an attempt to answer that question, I put together an analysis of table count comparables. The chart on the following page compares the year to year percent increase/decrease in table count for all ACBL clubs, for our Unit 160 (South Carolina) and for clubs in our vicinity (70 miles or less). Note: the Total ACBL Clubs percentage is an extrapolation, since the ACBL does not see fit to publish this information in a timely manner, if at all.

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	2016 Over 2015	2017 Over 2016	2018 Over 2017	2019 Over 2018	Four Year Period
Total ACBL	-0.8%	-0.3%	0.2%	-0.5%	-1.5%
Unit 160	-1.5%	-3.0%	1.1%	7.5%	3.9%
Vicinity	-2.2%	-3.0%	-3.5%	1.7%	-6.9%
Us	6.7%	7.0%	2.3%	20.4%	40.7%

As you can see, we are doing really, really well in these comparisons. Also, it is nice to see that our Unit had a very good 2019. In addition, our friends in Columbia are now the largest bridge club in the South Carolina Unit.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

The Club's net assets as of 12/31/19 were about \$42,000, an increase of about \$4,100 from the prior year end. Our funds are invested in six separate laddered Certificates of Deposit with varying terms from 12 to 24 months, totaling about \$36,600. The remainder of our funds is in our checking account and a money market account. All funds are held at Security Federal Bank, as they have been for many years.

The \$4,100 increase in net assets is the amount by which all of the Club's revenue exceeded all of its expenses. The amount attributable to our normal Croft House games was \$1,900 (which includes membership dues of \$1,400), plus \$1,800 from our Sectional Tournament and \$400 in interest income.

Looking solely at our Croft House games, total game fees collected during the year were about \$23,800 and the total expenses for running those games was about \$500 less than that. The major expenses are Food and Parties (30%), ACBL Fees (30%), and Rent (19%). So, basically, we are running our regular games at a slightly above breakeven point.

SECTIONAL TOURNAMENT

This thing continues to be a wild ride. Up one year, down the next and so on and on. After an awful 20% decrease in table count in 2018, we had a 13% increase in 2019. The Tournament Team headed by Greg R and including Phoebe, Sherry, Barb and Jesse did a great job of controlling expenses resulting in a net gain of about \$1800. Despite the unpredictable swings in table count, we have managed to make a profit each year.

Every year about this time we wonder why we have this tournament and give serious thought to giving it a rest. It is a tremendous amount of work for sometimes little or no financial reward. But, the tournament is held to enable our members to earn Silver Points locally, so, as long as we don't lose money we are OK with the financial results.

Yet again, we have decided to have the tournament this year. The dates are September 25th through the 27th and the venue will once again be the Odell Weeks Center. Greg R has agreed to a return engagement as Tournament Chair.

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HOLIDAY PARTY

In April 2016 we did a member opinion survey and one of the questions related to having our annual Holiday Party at a non Croft House venue. While the response was less than favorable, we decided to give it a go anyway. I feel the change has been remarkably successful. Attendance has increased each year with the latest event having 24 tables for bridge and nearly 120 members and guests for dinner. Phoebe and Woodside have combined to make this a really nice seasonal event. We have already reserved Woodside for the same time this year.

OTHER STUFF

Individual and Pro - Am Games – these were a bit of a disappointment this year. For the first time that I am aware of, attendance at these games averaged less than at our regular pair games. Perhaps these games have run their course. Perhaps not. We will continue to have them periodically but will need your input in deciding their ultimate fate.

Team Games - we are now using handicaps in all of our team games, unless disallowed by the ACBL in certain special games. The Perfect 10 format has evolved or devolved (depending on how you see it) to the Dirty Dozen. In my view, the handicaps have leveled the playing field making it easier for our lower masterpoint members to be successful. Not all agree. I get the following complaints: the handicaps are too low; the handicaps are too high (which they purposely are); it's unfair that I have to play against a team with two '4s' on it; it's unfair that I have to play against a team with three or four '1s' on it. Well, I'm pretty sure I can't resolve all those complaints simultaneously, so we'll just have to plod on and live with it.

Partnership Program – thanks to Cathie, we now have an email based system which has been successful in partnering club members for various games. While Cathie has decided to move on from the Partnership Chair position, Joanne has volunteered to take on that responsibility. It is my hope that those of you who avail yourself of this program will be more cooperative than in the past. Please inform Joanne if you get a partner by yourself or of any other changes. It's a hard and time consuming job, and we need to stop making it harder.

Teaching Program – still don't have one. Nobody seems to care. Nuff said.

Thank You – I would like to thank all of our volunteers who have served our club during the last year. First, our Board Members: Lauren, Cathie, Sedley, Phyllis P, Phoebe, Past Manager Steve, and Treasurer Mike. Game Directors: Alan, Jay J, Sedley and Jesse, Steve, and Lauren. Our incredibly efficient Set Up Team: Pat B, Betsy, Shela, Sara, and Marc with assists from many others when needed.

GAME DIRECTORS MEETING REPORT

On Friday, January 17 there was a meeting of all active Game Directors (all of whom were present) to discuss where we are with respect to running our games in compliance with the Rules of Duplicate Bridge while simultaneously fostering a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. This, by the way, is not that easy given the complexity of the laws and the competitiveness of the players.

While I think we are doing pretty well, there is room for improvement. The most important responsibility of the Game Director is to ensure that all irregularities are resolved in the fairest way possible. It is equally important that the Game Directors educate our players about the rules in general, the purpose of the rules, and the reasons for their own rulings. Some of the rules seem to make little sense and be overly punitive. That's because the punitive laws are designed to thwart unethical actions. The rest of the laws are designed to allow an actual bridge result to occur in spite of the irregularity.

We discussed the slow play issue. While we don't have a big problem in this area, there is nothing that can disrupt a bridge movement more than slow play. Our biggest problem area is people starting a board after the two minute warning. Since asking our members not to do this has had little effect, the Game Directors will try to be more vigilant about monitoring this and issuing mandatory ¼ board procedural penalties to both pairs. The penalty is not negotiable, so don't waste your breath arguing about it.

Future editions of this newsletter will contain articles explaining some of the more important Rules of Duplicate Bridge and how they affect your actions as a player.

