



The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club Member News

March, 2026

From the Editor: As we enter March, our high season in Florida and The Villages, we welcome all our snowbird friends and returning bridge players. We are finding some games are filled, so be sure to make a reservation to secure your spot to play. If you have a reservation, and you cannot make the game, please notify the Director! It is very difficult for them to revise game movements with very little notice. Your courtesy will be appreciated.

Our Education Department, headed by Harry Messenheimer, has been doing a great job in providing educational opportunities, and you'll find a recap of upcoming classes in this issue. We are very fortunate to have access to these different classes and seminars.

We are saddened to have lost Karen Whelan and Joyce Knapp recently, and links to their obituaries are provided.

Mark your calendars for the first Alzheimer's event to be held Sunday, March 8, details later in the Member News!

Memoirs of a Retired Bridge Cruise Director

By Buck Buchanan

In 2005, newly retired and a little bored, Mauri and I went on an Oceania cruise up through the Baltic. There was no bridge director on board, and, having taken up duplicate two years before, I was anxious to play some bridge.

There was a sign-up sheet in the card room, and I showed up after lunch the next day hoping to pick up a game. There were about thirty bridge players, but no director. Although I had no experience as a director, I volunteered to direct. The

ship did have paper travelers, so I was able to do this. Things went smoothly, except for one time when I forgot to call a skip when we had an even number of tables! Fortunately, there were no calls for the director that I couldn't handle.

A couple of the bridge players suggested to me that I should apply to become a bridge director on ships. Mauri and I could get free cruises that way. Free cruises? Show me the way!

I looked into this, and there were three requirements to qualify for a position as a bridge director on cruises. You had to be a Life Master, you had to have passed the ACBL Director test, and you had to pass the Teacher's test. I managed to achieve all three within the next year and was ready for the next step.

The cruise lines told me that cruises were assigned by one of the agencies that supplied staff to cruise lines. I checked these out, and there were four, two in California and two in Florida. I contacted all four. One of them turned me down flat, saying that I had no directing experience (true), another would talk to me only if I came to the Nationals for an interview, and the other two decided I was qualified.

Shortly after, I received an email list of about fifty cruises from one agency. Mauri and I were particularly interested in long winter cruises so we could escape the New Jersey winter. I put in for a four-week transpacific cruise in December and another in January. I figured that if I was lucky, I might get one.

Would you believe we got both? I had to make a hurried call to the agent to tell her we had forgotten a previous commitment, so we ended up with just a January transpacific.

Airfare for bridge directors is not included, so we booked a 22-hour economy flight from New Jersey to New Zealand, where we boarded our ship the next day. We were assigned an inside passenger cabin on one of the lower decks. We told the Cruise Director we had never done this before, and she was very helpful. Basically, we only worked on sea days. I would hold a one-hour class in the morning and then run the bridge game after lunch. Over the years, we had as few as four tables to as many as twenty.

The ships were always ACBL-certified, so I could award master points. Mauri was always available to play with someone who came without a partner. One time she played with an English gentleman who only played ACOL. He didn't know Standard American, and Mauri didn't know ACOL, but they managed a 65% game!

Our time was our own on the days we were in port. We quickly learned that we could get free shore excursions if we signed up as escorts. We always tried to sign up for the most expensive and interesting shore excursions, and many times we were awarded these. Other times we were given the ones that regular crew members didn't want.

A funny thing happened on one of our Australian cruises. Australia has a law that all crew members have to have a specific responsibility in case of an emergency. I was told that my responsibility was to operate one of the water-tight doors, and I was trained to open and close this. Afterwards, I asked under what circumstances I would be expected to operate the water-tight door. The ship's officer very emphatically told me that under no circumstances was I to operate the door!

We usually booked four to five cruises a year up until I retired in 2014. We tried always to book interesting places. We did most of the Far East, Australia and New Zealand, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Baltic, Alaska, South America including around Cape Horn several times, and more trips to the Caribbean than we can count. The eastern Mediterranean was probably our favorite place. We visited over a hundred countries. It was overall a great experience.

Education Update

Michael Berkowitz Seminar

On Saturday, February 7, 2026, Michael Berkowitz presented a live workshop which covered Slam Bidding and also declarer play with a topic called Develop, Don't Grab. This was an all-day event, with a delicious lunch included. The event was very well attended, and included a variety of practice hands. Michael Berkowitz is a terrific teacher, and we all came away with some new concepts to improve our bidding and play. Many thanks to Education Chair Harry Messenheimer and his crew of helpers who organized this event and made it such a success!

