



Hartford Bridge Club

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October 2022 Newsletter

Hi Everyone,

This will be my last newsletter as president and Donna has graciously let me have the stage in what will be my valedictory missive. As you know as a reader of these newsletters, they have not been shy about pointing out the myriad challenges the club has faced over the past two years of this pandemic. Many of those challenges will remain, but I would like to take this opportunity to talk about how the club and many of its members have overcome those challenges in splendid fashion so that the club is in a truly enviable position given the current circumstances in the bridge world.

This month starts a new fiscal year for the club and remarkably the club will not have lost money this past year. This has not been a small accomplishment and has been achieved in circumstances where more than 40% of the 4,700 bridge clubs that existed prepandemic have failed. Moreover, by a combination of sound fiscal policies and a reasonable restraint on expenses, not only will the club not lose money this past fiscal year, it will be in a sound position going forward.

But each day, more and more, I am reminded that the club is its people. As a member-owned club, everyone is a volunteer and many have given selflessly of their time and selves to the club to sustain the wonderful community that the club is. I am going to praise the efforts of a number of people now; but each and every one who comes to the club or plays online at its games is a vital part of this community. None of this should be taken for granted.

No one cares more or has cared more about the club for over 25 years than Donna. It is a tribute to her that the games are warm and welcoming and yet efficiently run. They create a space where people can truly enjoy one another and participate in a first-rate bridge game. We should certainly not take this for granted. There is a lot of effort behind the scenes to ensure that the games function as well as they do.

We are blessed with a number of conscientious and resourceful directors who often have the patience of saints with the plethora of issues they continually face before, during and outside of the games. They make our experience at the tables online and face-to-face always pleasurable whether or not the cards are running in our favor. The club owes a real debt to Donna, Susan Seckinger, Laurie Robbins, Linda Starr, Bill Watson, and our newest director, John Calderbank, as well as to Mark Smith and Sally Kirtley for their online contributions.

The club has done remarkable things on the education front despite the pandemic and the lingering fears COVID has engendered. Laurie Robbins has simply done a spectacular job of providing online classes to large and appreciative audiences. Her teaching is much admired and deservedly so. We now have had nearly 100 participants in our in-house beginner classes over the past year. Much of the success of those beginner classes is due to the table buddies who patiently and positively assist the beginners. They have been Carole Amaio, Peggy Arseneaux, John Calderbank, Nancy Calderbank, Mary Eisenberg, Ausra Geaski, Ann Hughes, Betty Kerber, Lori Leopold, Ann Lohrand, Susan Seckinger, Aldona Siuta, Mary Sullivan, John Willoughby. A number of these beginners have become members of the club and progressed to both the Supervised Novice games, which have been resurrected and are superbly run by Bill Watson, as well as the club's limited games. The enthusiasm of these beginners for the game of bridge is truly something to behold.

Our expert players have also lent their expertise in classes and mini-lessons and their contributions have been much appreciated. Joel Wolfe's well-received classes on defense, Mark Smith's Tuesday night supper entertainment, as well as the mini-lessons of Joel, Tom Joyce, Geoff Brod, and Dave Ehler all contributed significantly to the club's mission of providing significant educational opportunities where and when it can.

Lori Leopold stepped in this spring and has done a superb job of communicating to members in our almost daily newsletters. Peter Katz continues his remarkable efforts with the website. John Calderbank now oversees our membership drive and membership list to ensure its accuracy. Debbie Bogatz, the newest member of our communication team, has developed a Facebook page for the club and is working hard and well to gain publicity for the club. Sally Kirtley and Susan Seckinger both provide invaluable administrative aid with regard to matters ACBL, BBO and otherwise.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the conscientious and thoughtful efforts of the Board of Trustees in steering the club through these challenging times where COVID provided continual obstacles to the best laid plans and desires. John Willoughby, vice-president, Ann Lohrand, secretary, Trevor Reeves, treasurer, Carole Amaio, Ben Bishop, Nancy Calderbank, Roger Pikor, Mike Wavada, Bill Winger and Donna all shouldered their responsibilities to the club and members admirably both in the many long meetings we enjoyed together and thereafter in executing various tasks on behalf of the club. John Dinius, as head of the Board's Finance Committee and as bookkeeper for the club, made significant contributions at every turn. He led an engaged and thoughtful finance committee (Debbie Prince, Diane Tracy, Ben Bishop, Trevor Reeves) that gave wise and helpful counsel to the board. Roger Pikor and Tom Joyce, as heads of the facilities and policy committees, similarly gave the Board much appreciated efforts. John Willoughby ran the planning committee (Riva Lewinter, Mike Wavada, Barbara Fletcher, John Calderbank and Ben Bishop) whose ideas for the future provided much food for thought as well as action. I have every expectation that the Board will function superbly under the measured and thoughtful leadership of John Willoughby.

There are many others who contribute in significant ways to the wonderful community that is our club. There is Pat Salve, whose wise counsel, now and over the years, has been of immeasurable aid to the club. There is Helma Strauss who is always willing to come in to insure there is not a half table or to help at a limited game. There are so many others whose contributions are unknown to me and who I hope take justified satisfaction in the fact that their deeds are ones that are part of the glue that gives the club its stability and strength.

Nonetheless, there are two persons whose contributions over the past several years I have to single out because they have been enormous and likely somewhat under the radar. Linda Starr fulfills many roles at the club, director, teacher, editor, communicator and much more. She not only fills in wherever she sees a need, she does it with extraordinary aplomb. The club and I can't thank her enough for her all she does. Trevor Reeves has served this club as president and then treasurer in the last two years. It is not an overstatement to say that, but for Trevor's efforts, the club would not be on the firm financial footing that it is. He spearheaded our becoming a 501(c)(3) corporation and has zealously and rigorously watched over and advised about the club's financial well-being. His financial acumen and efforts have created a debt that that the club cannot repay.

Speaking of 501(c)(3) and debts the club cannot repay, I would be remiss not to mention that the club has received over \$25,000 in donations this past fiscal year from many individuals, who mostly want to remain anonymous. This is an unprecedented and heartwarming show of support. That these donations have come without the active campaign many clubs now feel compelled to make is even more gratifying. The current fiscal year has started off with a very sizable anonymous donation from a longtime member, who is no longer able to play at the club. Her words when making her gift were: "I don't want the club to fail." I can reassure her that with the many loyal and engaged members we have, there should be no fear of failure. Rather, there is certainty that the club will continue now and well into the future as a vibrant home for bridge playing and bridge education.

As for me, I just want to say it has been a wonderful privilege serving as your president these past two years.

Fondly,
Felix