

Historical Excerpts

Our American Bridge Association was conceived in the American Tennis Association (ATA). The ATA Nationals were played in Hampton, Virginia, August 1932. Ted Thompson and Eyric Satch were the finalists. At the conclusion of the tennis tournament, a team of bridge enthusiasts suggested a duplicate bridge match that night as a method of relaxation after the strenuous week of tennis.

The duplicate boards or trays were described as "an ugly black wooden box with letters on them ("N-S, E-W") and an arrow pointing North." On this night, the arrow was pointing toward the Atlantic Ocean and the east position toward the Chesapeake River. The director told the group that the arrow might arbitrarily be placed in any direction.

Our late President Emeritus, Victor R. Daly, was present, but not a participant. He protested the placing of the arrow in any position. He finally acquiesced. It is interesting to learn that our Vic had a voice in ABA from its embryonic period.

The names of some of those who participated in this match and are responsible for the organization of the ABA are: Dr. John L. McGriff, Portsmouth, Virginia, Drs. E.L. and L.L. Downing, Roanoke, Virginia, Dr. Furlong, Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Dr. W.E. DuBisette, Endfield, North Carolina, who later moved to New York and became the first president of the American Bridge Association.

This group, with others, is responsible for the creation and organization of the ABA, and the sponsoring of the first national bridge tournament at Buckroe Beach, Virginia,

Foreword

(From the first souvenir journal, Buckroe Beach, VA)

The American Bridge Association, in presenting its first annual bridge championship, cordially invites all clubs to become members. This non-profit organization is sponsored by our foremost bridge fans. Its object is to develop and perpetuate bridge as a national pastime, and to further honest and clean recreation. The American Bridge Association has as its goal the enviable record that has been made in the realm of sports by the American Tennis Association. It is hopeful that with the encouragement and support of individuals and clubs such a record shall someday be equaled. I, therefore, present to you this organization in which its participants can attain the awards or merit and rank only when the ideals of truth and honesty are fully appreciated.

Dr. W.E. DuBisette
President, ABA, 1932

First National Championship Tournament Buckroe Beach, Virginia

Program:

The first National Bridge Championship Tournament, sponsored by the American Bridge Association, was held August 6th to 8th, 1933, at the Bay Shore Hotel, in Buckroe Beach, Virginia.

National Contract Pair Championship (Main Event), entry fee \$2.00 per pair.

National Auction Pair Championship, entry fee \$2.00 per pair.

Women's Pair Contract Championship, entry fee \$2.00 per pair.

Open tournaments and dancing every evening.

Annual Meeting:

Day and hour of meeting to be announced,

Election of Executive Committee
Election of Women's Committee,

Elimination play Tuesday to Friday - daily sessions.
Permanent trophies awarded to all winners. Build the ABA by having your club secure memberships.

There were eighteen tables in play at Buckroe Beach. Six tables each of Open Pairs, Men's Pairs and Women's Pairs. Mrs. Eva B. Smith and Mrs. Louis Collins were the winners in the Women's event. Dr. McCord and Mr. Dallas Nicholas of Baltimore, Maryland, were the winners of the Men's Pairs. Mr. Morgan Jensen of Long Island, New York, directed the tournament and was the first Executive Secretary of the American Bridge Association.

Roster of Officers:

Dr. M.E. DuBisette, President
Miss Mae Fane, Vice President
Mr. Horace R. Miller, Secretary
Lt. Samuel J. Battles, Treasurer

Tournament Committee:

Mr. Morgan S. Jensen (Chairman), Brooklyn, New York
Mr. Joseph Steber, New York, New York
Mrs. Ethel Merriman, Lynchburg, Virginia
Dr. Elihu D. Burke, Norfolk, Virginia

District Representatives:

Mr. James C. Boozer, New York, New York
Mrs. Mae Styles, Brooklyn, New York
Dr. George Moore, Roanoke, Virginia
Mr. William Rich, Norfolk, Virginia
Mr. Clarence Mills, Pasadena, California
Mr. H.D. Stucker, New Jersey
Miss Helen Cooper, Washington, D.C.
Dr. C.W. Furlong, Smithfield, North Carolina
Dr. J.L. McGriff, Portsmouth, Virginia

Origin of Tournaments:

Sectional Tournament: In the general business meeting held during the National Tournament in Atlanta, Georgia, 1940, it was ruled that the club or group of clubs, in each city be granted one tournament annually that offered national master point awards. The first such event was sponsored by the Midwest Bridge Association in Chicago, Illinois. The Section Vice President, Mrs. Morine Mitchell, of Chicago, ran this event.

Grade "A" Tournament: Grade "A" events grew out of the redesigned tournament program introduced by the Tournament Committee around 1952 through the efforts of the Chair, Mr. Allan Woolridge of Washington, D.C.

Origin of Games:

Mixed-Team-of-Four: During the National Tournament in New Orleans, Louisiana, 1944, the Chief Director and Chair of the Board, the late Mr. Faustino Gregoire, noticed, near the closing of the tournament, that the receipts were somewhat low. So, he presented the idea of putting on a Mixed-Team-of-Four and allowing the directing staff and scorers to play. The Tournament

Committee Chair, Mr. Zach H. Brooks, Chicago, Illinois, approved and supported this idea. This became one of the more popular events on the National schedule at that time.

The Belsaw Cup: Originally the National Tournament opened on Sunday with an Individual game. Only the twenty-five highest point holders were able to enter this event. During one Individual Game at the National Tournament, there were many players on hand desiring to play rather than kibitz or play rubber bridge. They wanted some type of play to occupy their time. This was called to the attention of the Tournament Chairman, Mr. Zach H. Brooks. He approved and ran the game along with the second session of the Individual.

After the game was over, many players felt that since it was held at the National Tournament, it should merit National status. This was upheld. Therefore, the following year this game was added to the program of events and named in honor of the President, Dr. E.T. Belsaw of Mobile, Alabama.

The schedule was then rearranged so that an Individual game would be provided for all classifications. The starting day was moved to Saturday. Later the Belsaw event was relocated on the program.

The Side Games: At the start of the National Tournament in Los Angeles, California, 1961, the Director-in-Charge, Mr. C.G. Polk and his assistant, Mr. Zach H. Brooks, were called to a joint meeting of the Board and the Tournament Committee. The Board asked if it would be possible to get games started on time. These directors told them that games could be started within ten minutes of the scheduled starting time if permission would be granted to start games regardless. The Board and Tournament Committee said to

go ahead. They promised to back Mr. Polk and Mr. Brooks 100%.

The first event on the program was the Individual. As entries were sold, players were instructed to be seated and ready to begin play promptly at the scheduled starting time. When the time came to play, about 30-35% of the players were not in the room. The game was rearranged and started within 5-8 minutes. When the tardy players arrived on the scene and found that the game had started, quite a squawk went up. After they cooled down, some of them asked if some type of play might be arranged for their benefit. Since Mr. Polk and Mr. Brooks had been advocating side games for some time, they were glad to accommodate the players. The revenue did the rest.

The Early Bird Games: Mr. Polk and Mr. Brooks had been advocating Early Bird games for a number of years. In Buffalo, New York, during the 1964 National Tournament, the Tournament Chair, Mr. Alan Woolridge realized the receipts from the events were running low. He informed Mr. Polk and Mr. Brooks that he was ready to give their idea a trial. The first such event proved to be so successful that he decided to put the second such game on that same week. Since that time, the Early Bird games have been regular program events.

The Midnight Games: At the 1969 New York Nationals, Mr. Kenneth F. Cox, Convention Manager, noticed a large number of bridge players sitting around after the scheduled events were over. He decided to put some Midnight games into play since he believed bridge players would stay up for additional games. The F. Alberta Peterson Scholarship Game was the most popular midnight event for many years.