Competitive Bidding

On Tuesday, March 3, Gloria Bennett will be presenting a session on Competitive Bidding. This session dives deep into the "make or break" moments of bridge, covering the Law of Total Tricks, the critical difference between Takeout and Penalty Doubles, and navigating high-level bidding. Learn to confidently decide whether to push for one more and when to pass - turning tricky hands into winning results! O'Dell Recreation Center, \$5. Contact Gloria at gloriabridge123@gmail.com for more info.

Two over One Bidding

On Tuesday March 10 & 17, Janet Matthews will be presenting 2/1 game force modifications to Standard American bidding. Enjoy Janet's engaging use of videos and exercises as she clearly lays out the logic of two over one. You will receive notes and exercises at each session.

In Memoriam

The club is saddened to learn of the passing of two bridge players:

Joyce Knapp, a long time member of the club, and bridge enthusiast, passed away recently. Joyce had moved from the Villages to Mt. Dora in recent years, but came back to play locally in some bridge tournaments. For the obituary, click here: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/joyce-knapp-obituary?id=60649321>

Karen Whelan passed away on February 18, 2026 and is survived by her husband Bob, and other family members. Karen and Bob, both Silver Life Masters, have been regulars in the VDBC 1500 and Open games. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday March 14 from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at 1318 Augustine Drive, The Villages. For the obituary and RSVP details, click here: <https://everloved.com/life-of/karen-whelan/obituary/>

Alzheimer's Event

The first Alzheimer's event of 2026 will be held Sunday March 8, at Seabreeze, 750/Open. The \$5 game fee will be donated to the Alzheimer's association. There will be a 50/50 raffle and Free Play raffles. Thanks to a generous donor, there will be an anonymous donor challenge match of \$7500! Mark the date!

Help Wanted

Buck Buchanan, our assistant editor, has retired. Buck turns 90 this year and is taking a step back. The Member News needs a replacement! Does that appeal to you, or do you know someone who might fill the bill? We could use someone to pass along any interesting information about members, or snap photos of bridge events. Our members also enjoy the book reviews. If you are a reader, and would like to share a review of a good book, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact Jennie or Nancy if interested.

St. Patrick's Day

By Nancy Tessier

March 17 is the feast day of St. Patrick, an Irish missionary from the 5th century. Most of what we know about him is through legends, folk lore and myths from the past. He was a Roman-British citizen and his father Caipurarus was a senator and tax collector. Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates at age 16, and was a slave in Western Ireland for 6 years before his escape back to Britain. He heard the "word" of the lord and became a missionary, converting pagans (anyone who was not a Christian) in Ireland. He used the shamrock as a symbol of the holy trinity in his teachings. Did he banish the snakes from Ireland? Maybe there were no snakes before he showed up, as many believe.

So wear your green, lift a pint and honor St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint. Everyone is Irish on March 17th.

Day Trip – "The Melon Patch Players"

Submitted by Bev Willson

We have had some chilly weather in TN lately, 16 days' worth if I counted correctly. The worst is over and thankfully (unlike the FL panhandle) we did not have to brush away snow, but I did have to scrape the windshield early one morning before leaving for bridge! So, on days when the weather is problematic for outside activities, my husband and I like to explore online to find nearby events and venues indoors. And we found a gem!

In nearby Leesburg there is a small venue (seats about 200) called "The Melon Patch Players". Located in the Tropic Theater on Main St. They were putting on a production of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. We are diehard Christie fans and, of course, like many, have seen the movie but we found the thought of a stage production intriguing. How would they adapt the train's scenery changes with passenger sleeper compartments, dining coach etc.? Would the actor playing Hercule Poirot be able to fill the little Belgian's spats?

We decided to go and secured 2 of the last 4 matinee seats for that day! Reasonably priced at \$24 each. We arrived in Leesburg about noon, in time to enjoy lunch at McCracken's Irish Pub, just 2 blocks from the theater. Typical pub fare, nicely presented and tasty.



We found the theater seats comfortable with plush upholstery. Not merely folding chairs. A valued surprise. The stage adaptation of the classic whodunit did not disappoint. The 12 actors were talented, engaging and energetic. The sound system was very good. The clues were subtle (or did we notice them because we had seen the movie...twice?). And the actor portraying Poirot did a commendable job. He just needs a little coaching on his accent. As for the scene changes, I mentioned above, these were cleverly handled with the stage's 360° revolving platform. A showcase of ingenuity that provided

for quick set changes and eliminated those awkward pauses. Nod to the adept quick acting stagehands. After the play, the actors, in costume, gathered in the lobby to chat and were charming. See photo.

