



THE STICKY WICKET

NOVEMBER 2022



VIEW FROM THE TOP

JOHN BANNISTER IN THE SPOTLIGHT



John Bannister, as most of you know, has been the dedicated and much-appreciated President of the National Croquet Club Board for two years. Here he is interviewed by **Bob Rochedieu** to outline the administrative structure under which the Club operates, and share his insights on the coming year.

John, how long have you been associated with the National Croquet Club (the "Club")?

In 2015, just by luck, my wife and daughter, who lives in NYC, stumbled upon the National Croquet Center, (the 'NCC'), when searching for a wedding venue. Our daughter's wedding there was delightful, and we were intrigued by what the NCC had to offer in the way of the sport of croquet. As I was still working in international sales, traveling worldwide and managing an office in Dubai, it was not the time to join.

When I retired in 2017, Carol and I joined the Club so that we would have an activity to do together, and mostly get me out of the house! That was a game changer. It has made retirement so enjoyable, not only learning new skills and challenging myself to be a better player, but meeting new people. I also serve on the committee in the Special Olympics Croquet program where I volunteer.

In 2020, I was elected to the Club's Board of Directors, chosen as President. and reelected in January 2022. My focus has been on membership growth and retention, streamlining our procedures and documents, and improving committee effectiveness to be more responsive to member needs. We initiated an annual audit, and its minor recommendations were, or are, being implemented.

Will you briefly describe the relationship between the National Croquet Club, the Croquet Foundation of America, and the National Croquet Center?

I'm happy you asked that as it confuses everyone! The Foundation is a fully tax-exempt 501(c3) not-for-profit corporation that owns and operates the NCC. A self-governing Board of Directors manages it. All front-office staff, the grounds crew, and the Croquet Pro are Foundation employees.

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2023, ANOTHER BANNER YEAR FOR THE NCC!

From the Desk of the Chairman

As the Croquet Foundation of America (CFA) starts another season at the National Croquet Center (NCC), I'm pleased to report on plans that will enhance everyone's experience at the NCC, along with comments about finances and an introduction to the CFA Board.

Expansion. The CFA, which owns and operates the NCC, has completed a long list of improvements, seen & unseen, with much more in the works! Among other things, **we're gearing up to add six new croquet courts, five in the back on ground-level lawns and one by the pond, a 50 percent expansion!** We are also planning major enhancements **in the bar and ballrooms, adding an electronic Recognition Wall, and purchasing the adjoining 2.3-acre property** at 885 West Patrick Circle, including a house, two storage buildings, and room for four additional courts!



Finances. The Club's Space Sharing Agreement with the CFA (funded by your membership dues) will cover about 40% of the Center's \$1.1M basic operating cost this year. That is up substantially from past years, based on excellent membership growth. The balance of our earned income is covered by outside events that promote the sport, rental income from Sandy James Fine Food & Productions (caterer) and the USCA, court rentals, and the Pro Shop.

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**Three gateways before you speak:
Is it true? is it helpful? is it kind?
Rumi (Sufi poet)**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sometimes a great notion becomes the seed of a plan that actually comes to fruition. Such was the motivation to launch a newsletter for the National Croquet Club now, in 2022. We follow four years of lively newsletters published by Mary Shields that ended in 2018. Visionaries early this year included Shaun Henderson and Cooky Donaldson, who, with the encouragement of Mary Shields, became the inspiration to start again.

Here you have the first edition of *The Sticky Wicket (SW)*, an online monthly or bi-monthly highlight of news of our croquet events and the people who create them, the very activities that bring us together as a community bonded by our love for the sport. The Sticky Wicket is a moniker we think conveys a sense of challenge, fun and, camaraderie, like the game itself. We will aim to provide useful information, and to entwine the National Croquet Club's place in croquet history with a sense of pride and whimsy.

This first issue features an overview from Club President John Bannister, update on the expansion from CFA Chairman David McCoy, the launch of the new Croquet Museum, Tips from the Pro and more! Thank you to Franck Meunier for his wonderful assistance in formatting the newsletter.

Your feedback and suggestions are most welcome, and please come forward if you have writing experience. Contact me at mcchurchill@gmail.com. The success of a great notion can only be measured by you, the reader.

Mary Churchill, Editor

Dine and Discover Luncheon Series



The first in a new series of six Dine and Discover luncheons organized by June Rochedieu entertained and delighted attendees by lifting the curtain on the talented productions of the FAU Theatre Lab. Lou Tyrell, who has directed plays there, brought our attention to this exciting regional theatre.