The Pro-Am Games: The Pro-Am Games were initiated during a Spring Nationals held in Columbus, Ohio in 1988 during the administration of Mrs. Thelma Woodson of Detroit, Michigan. Attractive badges announcing the player as a Pro (Professional) or Am (Amateur) were provided under the auspices of Mrs. Phyllis Heard. This early morning game added a continental breakfast to its agenda during the time Dwight Galley was chair of the National Tournament Authority. This event has become a very popular addition to the schedule.

The Second Chance Knockout: Taylor Cox of Detroit, Michigan was Chair of the National Tournament Committee under President Robert Price of Chicago. Taylor noticed that 25% of the people, who played in the Victor R. Daly Knockout, did not return for the evening session. He researched this finding and discovered many people feel the tournament is over when they lose the first round of the KO. Some people come to the tournament only to play the KO. Many of them leave the tournament thus reducing the amount of revenue available to the ABA.

Taylor also knew there are (4) sessions of KO team play available after the first round. He reasoned that if he set up a new game, to be played during the four rounds people were involved in the Victor Daly KO; the 25% who leave the tournament might be persuaded to remain and continue playing. Thus the Second Chance KO was added to the schedule. When players register for the Victor R. Daly KO, they pay for two sessions. If they lose the first round of the Daly KO, they are already registered for the Second Chance KO. This double registration also permits the NSD to set up the Second Chance KO without doing a re-registration. This has proven to be a popular event at the Nationals and encourages players to remain.

Morning Knockout Teams: President Robert Price of Chicago was concerned about the financial plight of the ABA. He talked to his National Tournament Committee Chair, Taylor Cox of Detroit, Michigan, about a game being played in the ACBL. The game was a morning knockout. Taylor checked the schedule and inserted the Morning Knockout Teams. People, playing in the Victor R. Daly KO Teams could play in both games. Thus the Morning Knockout became a permanent part of the National Tournament Schedule.

Stratified Games: Although Stratified Games were played in the ABA before 1993, Dr. Will E. Richardson, Chair of the NTA supplied the criteria for the Three-Tier Stratified Pair Game and the Stratified Swiss Team Games. These games proved to be very popular in low-density areas where getting the minimum number of teams had proven to be a problem.

The Northwest Section: In recent years, the ABA has enjoyed overall expansion, particularly in the Western and Southwestern Sections of the country. On January 1, 1979, after ten years of amicable negotiations, the Northwest Bridge Association, under the leadership of Mr. Herbert Jackson, joined the ranks of the American Bridge Association. This historic occasion added the States of Washington and Oregon, specifically the cities of Seattle, Portland and Tacoma.¹

¹**Note:** These historical excerpts are the result of the collective memory of the following ABA Charter Members: Mrs. E.M. Elliott, Portsmouth, VA; Mr. Frank Merritt, Norfolk, VA; Dr. and Mrs. Conrad Edwards, New York, NY; Mr. Zach Brooks, Kansas City, MO; and Mr. Clarence Denson, Birmingham, AL. Other material was submitted by Mr. Doyle Branch, Houston, TX; Mr. Taylor Cox, Detroit, MI; Miss Ann Daniels, Los Angeles, CA.; Mrs. Eliza B. Newton, Tuskegee, AL.; Dr. A. Jacqueline Sheppard, Atlanta, GA. and Ms. Vernice Whitfield, Savannah, GA.

History of the Spring Nationals: From April 8-12, 1969 the first Spring Nationals was held in Columbus, Ohio. This was the result of the Time and Place Committee study under the leadership of Mr. Victor R. Daly; President Emeritus Attorney Maurice Robinson of New York City was President of the ABA at this time. The committee recommendation to have a Spring Nationals to be held in a central location in order to have the maximum attendance was approved at the Annual Meeting in Louisville, 1968.

