

U452 State of the Unit Address on December 5, 2021

Welcome everyone to the annual report and state of the unit address. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Joe Morgan, the current President for Unit 452.

Each year we gather in December to summarize the significant events that have shaped our Unit this past year. We announce our new board members, celebrate our achievements, acknowledge those who have played a significant role in guiding our Unit, and remember those that have been lost. We briefly discuss the Vancouver Club's finances, and address some of the significant challenges we will be facing in the future.

I am happy to announce that you have elected Joe Coulter, Jerry Draggoo, Craig Schaueremann, and Rich Zier to the board of directors. In addition Rich Carle will also be a board member representing Longview Bridge Club. Please join me in welcoming our new board members.

Unit 452 has had some significant successes this past year.

- In June we raised \$2,129 for The Alzheimer Association. Special thanks to Joy Fletcher for coordinating the auction and corporate sponsors, Jeff Jacob, and Rich Carle for donating their time and director fees, and to all who supported this very worthwhile charity.
- In August, we were the first club in America to hold a downgraded open sectional. Thanks to Ginny Griffith the tournament chair, Sue Freitag, and Lila Wallace for their help in contacting players, and everyone else involved this tournament, we made a profit of \$1,380.
- In the past year, 22 members have achieved their next rank including one member, Bruce Cuthbertson reaching Diamond Life Master. In addition 4 new members have joined the unit.
- Several members of Unit 452 will be representing district 20 at the Reno Nationals.

This past year it has been particularly difficult as we have been transitioning from our forced online world to whatever combination of online and face-to-face games the club will ultimately become. The successes we have achieved are the result of a lot of hard work and dedication from a lot of individuals and from the patience and support we get from our members.

- I would like to thank all of the board members for their tireless support of the Unit's goals this past year. It has been quite a challenge working to find a common ground that meets our member's diverse needs and the mandates from the State and the ACBL. A special thanks to our departing board members; Joy Fletcher, Rita Fontaine, and Kathy Mather whose 3-year terms have come to an end this year. I would also like to thank Ginny Griffith, Linda Medina, and Garland Wilson, members who regrettably were unable to complete their 3-year terms. We thank you all for your service.
- I would like to thank all of our directors; Rich Carle, Lynda Hirst, Jeff Jacob, Hal Montgomery, Care Parker, Tim Riling and Jan Yocom, for their willingness to work whatever schedule or venue the members are willing to play.
- Our thanks to Jim Windus, for his donation of time and money coordinating the improvements to our air circulation and heating system, making it safer and more comfortable to play face-to-face bridge at the Vancouver Bridge Club.
- Thanks to Chuck Burns for accepting the role of Managing Director of our F2F games and to Michael Walker for his continued help supplying items needed at the club. We anticipate both of these roles will increase as the club is able to have more face-to-face games.

- An extra special thanks to Kathy Mather. Along with being the treasurer, Kathy picks up pieces of other necessary tasks, to ensure tournaments are scheduled, special events are sanctioned, and basically whatever job has to be done.
- Finally I would like to give a huge thank you to Rich Carle. It might take less time to list what he doesn't do for the club, because the list of what he does is quite long. Along with being a director, the Managing Director of Online games, the Club Manager, Web Master, and Computer Administrator, he shares the duties of event planning with Kathy. Oh, and for the past half year, he has been a temporary member of the board. He is the Yoda to our Luke Skywalker. Thanks, Rich, for all you do.

This past year started off on a sad note, as we lost Tom Young on first day of the year. Later in January we lost Chuck Guse, Ken Stulgis, Ian Kirk, and Steve Tubbs passed in March. They will all be greatly missed. In tribute to our friends and former partners, a brief message and photo have been added to the "In Memorium" section of our website.

Financially, the Longview Club is doing great. The LBC rents space at the senior center and only pays a fee when they use the building. So during the year the center was closed, LBC did not have any facility costs. In addition, the number of games they offer a week since the site was closed has more than doubled and their monthly table counts are currently 2½ times larger than they were pre-pandemic.

Vancouver Bridge Club (VBC) as a result of the pandemic, we were forced to shift from being entirely face to face to only being able to play bridge online. Even with our online games increasing our table count by 36% for the last half of 2020, we still ended the year losing about \$2,700. Thankfully club members donated funds so that the financial reserves of the club did not have to be touched.

In 2021, VBC started the year much as it ended in 2020, with the table counts for the first five months up 48% over those in 2019. VBC's Year-to-Date profits were up as well, netting \$3,460 without having held a sectional. Things were looking good; people were able to get vaccinated and the number of cases in our area were coming down.

In June, the state lifted their mandate that prevented groups from gathering indoors, so both LBC and VBC started holding Face-to-Face (F2F) games. The VBC started F2F games on Mondays and Saturdays for both limited and open players. Despite the open games having a good turnout, the lack of interest in playing F2F by enough limited players made the change a net loss in revenue. Basically we were trading 13 tables online (both open and limited) for 10 F2F tables. As a result, Vancouver's table count for June decreased 7% and for July it was down 9%.

Since then, our table counts have dropped significantly, 30% in August, 32% in September, 34% in October. We know that the mask mandates and the closure of the club for nearly a month had an impact to our FTF game totals, however the decrease in table count has come primarily from our online games. As a result the club has been losing money each month; June -\$1,092, August -\$405, September -\$1,907, and October -\$1,580.

While there is no reason to panic, Vancouver has enough money in reserve to weather this storm, the situation is creating quite a challenge and will weigh heavily on the board's future decisions.

- The Vancouver bridge club's lease expires in February of 2024, and it appears the property owners are seeking approval from the city to convert the land into an apartment building.
- Our current venue for Open Sectionals, the Vancouver School for the Deaf, may not be available in the future. They have a multi-year renovation plan they have implemented and at this time they are not willing to rent out the space.

- Our paid membership is down 17% over the past two years and it is highly likely that our active membership is down even more as some members don't intend to renew their membership.

As the bridge world begins to move back towards the new normal, whatever that will be, if we want to have a healthy F2F presence, we are going to have to rebuild our membership. This is going to be one of the primary goals of the new board in the coming year. But the job of rebuilding is going to be everyone's responsibility. We need those of you who can, to volunteer for committees, that will be popping up throughout the year. Right now, we could really use the following key positions filled.

- Having someone performing the role of Education Liaison is key to the recruitment and development of new members. Maintaining a training program is not only one of the principal objectives of our unit, but also it is an essential element to promote growth and our ultimate longevity.
- The role of a Hospitality Chairperson is to not only send out cards to members when they are ill or hospitalized, but also to conduct outreach whenever members have been missing to make sure everything is okay. Covid put a serious kink in our process so we have not been routinely checking on our absent players and our membership may be down as a result of it.

Well, I've talked long enough. Let's go play some bridge. Thanks.

*- delivered by President Joe Morgan
December 5, 2021*