

## American Contract Bridge Association (ACBL) and Unit 390 Membership

In reviewing the comments and questions provided with input to the late 2009 Unit 390 survey, Jim and Ken thought it helpful to provide some information on the many ways your membership in the ACBL works for you.

### The ACBL

The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) formed in 1937 is the largest bridge organization in the world with 162,000 members (including you!) and authorizing 3 million club and tournament tables of bridge annually plus another 300,000 online tables per year. ACBL certifies bridge Directors and bridge teachers as well as player achievements.

ACBL serves you directly in many ways:

- sends you the monthly Bridge Bulletin with a wide range of articles of interest to all levels of players,
- keeps track of your masterpoints,
- organizes three 10-day NABC tournaments each year –tournaments that are a thrill for all at some time in their bridge career (Did you know that you can read the Daily Bulletins for these fabulous tournaments by searching <http://www.acbl.org> and then accessing the Daily Bulletins for that event? Place a July 22<sup>nd</sup> 'bring forward' to try this by tracking the New Orleans NABC Daily Bulletin for 10 days).

ACBL has a wide range of additional services – tour the website when next using your computer.

### Unit 390

In many respects the primary service provision from your ACBL membership is at the Unit level. Unit 390 includes Calgary and extends west to the BC border and east to the Saskatchewan border. West of Highway 2 the Unit is Didsbury at the north and High River to the South. East of Highway 2 Unit 390 is Castor, Coronation at the north and (excluding the Bassano/Brooks corridor on Highway 1) Vulcan at the south.

Units receive funding for the membership payments of their Unit (11% of your annual fee paid to ACBL is reimbursed to the Unit). Units do not receive monies from club games but do retain any proceeds from Sectional (weekend) tournaments they organize - in the case of Unit 390, four (January, March, September, November) per year.

In addition to Sectional tournaments, Unit 390 provides an excellent welcome program for new members, a mentorship program, Kibitzer (published 2 to 3 times a year), and a website (<http://www.acblunit390.org>) with lots of information and links.

Unit 390 currently enjoys over 800 members. For the last 10 years the Unit has been growing at about 2.3% per year and in this last year, membership growth has been much higher – more than 10%!

## District 18

The ACBL is organized into 25 'Districts'. Alberta is in District 18 which covers a massive geographic area (in addition to Alberta, it includes Saskatchewan, Northern Manitoba, Montana, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming – the first letters of each results in 'WASUMI'). District 18 is one of two ACBL Districts that span the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. The primary role of a District is to, in collaboration with the local Unit, organize Regional (week long) tournaments of which there is always at least 1 in Alberta each year (Calgary, then Red Deer, then Edmonton, then back to Calgary - plus one in Lethbridge every fourth year). The next Regional in Calgary will be August of 2012, and many Unit 390 members will be at this year's Regional in Red Deer, August 9 through 15. A District also provides a second level of appeal for any bridge-related disciplinary matter. Districts receive their funding from Regional surpluses with which they fund other Regionals in the District. District 18 also provides the initiative to hold, in collaboration with each Unit, the North American Pairs (NAPs) and Grand National Teams (GNTs) competitions and provides financial support for the winners in each flight of both competitions to play in the final at an NABC. District 18's website is <http://www.wasumi.org>.

## Volunteerism

Survey comments showed that the membership is aware of how hard everyone is working on behalf of the membership. The enthusiasm and efforts of all volunteers in whatever their bridge interest is appreciated and encouraged. Talk to any Board Member about ways to volunteer.

## ACBL Zero Tolerance Policy

It is important to have a non intimidating place for people to learn and play the wonderful game of bridge. ACBL developed a 'zero tolerance' policy many years ago to provide a more nurturing environment for all bridge players. Unit 390 endorses the zero tolerance policy.