The site for the first Spring Nationals was Columbus, Ohio. Mrs. Myrna Beatty was Chair of the Planning Committee. Mr. Otto Beatty, Sr. was the Unit President. The Buckeye Duplicate Club served as the host club for this event where more than 300 bridge players, comprising 790 tables, enjoyed a program, which included:

Greetings from Mr. Clovis Nogawich, representative of the Mayor M.E. Sensenbrenner at the Thursday Public Meeting

Remarks by the Honorable Robert Duncan, Judge of the Supreme Court of the State of Ohio

Awards presented by Anheuser Busch, Inc. of St. Louis. Other corporate sponsors for this event included Mr. Gordon Hamilton Dash, Assistant to the Eastern Division Manager of Calvert Distillers and Ms. Gloria Thomas of F & M Schaefer Brewing Company

Dinner compliments of Otto and Myrna Beatty at their restaurant

An Awards Ball, held at the Neil House with presentations to Roscoe Rigmaiden and Willa Canty as the Outstanding Players at the first Spring Nationals. (Material from the 1993 Dallas Souvenir Journal)

The College Bowl: The first ABA College Bowl was held in Nashville during the 1989 Spring Nationals. Wilberforce, Central State and North Carolina were the participating institutions.

The ABA National Headquarters: The idea for a National Headquarters was introduced by Dr. A. Jacqueline Sheppard in her 1976 presidential address. She requested that a special Headquarters Game be established to fund the prospective building. After much discussion about the feasibility of the idea, Mrs. Imogene Boyd of Indianapolis, IN., moved that the body adopt the presidential recommendation. The motion was adopted. President Sheppard appointed Dr. Felix Dunn of Gulfport, Mississippi to chair the first housing committee.

When Atty. Arthur J. Reid, Jr. became president, he gave new impetus to the idea of a home for the ABA. The late Past President Victor R. Daly and Mr. Robert Seymour became the first \$1,000 contributors to the fund. Others, including the late former Eastern Section Vice President, Asher Conn, and late former Los Angeles, California Unit Secretary, Mrs. Joan Jewell soon followed.

The fund grew steadily over the years until President Anita Troy breathed new life into the project. She brought the matter of a purchase of a house to the Board of Directors at the Spring Nationals in St. Louis, Mo. in April, 1994. The body in session voted to proceed with the purchase. An ad hoc committee was formed.

A suitable building was found at 2828 Lakewood Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia. A committee - composed of National President Anita Troy; National Vice President, Kenneth F. Cox; Executive Secretary, Gloria Christler; National Treasurer, George Saunders; Co-Chairs of the Housing Fund, Iris Carr and Carrolena Key and Past President, George

Johnson - inspected the site and recommended the purchase of the building.

On July 15, 1994, the papers were signed. The ABA became the owner of the two-story structure. The committee, listed above, participated in this historic moment.²

National Presidents

1932-1935	Dr. M.E. DuBisette, New York, NY
1935-1936	Mr. Horace "Jock" Miller, New York, NY
1936-1949	Dr. E.T. Belsaw, Mobile, AL
1949-1965	Mr. Victor R. Daly, Washington, DC
1966-1969	Atty. Maurice Robinson, New York, NY
1970-1973	Mrs. Pauline Taylor, Detroit, MI
1974-1975	Dr. Arnold P. Jones, Jr., Chicago, IL
1976-1977	Dr. A. Jacqueline Sheppard, Phila., PA
1978-1981	Dr. Arnold P. Jones, Jr., Chicago, IL
1982-1983	Atty. Arthur J. Reid, Jr., Washington, DC
1984-1985	Mr. George Johnson, Charlotte, NC
1986-1987	Mrs. Geraldine Wilson, Winter Springs, FL
1988-1989	Mrs. Thelma Woodson, Detroit, MI
1990-1991	Mr. Robert J. "Bob" Price, Chicago, IL
1992-1995	Mrs. Anita Troy, Henderson, NV
1996-1997	Dr. George Love, Pittsburgh, PA
1998-2001	Mrs. Cleo Terrell, Chicago, IL
2002-2005	Mr. Richard H. Bowling, Greensboro, NC
2006-2007	Mr. Henry Irwin, Austin, TX
2008-2011	Mrs. Leola Rucker, Virginia Beach, VA
2012-2015	Mr. George Hudson, Jamaica, NY
2016-	Mr. Henry Irwin, Austin, TX

²Information in his item is from the collective memories of Worth Christler, Kenneth f. Cox, Bernice Rigmaiden, Jackye Sheppard, Anita Troy and Thelma Woodson.

