

# Mr. Friendly

North Carolina's Eldon Clayman is Goodwill Member of the Year.

"I just try to get people to come and play and have a good time. To socialize. That's what cards are for," says Eldon Clayman, the 2017 Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year. The ACBL committee selected Clayman, 74, for his outstanding work in North Carolina for the past 25 years.

Players from District 7 know how instrumental Eldon has been to the popularity bridge in the area. Together with his wife, Susie Clayman, who died in 2014, the two transformed western North Carolina into a vibrant club and tournament bridge scene.

"When Eldon and Susie Clayman moved to North Carolina in 1992, it was definitely Michigan's loss," said Bill Wisdom, a prominent Tar Heel player and member of the national Goodwill Committee. "Eldon and Susie are well known and well respected for their people skills. They leave an impression on you because they're so friendly."

Fellow Goodwill Committee member Richard Brown of Easley SC agrees. "Eldon has done as much for Goodwill and the promotion of the game as anyone."

In addition to running a weekly club game from their home in Valdese NC, they ran a game in nearby Hickory twice a week. And because of their hard work, there are



now several sectional tournaments annually in the area, whereas there were none prior to their arrival.

Wisdom says, "They began running games in 1993 and hosted their first sectional in 1994. At that time, they had 107 tables. The word soon spread and people flooded to their tournaments. For many years, they hosted four annual tournaments in Morganton NC that totaled more than 1300 tables.

"Susie greatly encouraged grassroots players who always felt welcome at the tournaments. She passed away a few years ago, but Eldon carries on the tradition. He sits at the front of the room with the director who is selling entries. After welcoming everyone, many by name, Eldon offers them pocket calendars and pencils advertising upcoming tournaments. He takes and posts pictures of the winners, and there are newspaper articles from surrounding areas with pictures of bridge players. He thrives on the sociability, and his enthusiasm is infectious."

Eldon has held a wide variety of leadership positions with District 7 and the Mid-Atlantic Bridge Conference. He is best known to many, however, for his role as partnership chair at most District 7 tournaments for the past two decades, often filling in as a partner for players who don't have one.

The Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Committee will officially award Eldon Clayman the Goodwill Member of the Year honor at its meeting at the Spring 2017 NABC in Kansas City.

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