

Shoemaker to focus on communication

Cindy Shoemaker has been elected ACBL president. She was unopposed. Like her predecessor, Margot Hennings, she served as the vice president and chair of the Governance Committee before taking the helm.

Shoemaker joined the ACBL in 2011 and accomplished much in a short time. She joined the Board in 2020, representing District 17 (Southwest U.S.). Having focused more on organizing bridge than playing, she has around 1000 masterpoints – the least on the Board.

“I’m a newer player; I represent the majority of ACBL membership,” Shoemaker said. “I came in through the unit, supporting clubs. I understand the ecosystem, the infrastructure. I don’t feel like I’m the



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CINDY !**

New president

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status quo. I’m the ‘new quo.’”

She urges other newer players to follow her example and get involved. “It’s not about how many masterpoints you have. It’s about love of the game and taking the skills you have and applying them for the good of bridge. I think we’ll get more volunteers if people realize that.”

It was in San Francisco in 2019 that Shoemaker attended her first meeting, observing, as newly elected members typically do, and in San Francisco that she was elected president.

Her focus, she said, will be on communication and the Board’s strategic priorities.

“I want to use my communications and marketing expertise to build on the organization’s successes, to keep the momentum going. I think that’s most exciting.”

As a result of leading a Communications Task Force four years ago, Shoemaker took responsibility for writing the National Board Report, which Board members use to communicate with their constituents. A variation of it appears as the Board News column that appears in the March, June and October issues of the Bridge Bulletin. “It’s been a great communication vehicle. It shows members what the Board is working on.”

She’s interested in facilitating more discussion at Board meetings. Key topics for discussion are the strategic priorities defined in the ACBL’s mission statement: membership growth and retention, financial stability, enhancing IT capabilities, balancing online and in-person bridge and measurement to evaluate the success of current programs.

“It’s very difficult to grow bridge,” Shoemaker said. “We need to shore up retention. From a marketing perspective, it’s more cost-effective to retain than to recruit new members.”

It’s hard to see the positive impact

programs that bring in new members are having if the organization loses them just as quickly, she noted. “The journey to earning masterpoints and advancing in rank is often slow and difficult to navigate. It’s important for players to achieve their goals and celebrate their achievements.”

Shoemaker is excited to work with Executive Director Bronia Jenkins and address these issues with her colleagues.

“What motivates me is the people: the community, the stakeholders. This is such a special community. I have put a lot of my game on hold so I can do as much as I can for bridge. I truly enjoy my colleagues. I see their dedication, how hard they work. It’s so evident in what we’ve accomplished.”

Growing up in Chicago, Shoemaker dreamed of becoming a journalist, and served as editor of her high school paper. She graduated from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State and was hired by the Mesa Tribune, the third-largest

newspaper in Arizona. But the low pay left her needing additional work, compromising the attention and commitment the position demanded. She realized it wasn’t going to work out.

Reluctantly giving on her newspaper dream, she returned to Chicago, becoming an editor at a trade publication in bank management. She still needed two side jobs in retail to make ends meet, but at least that was feasible with a more regular schedule.

The position at the bank magazine proved to be invaluable, offering versatility and exposure to all facets of the publishing process, notably marketing. She went on to become marketing director of a publishing company. That paid the bills, and she felt even richer for her struggles as a young person.

“I was working three jobs. I’m proud of that,” she said. “It’s given me confidence. I can persevere.”

Later, she moved to Colorado and then back to Arizona in 2009.

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