## Fees for Bridge

Bridge continues to be one of the best hobby values available. Most clubs charge \$5 to \$7 per game. Of that charge, a portion (that varies between regular club games, championship games, STAC games, etc.) goes to ACBL. On average, about 75 cents for each game you play goes to the ACBL to track your masterpoints, assure quality Directing and Teaching, and ACBL general administration. The remaining portion goes to the club, and considering that the Director gets to the game an hour or so early to make sure the coffee is on and the game is ready, and after the game the results are posted and the tables are cleaned, your per hour game fee is probably something like \$1 per hour --- a bargain for such a marvelous hobby!

## Succession Planning

Clubs have evolved and will continue to do so. Perhaps the most important factor in bridge evolving in Unit 390 is the need for new Directors to run the wide array of games.

Please consider the Director's course as there always seems to be shortage of Directors. If interested, Brian or Joy Saville can provide information.

### Bridge Clubs

Bridge can include both sanctioned and non sanctioned games, the former being games recognized by the ACBL. Sanctioned games typically have a higher entry fee than non sanctioned games as a portion of the fee goes to the ACBL.

Unit 390 currently includes 12 clubs each of which offers one or more sanctioned games per week --- Aurora, Banff, Bidwell, Bob's, Bow River, Bridge Haven, Bridgejoy, Bridge 'R' Us, Chinook Ladies, Martinique, North Calgary Ladies, and the South Calgary Ladies. The Glencoe Club also provides sanctioned games and these are restricted to members and their guests. There are several clubs (Canmore, Dutch Canadian, High River, Okotoks, Parkdale Seniors) that offer non sanctioned duplicate games.

### Martinique Bridge Studio

Martinique is the longest operating bridge club in the Unit 390 area and it has gone through numerous ownership and location changes in its 50 year history (see Kibitzer Sept 2006 for a story of the Martinique). The Martinique houses the Unit 390 library, the Unit 390 bulletin boards, displays the Unit 390 trophies, and provides space for Unit 390 meetings. Unit 390 appreciates Martinique's willingness to provide 'Unit' services to the membership (at no charge) over the last several decades.

### Youth Bridge

A high priority for all levels of bridge organization is bridge for youth. In recent years the ACBL has introduced a number of strategies to draw younger players into bridge and Unit 390 wishes to do the same. Volunteers with ideas to help Unit 390 efforts to bring young players into bridge should contact Jim.

### Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF)

The CBF is a Canadian organization whose mission statement is: *"The mission of the Canadian Bridge Federation is to promote bridge within Canada and protect and advance the national interests of Canadian Bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for International bridge competitions."* It has a membership structure separate from ACBL although your annual CBF membership fee can be paid with your ACBL fee renewal. Structured as six 'zones', Alberta, Saskatchewan and Northern Manitoba are in Zone V. CBF organizes and runs two multi-level national events: the Canadian Open Pairs Championships (COPC) and the Canadian National Team Championships (CNTC) – Flight A (open) and Flight B (under 2500). These events begin at the 'grassroots' level and culminate at the Canadian Bridge Championships (CBC) where National winners are declared in each event. At the Canadian Bridge Championships (CBC), National Finals are also held in the Canadian Women's Team Championship (CWTC), Canadian Senior Team Championship (CSTC)

and Canadian Imp Pairs Championship (CIPC). CBF also organizes a fundraising Regional tournament each year.

To help promote bridge in Canada, the CBF runs two Rookie-Master games each year – Helen Shields game in April and Erin Berry game in October. The CBF promotes youth bridge in Canada. The CBF administers the Canadian Junior Development Fund, the CBF Charitable Foundation and also the Erin Berry Memorial Trust Fund. CBF publishes a magazine (Bridge Canada) two or three times a year. Its website is <http://www.cbf.ca>.

Many thanks to all who took the time to provide comments and questions when completing the survey. We hope these comments are helpful to you and would value any feedback.

*Jim Murphy*

President, Unit 390  
[390president@acblunit390.org](mailto:390president@acblunit390.org)

*Ken Scott*

Alberta Representative, District 18  
[ken@glisten.biz](mailto:ken@glisten.biz)