

## John Blackwell

I wish to join the board of The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club because I have come to believe that the club is missing significant opportunities to benefit its members.

At University College London (ranked #22 worldwide) I more or less majored in rubber bridge, which helped to pay my way. I only just managed honors in my math degree. However, the math department gave all math majors a two-week computer programming course, and I was hooked. For thirty years, I ran a software company, but this required too much travel to maintain a bridge partnership, so I only restarted bridge just before I retired to TV. I only knew about TV and its bridge club because a good friend had moved here.

I have long been puzzled by the fact that the club seems almost invisible in TV. Since my wife became president of her club she has nearly doubled membership, mainly by working with The Villages administration, and getting regular articles in The Village Sun.

Every year, thousands of ACBL members retire, wondering what to do with the rest of their lives. Perhaps 10% of these would choose to move to TV if they knew about it, including the fact that we have the second-largest ACBL club in the country. Would TV like to sell hundreds of extra homes every year, now that a recession is looming and sales will slow to an unknown degree? Would the club like hundreds of new members, now that each ACBL member plays fewer F2F games? I can't believe there is no basis for cooperation here.

The most obvious way for such cooperation to start would be for TV to sponsor teams to play in the ACBL Grand National Teams (GNT). If the team wore identical TV shirts, that alone would prompt questions. I think it highly probable that at least one TV real estate agent is married to a bridge player who would be delighted to go to the GNT events while the agent answered questions about TV.

TV hosts two sectionals each year. Does TV know how many houses they could sell by marketing their existing Lifestyle Preview Program to sectional attendees? They, and we, could market the sectionals at the GNT events.

COVID has damaged all bridge clubs, including ours. I believe my suggestions could easily restore ours to its former glory and beyond. Right now, the club is struggling to offer a variety of games to an insufficient membership, and losing money as a result. All too soon, unless something is done, the reserves will run out and the club will close. Can we reach out to the various 'social' bridge clubs and help people 'graduate' to 'real' bridge?

The current board has done a great job of guiding the club through the COVID crisis. The time has come for a wider vision to make our club #1 in the world, offering its members an ever-wider range of well-attended games, profitable without a price increase. Planning is what I am good at, and I would like to use my thirty years experience running my own business to enhance the club.

Merle Erlich

I am a native Chicagoan. I was born in the city and raised in the suburbs. I attended the University of Illinois where I met my husband. We married and raised our three children in the western suburbs of Chicago. . I taught middle and high school history and eventually became an elementary school principal.

Five years into retirement Barry and I took a six week rental in The Villages to see if this was a place where we could winter and escape the brutal Chicagoland winters. In addition to the myriad of inside and outdoor activities, we discovered that The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club offered weekly, even daily games at both of our playing levels. The Monday and Thursday night opportunities for lessons (and finding partners) followed by limited sanctioned play were my favorites. I still participate in the classes our club offers. Perhaps these learning together experiences have produced the comradery that I continue to enjoy now six years later at my Club games. During the pandemic period and even now, the availability of online Club games keeps many of us in touch, whether or not we are in town.

I accept the invitation to be considered for the Board of Directors position because I am ready to give more of my own time, energy, and expertise to continue the good work of those who came before. I am especially interested in the continuation of educational opportunities and to further developing a sense of community within the club.

Cathy Fasingbauer

I'm Cathy Fashingbauer and moved to The Villages this year to play competitive bridge as part of my retirement plan. I started playing bridge in 1993 as a complete novice. The internet was fairly new, and I researched bridge clubs and wanted to play with absolute no understanding of the word "Duplicate."

Bob, my husband, picked me up at the bridge table after a frustrating session and asked me to play. He taught me negative doubles and Jacoby transfers and how to give count. We were married in 1998 and still play bridge together, as amazing as some people may find that not to be possible.

I worked full time for 32 years (1987-2021) and retired from the Illinois State Police as Laboratory Director from the Rockford Forensic Science Laboratory. In 2010, Bob and I sent our 11 year old daughter, Ellie, to bridge camp and then took a family vacation to the New Orleans National tournament. She has gone on to play with the US juniors and was part of that program for 6 years. My son, Robert, learned to play bridge at the same camp and he played in two YNABC events., but he never developed a real interest for the game.