Next Dine and Discovery luncheon, December 14 with Maddy Singer. Mark your calendars and come meet new friends and old while you lunch and learn!



WE LOVE CLUB MEMBERS WHO COMPETE

*Everyone who competes is a winner in our book.
Some players just score higher than others.*

Cheryl Bromley founded the **Women's GC International Friendship Cup** competition in 2021 at the Chesapeake Bay Croquet Club. Eleven Club members competed this year in a very high-level tournament with women from the US and other countries. **Suzanne Turner** and **Mary Galasso** were winners of Shield and Zed plates respectively.



Alex Galasso and **Priscilla Flowers** were high scorers at the 2022 **USCA GC Nationals** in North Carolina. Priscilla won First Flight doubles with her partner from another club and Alex made it right up to the Quarter Finals First Flight singles and doubles. **Paul Fecteau** competed in the Championship Flight.

Ten NCClub stalwarts at the **Big Oyster GC Tournament**, also high level for players from the US and foreign countries at Chesapeake Bay CC



Caryl Firth, Pam Groh, Trudy Crowetz, Alex Galasso, Tate Russack, Mary Galasso, Cami Russack, Debbie Bradley, Priscilla Flowers and Sheila Petersen. High scorer was Priscilla Flowers who made it to the Final Four.

Little Fun Fact

The U.S. Postal service has issued a new stamp sheet called Backyard Games. With this pane of 16 Forever stamps, the U.S.P.S. celebrated the variety of games Americans play for outdoor recreation. Bravo croquet!



HOW'S YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF CROQUET HISTORY?

New Website to Launch in December



Did you know that croquet became the first outdoor game played by women and the first sport played by men and women together?

There were strict "moral codes" back then. A lady's ankle had never been revealed before in public, and, heaven forbid, this sometimes happened when searching for the ball under her skirt! When balls rolled off the court into the bushes, it was hard to retrieve them in a long skirt. There were many concerns that flirtations during the game created hurt feelings, and physicians warned that constant play could curve the spine. Those were the good old days going back to the 1800s.

Mary Shields, Museum Historian

Those intriguing facts come from The National Croquet Museum being launched online by the Croquet Foundation of America (CFA). Its purpose is to preserve the history of croquet in the U.S. and inspire those who are curious about croquet to learn more. Spearheaded by CFA Chairman **David McCoy**, Museum Historian **Mary Shields**, and Director **June Rochedieu**, the Museum promises to be a very exciting and prestigious addition to the growing sport of croquet.

"The CFA and I are thrilled that the National Croquet Museum website is finally going to be realized!" said David McCoy. "To have a permanent record of croquet in the U.S., especially one that features the many characters and unsung heroes of croquet beyond U.S. Croquet Hall of Fame members, and one that curates the wonderful art, trophies, and treasures we have here at the Center, has long been a dream of mine.

"We are deeply indebted to Mary Shields and June Rochedieu for their determination and talent in launching this new website," McCoy added. "It will greatly expand knowledge about the sport, its history, its development, its people, its equipment, and its clubs. Further, it will add to the prestige of the National Croquet Center and the resident National Croquet Club for its support of this major volunteer effort."

Please plan to visit the website to find out about the many famous people, including Queen Elizabeth II, the Beatles and Lady Diana as a child playing croquet. It's fun and you will learn a lot about our favorite sport! **Standby for the Museum site going live!**

June Rochedieu, Director



(ONE LAST) TIP FROM THE PRO, JACK RUSH

Stop the Twist!

A common question I get asked is why am I missing shots even though I am lined up? Most people believe it is a result of them thinking they are lifting their head. While that can be the case occasionally, majority of the time I see that they are moving their mallet head. This is commonly a result of twisting in their grip.

When you grip the mallet, it is important to keep your grip loose. This helps keep the small muscles in your hands relaxed. Keeping these muscles relaxed is vital. I will see players want to grip tighter right before they make contact with the ball. If you hold your mallet with a loose grip and then tighten, the mallet head will shift on you, leading you to miss hit shots.

