



The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club Member News

December, 2025

Note from the Editor: Next month we'd like to do an article on famous people our members have met. If you've met a famous person, let us know, and we'll include your story. We wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season!

Bruce Thiher By Nancy Tessier



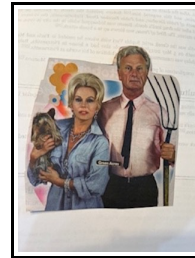
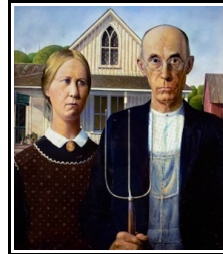
Bruce is well known as a director who always brings delicious brownies to his game. But there is much more behind this kind gentleman. At one time he lived in the well-known white house pictured in the famous 1930 painting by Grant Wood known as "American Gothic". He was postmaster in Iowa and they needed a resident for the home. Later, after several serious medical conditions, Bruce visited Columbia. He became enamored by the artwork and sculpture of well-known artist Fernando Bolero who featured large (OK, fat) people. Bruce had gained some weight as a result of medical care. And he met Rodrigo, a guide in the city. They are now life-long partners and visit Columbia frequently. He learned of The Villages after visiting a friend in Okinawa, Japan.

P.S. On 11/7 our lucky man hit a grand slam jackpot on the Golden Spike slot machine at Hardrock, Tampa. The IRS was pleased to learn of his \$10,000 win for a \$1.50 bet. Congratulations!

Notes on the painting "American Gothic":

The woman in the painting was Wood's sister, Nan, and the man, the family

dentist, Byron McKeeby. Grant Wood was driving through Iowa for “inspiration” when he saw the Dibble House. It is very vertical in nature, associated with Gothic architecture (three- pronged pitchfork, pointed windows, steeped roof and structure of the man’s face). The painting soon became a depiction of the Great Depression. Wood was quoted as saying “All the good ideas I’ve ever had came to me while I was milking a cow”.



American Gothic and a Parody from Green Acres

Norma Wilk and Chris Peters, A Sister Act **By Nancy Tessier**



You may have seen them together at the bridge table.

Chris moved from Sarasota after Norma suggested the change. Being a widow for five years with children in Kansas and California, she thought it was a great idea. She took up bridge in 1998 to socialize and recently obtained her Sapphire Life Master rating (Congratulations to you on this great achievement).

Chris’s husband Walter owned a plane and would fly her to tournaments. Her beloved cat Nellie brings her joy and even walks on a leash. Chris was responsible for opening (hiring and training) K-mart stores and worked with the first location in Garden city Michigan in 1962. She also worked for a State Senator and met Ronald Reagan at a fundraiser in Michigan where the family grew up.



Norma is 8 years younger than Chris, the youngest of four siblings. She has one child in Pittsburgh with 20 month old grandson Ewan. She travelled across Europe for six years working as a nurse. She tells us Greece was her favorite, with the beautiful islands. After visting a friend here, Norma moved to The Villages , and the rest of the siblings moved here also. Of the original four siblings, all lived nearby in Florida until earlier this year when two sadly passed away.

Alzheimer's Fundraiser

By Nancy Turner

We had a spooktacular start to our Alzheimer Association fund raising. A huge thanks to my fellow committee members - Merle Erlich, Donna Brown, Russ Pearly and Wanda Rainbolt

Our events are all run by volunteers and we couldn't do it without them. Many have helped at multiple fund raisers. Thank you!

Laurie Igjel
Linda Briggs
Anita Piotrowski
Bonnie and Don Orris
Marie and Nick Figueiredo
Jan Masterson and Maury Fjestad

We had 51 tables of bridge for \$1029
We had raffle and cash donations of \$1246
We had checks for \$2125
Grand total of \$4391!

Thank you to all who came, played and donated.

Bridge Tournaments

By Jennie Cleary

Daytona Beach Regional

In November, many of our members checked out the Regional bridge tournament in Daytona Beach. If you've never been to that tournament, its a nice one to go to. The hotel is very nice, right on the beach. We were fortunate to have some comfortable warm nights while we were there. The hotel gives out complimentary S'more kits, and we noticed quite a few bridge players toasting marshmallows for S'mores on the fire pits at the rear of the hotel after dinner, overlooking the ocean. Down the road in Ponce Inlet, there are some fun seafood restaurants that offer fresh fish right off the boat if you're looking for something other than hotel food. Results of the tournament can be found here: <https://live.acbl.org/events/2511106>



Bill Cleary at Ponce Inlet



Virginia Stayman roasting marshmallows

The Villages NLM Gold Regional and Open Silver Sectional

Our recent Regional/Sectional tournament was a rousing success, with 328 tables in play. There were 388 players who earned 1,270 masterpoints. A list of NLM Regional winners can be found at this link:

<https://web2.acbl.org/tournaments/results/2025/11/2511112.htm>

A list of Sectional winners can be found at this link:

<https://live.acbl.org/tournament-overalls/2511330>

Kudos to Donna Brown, tournament chair; Merle Erlich, co-chair; Nancy Turner and Wanda Jean Rainbolt who organized snacks, Monday lunch, and treats. On behalf of the VDBC Board of Directors, Thank you volunteers! From set up to take down, and everything in between, you pitched in to help make this tournament an overwhelming success!