The 2015 summer national was held in Chicago, where I served as the YNABC coordinator responsible for organizing adult supervision, over 25 volunteers 2x a day for 3 days, one for each table to keep the game moving during the three day event. I also had to find a guest speaker for the kids during the break.

Becoming a board member would allow me to share my experiences and bring new perspective to the board with a broad range of knowledge. Since my beginnings, I have become a solid bridge player. I am looking forward to bringing new energy to the board, should I become the selected candidate.

## Bob Matthews

Three very different careers, one as the Head of Math in one of the top ten schools in England; one as a Military Officer where I rose to the command of a large Joint Service Unit; and one as a commercial pilot, flying for a Medivac Corporation, all gave me multiple opportunities to experience how best to use resources for the common good and to listen to, and take account of as many different needs as possible.

I tried to bring those experiences to the table when I was last elected to serve on the Board of the VDBC, where I spent 7 years, several of those as the Club's President.

Although I am currently serving the club in the capacity of its Head Director, (again a position I feel very privileged to hold), I also wish to return to the Board as a voting member if you will support my nomination.

Our club is rebuilding and re-structuring and has many diverse factors that affect how it will move on into the future. As such, I would like to be able to bring back into play my past experience and be allowed to represent you as one of those responsible for the decision-making processes that will determine where we go next.

No one can promise to satisfy the requests, or needs, of every faction in such a complex organization as we are, all at the same time. I certainly would never try to. But if elected I *will* promise to do my very best to see that each different voice is at least heard and taken into account. And I will continue, as I hope my track record shows I have done so far, to serve to the best of my ability for the betterment and ongoing development of our club as a whole, and for each of you, its members.

Bobbie Meyers

I have been a member of the Villages Duplicate Bridge Club for 10 years and a member of the ACBL for 30+ years. During the last 10 years, I have observed the policies under which our club operates. Our board works very hard, and I would like to be a part of it. My goal, if elected, is to listen to the concerns and suggestions of the members and discuss them at the board meetings. My hope is that together we can bring improvements that will help our club to grow in a manner that is acceptable to the membership. I feel we have a great club, and I hope to see it become even better.

### Jim O'Brien

I am a certified public accountant with over 40 years of experience in public accounting. While I am new to The Villages, I am not new to bridge administration. Prior to moving to The Villages in December, 2021, I had been involved in the preparation of financial statements and the Return of Organizations Exempt from Income Tax for both Unit 222 (southeastern Wisconsin) and the former ACBL District 13 (Chicago, Wisconsin, and Upper Michigan) for over twenty (20) years. My wife, Sandy, and I ran the North American Pairs (NAP) games for ACBL District 13 for five (5) years. We also ran and directed a club game in Hartford, WI for ten (10) years.

I have played and enjoyed bridge for most of my adult life. It is a wonderful and fascinating game that one can never expect to completely master. There is always room for improvement. While it may be a frustrating game at times, it is never boring. One of the major attractions of The Villages for me was the vibrant bridge community. The Board of Directors has a very important role to play in fostering this vibrant community. If the bridge community is to flourish, the Board must be responsive to the needs and desires of all members of the bridge community, no matter the playing level of the member. The most important goal of the Board should be to promote the game of bridge and to provide an environment that is comfortable and inviting for all participants.

I have played quite a bit of bridge since moving to The Villages. I have been amazed at how friendly the players are with each other, particularly with players new to The Villages. I have met a lot of wonderful friends in the face-to-face games. I would like to work together with the other Board members to continue to promote the game of bridge that provides so much entertainment for its participants.

Charlie Showalter

MS Health Physics, University of Arkansas. 30 year career as Commissioned Officer, United States Public Health Service (retired as Capt, O-6). Five years as Senior Director, Government Relations, American College of Radiology.