What is the solution? The answer is very straightforward. Keep the grip loose and the muscles relaxed. A little trick that I use is, take a deep breath before I swing. I would encourage players to utilize some trick to relax themselves before making a shot. Your swing will be smoother and more accurate. **HAVE FUN AND SHOOT STRAIGHT!**

**JACK LEAVES US NOVEMBER 1.
THANK YOU, JACK FOR YOUR
EXCELLENT ADVICE AND HELP
THIS SUMMER.
ALL GOOD LUCK IN YOUR
NEXT VENTURE!**



UPCOMING TOURNAMENTS AT THE NCC

Nov. 4-6: NCClub GC Singles

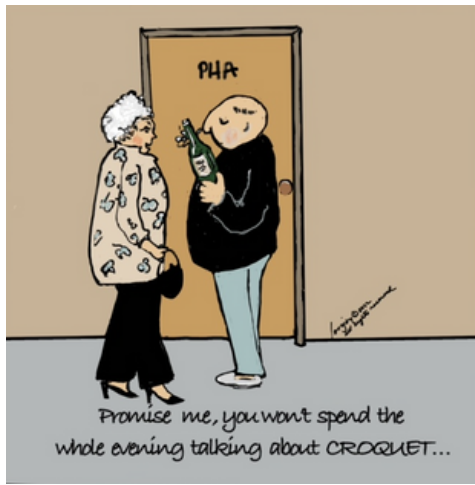
Nov. 10-13: USCA 9W National Championships

Nov. 16-20: USCA Seniors Masters

Dec. 9-11: Club 6W AR Doubles

Jan. 19-22: Women's GC Open 2023





Thank you Lovejoy Duryea for the cartoon!

Continued Interview with John Banister - Page 1

The Club has a 'Space Sharing and Operating Agreement' with the Foundation under which the Club transfers monthly amounts to the Foundation to share the cost of using the facilities and the personnel. When we use the acronym NCC, it refers to the National Croquet Center; the Club is simply "the Club."

What is the configuration of the Club Board of Directors?

The Club Board consists of seven members, including four Directors elected by Club members at the Club's Annual General Meeting in December who then serve as officers. The other three Board positions are the CFA Board President and two others appointed by him from among its Board members. CFA Board members are also Club members. The Club Board President holds a permanent position on the Foundation Board and attends all meetings ex-officio.

How do you see 2023 concerning events and tournaments at the NCC?

2023 will be a very active year for tournaments, corporate and private events. We are preparing schedules to show everyone those dates well in advance, especially the tournament and corporate events. We encourage Club members to assist at corporate events as they are a major revenue source for the NCC.

We anticipate a great year ahead for our Club! The most exciting news for me is the 50 percent increase in the number of courts. As of today, the Club has 475 active members and that may grow to 500 members by year-end. Thanks for the generous efforts and work by the Croquet Foundation of America for providing such a fine croquet-playing venue and experience for our members at the National Croquet Center.

Little Fun Fact

The game evolved from paille-maille (French: "pall-mall"), which was played in France at least as early as the 13th century and introduced into England in the 16th century.

Continued letter from David McCoy- Page 1

In addition to earned income, we hold fundraising events and solicit donations, which added upwards of \$200,000 this year, with a significant portion coming from CFA Board members. In comparison, we expect total operating and capital expenses this year to exceed \$2.3M, with the difference being covered by debt. This lets us move forward promptly with our plans. Specific fundraising and donations to the Legacy Fund will be used to fund projects and pay off debt. The generous support of Club members in this regard is encouraged and greatly appreciated.

Board of Directors. The CFA Board is composed of the following members, all of whom are actively involved in finding ways to make the Center an even finer place for the enjoyment of Club members and the public. Its members are David McCoy, Chairman & CEO; Hal Denton, President & COO; Mike Gibbons, Executive VP; Conner Helms, VP Legal; Ruth Summers, VP-Strategic Planning; Tom Tribby, Secretary; Trudy Crowetz, Treasurer; Directors Stuart Baker, Randy Cardo, and David Kepner; Damon Bidencepe (ex officio - as USCA President); and John Bannister (ex officio - as National Croquet Club President). Former Director Joy Diesel is on our Advisory Board. All CFA Board members are also members of the Club.

I will close by saying how grateful the CFA Board is for the outstanding volunteer participation and other support we receive from the National Croquet Club's members and its Board. We are working together as a team to make the National Croquet Center the finest and most fun location in the world for croquet!

David McCoy, Chairman & CEO
Croquet Foundation of America, Inc.



The fourth Thursday of every month, **Marianne Davidson** continues to delight all of us with her amazing cakes. Remember to sign-up for your birthday celebration cake!