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Sandy Ainsworth | Gail Becker | Steve Becker | Gloria Bennett |
| Gary Bowron | Karen Brennan | Linda Briggs | Don Broughton |
| Deb Brunoehler | Phil Brunoehler | Sarah Bush | Cindy Butts |
| Dave Butts | Bill Carignan | Bill Cleary | Jennie Cleary |
| Vicki Collins | Wilson Day | Linda Dodds | Mary Dudley |
| Barry Erlich | Jim Ewald | Jim Fangman | Carol Fangman |
| Jay Force | Greg Frank | Cynthia Freeman | Maury Fjestad |
| Susan Garbarino | Jon Greenspan | Rich Higgins | Pat Holmes |
| Laurie Igiel | Jean Knight | Sharon Kruger | Carol Leslie |
| Jan Masterson | Ann McClelland | Ken McPeak | Harry Messenheimer |
| Patrick Mitchell | Jim O'Brien | Bob Paul | Sally Paul |
| Adele Pearly | Russ Pearly | Anita Piotrowski | Linda Rainey |
| Becky Riehl | Eileen Rush | Margaret Sarno | Marilyn Schmidt |
| Scott Scobell | Andy Sloan | Ruth Srulevitch | Larry Sumner |
| Nancy Tessier | Tom Tessier | Laura Lee Testroet | Bruce Thiher |
| Neil Timm | Mike Tufariello | Nelly Tufariello | Dona Weber |
| Norma Wilk | Dave Winer | Marguerite Winer | Jon Williams |
| Andrea Wolff | Phil Wolff | Gwen Wright | |

Book Review - "Strangers in Time" by David Baldacci

By Buchanan

I love to receive recommendations from other readers. One, it makes my job easier. Secondly, I have trouble finding enough good books to report on.

Today's book is an excellent book. It was recommended to me by a woman in The Villages, and she asked that I not use her name, OK, but it was a good recommendation.

The book is "Strangers in Time" by David Baldacci. I believe I told you I have an Excel file on my computer, and I have over a thousand books that I've read in the past two plus decades. Twenty-five of these are by Baldacci. Strangers in Time is

the best one of his that I've read.

The book takes place in London during World War Two. There are three major characters; Charlie Matter, a fourteen year old orphan who is basically a street urchin, Molly Wakefield, a homeless fifteen year old from a well-to-do family but whose parents have disappeared and are presumed dead, and Ignatius Oliver, who runs a small out-of-the-way bookstore in London.

Much of the book is about bombing of London, with many deaths described. Gruesome. Charlie and Molly end up being taken under the wing of Oliver. Lots of other stuff, including a German spy. A good read!!

Day Tours

By Mary Jo Johnson

Central Florida has many opportunities for day trip excursions. Mary Jo Johnson and Dale Angione recently had a whirlwind week filled with 3 of them.

One was through Workman Transportation....a "FOODIE" tour with a walk through the murals in St. Petersburg. Traffic was light so the bus arrived early which allowed for some extra time at the pier, the Vinoy Hotel and the Museum. Food stops began with the 4th Street Shrimp Store where participants enjoyed shrimp cocktail and a cup of yummy New England Clam Chowder. The next stop was the Red Mesa Mercado for a beef empanada. The third restaurant was Pacific Counter for a Poke bowl (think Island Fin at Brownwood Town Square) followed by Cafe Sorrento where we were served a mini cannoli. After all that food a walk to see the murals was much appreciated. The city is famous for over 600 murals that adorn the walls of buildings. This all began about a decade ago where local officials loosened the ban on street art embracing local artists and their visions. There is even an annual mural festival each fall (SHINE St Pete Mural Festival). The last stop was on our way home at Massaro's Zagara Gelato where we got a cup of gelato and there were so many interesting flavors from which to choose.

The second tour was through the Happening Travel Club (once again to St Petersburg) but this time to see The Gallery of Sand....a competition of sand sculptures on the beach of course. FL sand contains quartz crystals which makes it easy to be tightly packed and sculpted until even and smooth. In addition to the sculptures, there was live entertainment and plenty of vendors. This was followed with lunch at Pete's Bistro at the beautiful Trade Winds Resort.