We thoroughly enjoyed our chilly day outing to a warm, cozy, welcoming venue, reasonably priced and would highly recommend it.

Book Review – The Book Club for Troublesome Women by Marie Bostwick

By Buck Buchanan

Don't miss this one – it might just be the best book I've read all year.

Back in 1963, Betty Friedan wrote a book called *The Feminine Mystique*. It caused quite a stir at the time. Some libraries and schools even banned it. The book talked about the lives of young married women back then — how many of them went from college straight into a world of fixing meals, raising children, and doing everything for everyone else, while having very few rights of their own. Things like opening a bank account or buying property often weren't even up to them.

This novel takes place not long after that book came out. It follows four young, newly married women who start a book club after reading *The Feminine Mystique*. They call themselves “The Bettys,” after Betty Friedan. As they read

and talk, they begin to question their roles and what kind of lives they really want.

The story follows these four couples as the women try to find more balance and fairness in their marriages. In one case, it ends badly. In the others, they manage to find their way forward through honesty, change, and compromise.

It's a thoughtful story, an easy read, and one that sticks with you.

The Lighter Side

By Mary Jo Johnson

Important Facts to Remember as you Grow Older:

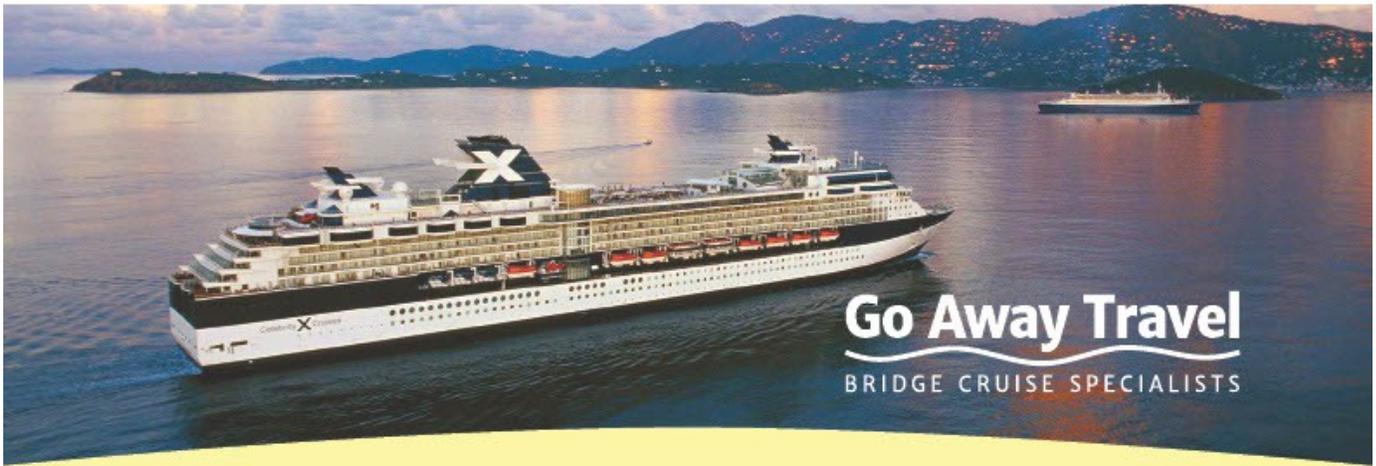
- Death is the number 1 killer in the world
- Life is sexually transmitted
- Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die
- Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the Internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, and maybe years
- Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.
- All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.
- In the 60's, people took acid to make the world weird. Now the world is weird, and people take Prozac to make it normal
- Don't worry about old age; it doesn't last that long

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 Jennie Cleary at wkc44@comcast.net, or Nancy Tessier at NancyBrooks2020@gmail.com 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.

Marilyn Williams tells us: the travel agent has now sent this to other past clients, as the response from the VDBC has been poor. Yes, the cruise is a long way off, but the room only holds 16-17 tables, so if you are interested, you might want to make your reservation. The deposit is fully refundable until May 15th.



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C1	CONCIERGE	\$2,525	\$4,400
V1	VERANDA	\$2,375	\$4,075
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I2	INSIDE	\$1,650	\$2,700

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