Started playing bridge in the 60's in college. Moved on to duplicate in the late 60's. Have played at all levels up to and including national championships. Have served as president of the Villages Duplicate Bridge Club 3 times. Have served 3 full and 2 partial terms on the Board. Have been involved in many changes in the club that has seen it evolve to its current status. Want to see continued growth that serves all categories of membership.

Vern Sikora

My name is Vern Sikora, and I am both surprised and honored to be nominated to run for the Board of Directors for our bridge club.

Born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, I spent most of my career as a homebuilder and developer, as well as a small business owner, in northwest Indiana. During that time I had the experiences of serving on various leadership committees and boards, including my local homebuilders association, my community's girls' softball league, and the Rotary Club at both the local and district levels.

I moved to The Villages fulltime in 2015 and began playing bridge in 2017, and I joined our duplicate bridge club in 2018. If elected to the Board, I promise to help our club continue to be one of the best clubs in the nation and represent ALL players at ALL levels to the best of my ability. I appreciate your consideration.



## Doug Smith

Bridge is a wonderful, challenging game, and as we get older, we all need to keep mentally, socially and physically active to stave off the less pleasant effects of aging.

I played a little duplicate bridge back in the seventies, then didn't play any for over forty years, until I came to The Villages. I re-joined ACBL and started playing in 2016 with a grand total of 16 masterpoints to my name. I attended a lot of classes, and Dean always had a short lesson at the start of each game. These were important to learning how to play the game better. The Villages is also strategically located with drivable Sectional and Regional games nearby for chances to get silver, red and gold points. Because I was fortunate enough to team up with a number of players and mentors much better than I, and because TVDBC has so many opportunities to play, I'm happy to say I've reached Silver Life Master, and look forward to many more games ahead.

I'll never reach the exalted levels of some of our best players, but I can still have fun and enjoy the game. That is due to all the LIMITED games available to us. I firmly believe that the future of the club is in bringing new players into the club, and in helping all the existing players develop and grow. It is essential to continue to offer a wide range of LIMITED games at all levels so players will not be intimidated and will have fun coming to our games. If elected to the Board, I will try to help the club grow and prosper to provide the same opportunities to others as I have had.

Nancy Turner

I was elected to the board in December 2019. We were a huge club getting ready to expand down south of 44 and then the pandemic happened. To say the past 3 years have been nothing like I expected would be quite the understatement. It's been tough. We did our best to keep the club going through difficult times. We are still facing challenges trying to get the right mix of face to face games up and running. And where does BBO fit in? So why do I want to keep doing this?

I moved here in 2016 with about 12 master points I had earned 30 years ago in graduate school. I hadn't played since but always wanted to get back into it someday. I retired here for horse country but picked The Villages over Ocala for the bridge club. I took Janet's beginner/refresher course and started playing in the limited games. I took as many classes as I could fit in and played in all our limited games. It just seemed like there weren't enough of them. I eventually started going to tournaments and became a Life Master. I really believe playing in the limited games helped me build and practice my skills set. It was harder 30 years ago. Beginners like me only had the club regular game and it was all levels. The experts continually beat the stuffing out of us. I really think my success here has been due to our education program and the availability of limited MP games. Now I play in many open games but still enjoy the limited games I'm eligible for. It should be a choice, after all we are retired and want to enjoy ourselves. I have been a strong advocate for limited games at all levels. So two things I really cared about, the education program and the limited games still need support.

During the pandemic I played quite a bit on BBO club games. It was a way to keep the club together and going strong financially. I still enjoy playing the club BBO games. The evening games were especially nice because they are over fairly early. I have to get up early to get to Ocala and get my horse ridden before we both melt. It was also a great way to play with snowbird partners. The board has been wrestling with the role of BBO moving forward. As a board member who enjoys face to face and BBO club games I feel the need to advocate for both.

The past 3 years have been more of a challenge than anyone could have anticipated but they were also good training for tough times. If you vote for me again I will continue to be an advocate for a mix of open and limited games as well as BBO club games. I know we can't please everyone but we can try, after all the club belongs to all of us.