Interesting Facts about the National Presidents

Victor R. Daly was the first president to take the ABA into hotels. He also assisted in opening the ACBL to ABA players. Pauline Taylor was the first woman president of the Association.

Horace "Jock" Miller and A. Jacqueline Sheppard, and Anita Troy served as both National President and Executive Secretary.

George Johnson served as National President and National Treasurer.

Anita Troy served as National Vice President, National President, National Convention Manager, and National Secretary

Attorney Arthur J. Reid, Jr. served as the Hotel Negotiator for ABA.

Robert "Bob" Price held the William A. Friend Award, for winning the most points in a year, longer than any other player in the ABA.

Mrs. Thelma Woodson presented the body with a Constitution and By-Laws, which returned the Chair of the Board of Directors to the President or his//her designee. This ended the method of electing a person to serve as Chair of the Board and to automatically rotate into the position of President after two years.

It was during the presidency of Mr. Bowling that the first published history of the ABA was issued in the form a Chronical "Defining Moments," in connection with a Historical DVD and Decks of Historical Playing Cards,

featuring the faces of past Officers. Under his egis, the first Office Manager was contracted to serve in the National Office in 2003

Henry “Hank” Irwin, Jr. encouraged Board members to purchase matching blazers with the ABA logo, which they wore during membership meetings.

Leola Rucker served as both National Secretary and National President.

George Hudson began an incentive program for ABA instructors.

National Executive Secretaries

1932- 1935	Mr. Horace "Jock" Miller, New York, NY
1936- 1941	Mr. Morgan Jensen, Brooklyn, NY
1941- 1958	Mrs. Georgia Stevens, Detroit, MI
1958- 1960	Mr. Kermit Ross, Washington, DC
1960- 1967	Mrs. Christine P. Jones, Washington, DC
1967- 1975	Dr. A. Jacqueline "Jackye" Sheppard, Philadelphia., PA
1976- 1987	Mr. Kenneth F. Cox, Riverdale, NY
1988- 2001	Mrs. Gloria Christler, Atlanta, GA
2002- 2003	Dr. Will E. Richardson, Atlanta GA
2004- 2007	Mrs. Leola C."Lee" Rucker, Virginia Beach, VA
2008- 2009	Mrs. Anita Troy, Las Vegas, NV
2010- 2017	Ms. Willetta Phipps, Atlanta, GA

Interesting Facts About National Executive Secretaries

In 1967, Mrs. Iris Carr, now of Dallas, TX, served as Acting Executive Secretary. Mrs. Theresa Archer, Washington, DC, was her Assistant Secretary.

Jacqueline Sheppard served as Executive Secretary and National President

Kenneth F. Cox served as Executive Secretary and National Vice President.

Gloria Christler published the first "Flash" at a Sectional Tournament under the auspices of Mrs. Sara Pearson, Western Section Vice President. She also published the first complete ABA Manual in 1994. This manual succeeded former Handbooks published by other National Executive Secretaries.

Dr. Will E. Richardson served as the Southern Section and Eastern Section Vice-President. He was the ABA Auditor and the National Tournament Authority.

Leola Rucker has sponsored two (2) ABA Scholarship Cruises with proceeds going to the ABA Educational and Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Under the leadership of Willetta Phipps, the members only section on the ABA website was designed to allow members to review their points and update personal information in real time. Additionally, members are able to view point races and milestone achievements using the ABA website.