

## APRIL NEWSLETTER

### **SPRING IS IN THE AIR - BRIDGE HAS COME ALIVE!!**

It is great to see so many games growing! Happy to see both *new and "old" faces!*

**Reminder** – Jerry Helms Seminar – Thursday, April 25 – 9 a.m-4:30p.m – **BRIDGE IN THE REAL WORLD**. Registration - \$125 if received by April 10. Call Kathy Wholey for more info – 704-756-0857.

### **CONGRATULATIONS** – New Plateaus

**Junior Masters** – Margaret Andress, Kimberly Bassett, Robert Fisher, Diane Hickey, Anita Kraynik, Carolyn Russell, Sandy Wyckoff

**Club Masters**- Robert Carraway, Karen Charles, Douglas Knowlton, Mrs Shug Lockett, Joseph Manter, Jennifer Miralia, Lisa Parrish, Colleen Penner

**Sectional Masters** – Sue Busby, Robert Carraro

**Regional Masters** – Toni Evans, Margaret Smith, Rick Welsh

**NABC Masters** – Ben Hawfield, Jan Loring, Arvil Price

**Advanced NABC Master** – Molly McGill

**Gold Life Master** – Art Friday

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS** – Jackie Key has moved to Brookdale Carriage Club, an assisted living facility. I know she would love to hear from you – 5800 Old Providence Rd, Charlotte 28226. We have really missed her – as she has us!!

**LIBRARY NEWS** –The Charlotte Bridge Club has placed the following book in memory of Dan McDonough – Larry Teaches Modern Bidding III by Larry Cohen

**MEMBER ADDRESSES** – Are you having difficulties receiving communications from the ACBL or the Charlotte Bridge Association? You may need to update your contact info. There are 3 ways to do this.

1. Preferred method via MYACBL: Go to <https://login.acbl.org/login>, login with your ACBL user name/password, then click on the "Update Info" button. You will be brought 'update info dashboard'. Click on "Update My Contact Information". From this 'update-info' screen, you can edit your personal info including email and phone. When done, click on the "Submit" button. You can then logout.
2. Onto a paper on a bulletin board at the club - Greg will set up a physical copy of an excel file and attach to the bulletin board at the club. Put your name and any updated email/phone info on it.
3. Send Greg ([gnblnc150@gmail.com](mailto:gnblnc150@gmail.com)) an email with your updated info

**INTERESTING BRIDGE LETTER:** Please read the attached letter about Bridge by Dave Heymann and Greg LeBlanc.



Bridge is dying out . . . or is it?  
By Dave Heymann and Greg LeBlanc

When I joined the Charlotte Bridge Association (CBA) in August of 2022, I feared Bridge was a dying game. I had just turned 65 and yet most of the players appeared to be older than me. My parents forced my brother and me to learn bridge in our teens so they would have a foursome in the house. I fell in love with Bridge but for the next 50 years I only played when visiting family.

Now that my wife and I finally had time to learn duplicate bridge and to start playing routinely, it seemed an existential crisis was looming for the game. In the 1940s, 44% of US households had at least one family member who was a contract bridge player. After decades of declining interest, Bridge saw slight upticks in activity when famous players like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet made the news. But then the Zombie Apocalypse hit in March of 2020 and face-to-face bridge in Charlotte was almost left for dead. Online bridge play surged during the pandemic and many players permanently moved away from bridge center games. It didn't help that the ACBL was forced to begin treating online games the same as club games and award master points. While this was clearly the correct move, I lament the loss of in-person players.

Mecklenburg County, which owns the club building, had its own financial crisis during the pandemic and began charging us rent at a high level versus allowing us to use the space at no charge as we always had. With few players and high expenses, the club was in financial peril.

Bridge was kept alive in Charlotte thanks to the efforts of our Club President at the time, Jack McMahan, and several volunteers. Working hard to publicize the games and to find partners for players, these rescue workers took bridge which had been on life support and began to grow the number of weekly tables. Today, the club is financially sound and while not quite at the peak play level of 2019, it is moving in the right direction.

All the while, the remaining players have been getting older . . . which people say is better than the alternative but those folks have never tried the alternative. For any organization or activity to survive, it needs a constant influx of new blood.

And this is where the true saviors enter our story. Colleen McMahan began teaching bridge classes for players who are completely new to the game. Colleen is a long-time member of the CBA and a top player. She is always encouraging players to come to our in-person games. Colleen has a passion for the game that inspires her students. If you are an experienced player, try to remember back to when you had never even heard of the game. Imagine how difficult it is for Colleen to bring people on board without them throwing up their hands in disgust at how complicated duplicate is for newbies.

Nonetheless, her classes are at capacity and receive rave reviews.

Thanks to Colleen's efforts, we are getting a large number of tables with new players each week joining us at the club. This has bolstered the club's finances and most importantly it is bringing younger players to the game.

Another CBA heroine in the same vein is Pam Barry. While Pam has stopped teaching, every Wednesday Pam runs a "Bridge with Friends" game that offers a low-pressure environment for those who don't have hundreds of masterpoints. They might have been hesitant to play against our club sharks, but BWF gave them a safe environment to improve their skills. This has allowed Pam to have 25 to 30 tables each week, which is our biggest day of bridge. Jack also created his own themed game with Brownies and Bridge. Karen doesn't let me eat the brownies, but I can smell them throughout the game. It is not easy to get players to show up on a sunny Saturday, but baking ending up being the answer.

It isn't just new blood that is required to keep bridge growing. We need to hang on to our existing players. That is where our other instructors have stepped up.

Wally Marcin and Rhea Caldwell provide individual and small group instruction mostly for beginners and advanced beginners. Wally has been doing this for a very long time. These Bridge evangelists also offer playing lessons. Len Case offers the same types of instruction but geared to our intermediate players. Anne Neal offers online lessons and Steve Hamburg is preparing to start a new Introduction to Bridge class on April 17<sup>th</sup>.

We also have players who will play but don't have a partner. Colleen has taken responsibility for making sure that anyone who wants to play is paired up with another member.

Each of these teachers receive a lot of gratitude from their students, but everyone who wants bridge to survive should be applauding the efforts of these Bridge missionaries. We may never get back to the 1940's era of bridge supremacy, but so long as the CBA stays vibrant, we will always have a place to play our favorite game.