Lastly, another Happening Travel Club adventure to Disney to see the Christmas lights, trees and decorations at the Grand Floridian and Wilderness Lodge. Then we were taken to Disney Springs for Santa's Marketplace Shopping and lunch.

There are so many restaurants but we picked House of Blues which has some interesting menu choices. One being Chicken and Donuts (buttermilk fried chicken, maple bacon donuts, bourbon syrup, honey sriracha sauce, powdered sugar and chives)..



A Road Trip Worth the Salt Air: Cedar Key & The Island Hotel

By Buck Buchanan

Mauri and I are excited to kick off a little travel feature for you all in the newsletter: good eats, scenic drives, and charming places worth visiting. Our first pick is a bit of a drive—about 85 miles from The Villages—but we think the destination justifies the journey: The Island Hotel in Cedar Key, Florida.

When we first discovered The Island Hotel, we were students at the University of Florida. Back then, money was tight and restaurant meals were a luxury. So when our parents came to visit, they'd take us to Cedar Key and to The Island Hotel. The

seafood there was simple, genuine and memorable. I'll never forget one visit: upstairs in the hotel, I stepped into the restroom past a little poker game—six or eight men around a round table, one of them the local police chief. Small towns have characters like that.

After graduation, life took us away, and years passed. But when we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in 2013, we made the drive back. The seafood? Still excellent. The ambiance? Warm and welcoming. And Cedar Key itself? It had grown, but in a gentle, natural way.

Back then, Cedar Key was a sleepy fishing village, just humming along among oystermen, clammers, and shoreline folks. Now it has more of the flavor of a coastal tourist town—quiet galleries, small inns, a few cozy gift shops, and, yes, restaurants that attract folks in from out of town.

Storms, Setbacks, and the State of Recovery

You may have heard that Cedar Key has had a rough few years. In 2023, Hurricane Idalia struck the Big Bend region and brought a record storm surge of almost 6.8 ft in some parts. Then in September 2024, Hurricane Helene hit close enough to blast Cedar Key with a new record storm surge, reports say up to 10 ft. in some places.

Those storms did serious damage. Many waterfront businesses took in floodwaters, decks and docks were destroyed, and some buildings remain boarded up. The hotel and seafood restaurants along Dock Street and elsewhere have had to rebuild, adapt, or relocate.

So: is Cedar Key “rebuilt” yet? Not fully. But yes—it’s still worth going. If you go, you’ll see a place resilient, persistent, and full of maritime charm even in recovery.

December 17

By Buck Buchanan

December 17 is a very special day for Mauri and me. Our daughter, Beryl, was born in Gainesville on December 17, 1966. I still remember the day. Mauri woke me up at about 6:00AM and said, “I think this is time”. I think I broke all speed records getting to the hospital. I dropped Mauri off at the entrance and then went to park the car. After I parked the car and went to the entrance, the nurse was greeting me, and held a tiny little baby. Couldn’t have been more than ten minutes

December 17, 1966 is a notable day for a couple other reasons. It was the day

Mauri's class graduated, and she was awarded her BS from the school of Architecture. It was also the day I passed my qualifying exam for my Ph.D.

That evening was also the night of the Department Christmas party. I brought a box of cigars and passed them out. I was not very popular with the women.

Buck and Mauri's daughter Beryl Ness and her husband Mike, celebrated their 35th anniversary last month.



The Lighter Side

By Mary Jo Johnson

HOLIDAY EATING TIPS

1. Avoid carrot sticks. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Holiday spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.
2. Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly, it's rare. You cannot find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an eggnog-alcoholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!

3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Gravy does not stand alone. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano. Repeat.
4. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.
5. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Holiday party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello?
6. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.
7. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. If you leave them behind, you're never going to see them again.
8. Same for pies. Apple, Pumpkin, Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert, Labor Day?
9. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards.
10. One final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Re-read tips; start over, but hurry, January is just around the corner.

Remember this motto to live by:

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate and wine in one hand, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming " WOO HOO what a ride!" HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!! (Hunter S Thompson is said to be original author).

A big thank you to all who participated with their articles. If you have member news to report, have an interesting background or experience you'd like to share, have been involved in a fun activity or have a trip report, we'd love to hear from you. Pictures would be great! Do you enjoy a fun hobby? What's the most

interesting thing that has ever happened to you? A significant day or experience in your life? What's the one place you'd like to see? A special birthday or anniversary coming up? Please send your articles to Buck Buchanan at **BuckandMauri@aol.com**, Jennie Cleary at **wkc44@comcast.net**, or Nancy Tessier at **NancyBrooks2020@gmail.com** Buck, Nancy, and Jennie are also able to help with write-ups if you send us the basics.

See the October 2026 Bridge Cruise flyer on the next page.



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