

THE STICKY WICKET

FEBRUARY 2023



WE PLAY CROQUET: GC, AC, AR



Yes we play, every day except Monday and sometimes at night. Sometimes we play well, sometimes we disappoint ourselves. But on we go, tournaments and players, winners and non-winners. We honor all!

The 2nd Annual Women's GC Tournament hosted by the NC Club, brought a record 60 women, many from Oklahoma and North Carolina. **Cheryl Bromley, Trudy Crowetz, Tom Lindley and Tom Hennelly** ran a smooth and fun tournament (of course they did!). **Bev Cardo** took home the Championship.



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NC Club President's Column



Tom Lindley

The term of an elected Board officer is only one year. That is a short time to accomplish anything and especially short if you want to accomplish a lot. **Club members join us in making things happen by volunteering on committees** where much work gets done. This year the Board has its committees up and running four months earlier than usual, and I want to begin by thanking our volunteers.

Most committee memberships are set, and some have already elected their Chair and Secretary. The committees for this year are:

Finance: Liaison and Chair, **Bill Sadowski; Anne Licursi; Kathryn Robertson; Lenore Warren; Larry Lynch**

Membership: Liaison, **Suzanne Turner;** Chair tbd. **Robert (Bob) Broadway; Joni Cherbo; Franck Meunier; Dr. Phil Robinson; Louis Tyrrell; Michele Vogel**

Croquet: Liaison, **Bob Rochedieu;** Chair, **Priscilla Flowers;** Secretary, **Nanci Hunt;** Education, **Bob Van Tassell;** Tournaments, **Tim McCormick;** Saturday Volunteer Coordinator, **Caryl Firth;** Equipment, **Dave Spivey**

Social: Liaison, **Ruth Summers;** Chair, tbd; **Kaye Broadway; Anne Carr; Lois Clay; Trudy Crowetz; Mary Galasso; Pam Groh**

Grievance: This year the Grievance Committee was re-established as a stand-alone committee, separate from the Board. (We will revise the Rules accordingly.) Members are Liaison, **Tom Lindley; Bruce Fogel; John Bannister; Steve Mednick; Lynda Sudderberg; Dick Sullivan**

Board Transparency with Membership: The Convener is **John Strasser**, and the Liaison is **Tom Lindley**. Membership will be considered by the Board in February.

Revision of By-Laws: Liaison, **Tom Lindley; Suzanne Turner; John Bannister; David McCoy; John Warlick; Nancy Sansalone; John Strasser**

Coordination of Volunteers for Corporate & Club Events: **Bob Broadway, Suzanne Turner, and Tom Lindley** are the Conveners; this will be considered by the Board in February.

Our members tell me that they want to see good sportsmanship and that "the point of all this is to have fun!" I agree. These goals are met in part by members who serve on the committees necessary to keep our Club functioning and improving, and in part by the many wonderful volunteers who help us meet our obligations to the CFA by helping at events.

Our thanks to all of you!

Tom Lindley, President, National Croquet Club Board of Directors



The 2023 Steuber Classic

Charles P. Steuber is an important name in croquet. Not only is it the name of our beautiful National Croquet Center, which he founded in 2001, but also each year since 2008, the famous Steuber Classic has attracted many of the best American Rules and Golf Croquet players. This year is no exception. Upwards of **60 of the finest croquet players are expected to enter**, according to tournament manager, **Bill Sadowski**.

Doubles play begins on Wednesday, February 15, with singles running from Thursday thru Saturday, and finals on Sunday, February 19. The **Steuber will once again offer \$3000 in cash prizes** to the top three finishers for Championship Flight Singles in both golf and American Rules competition. **This signature event paves the way for the Annual Hall of Fame Gala to be held Friday evening, February 17.**



Verdite carved stone sculptures from Ruth Summers

In addition to the cash prizes, trophies are given out as a a coveted long-time tradition. They are **verdite stone sculptures of animals that come from South Africa. Digby Bridges**, the local architect who designed and developed the Charles P. Steuber National Croquet Center and is also in the U.S. Croquet Hall of Fame has been importing these charming sculptures for many years. They were originally the trophies that The Palm Beach Croquet Club presented to various winners in its annual Croquet Invitational.

The Steuber Classic is **a NC Club function** but the monies raised will be passed along to the CFA, a 501(c)(3) organization. Registration is open through February 7. Contact **Bill Sadowski** (631-834-7176) or tournament directors **Carla Rueck or Julia Johnston** for information.

SPOTLIGHTS

We are men and women in white. And we are so much more! These two profiles begin a series of spotlights on members whose interesting lives are intertwined with the NC Club.

Sonia Alexandra, Holistic Health Pioneer



Sonia Alexandra

Sonia Alexandra is a successful holistic healer, inventor, entrepreneur, teacher and author who, after enduring many early years of arduous circumstances, is dedicating her life to helping and healing others.

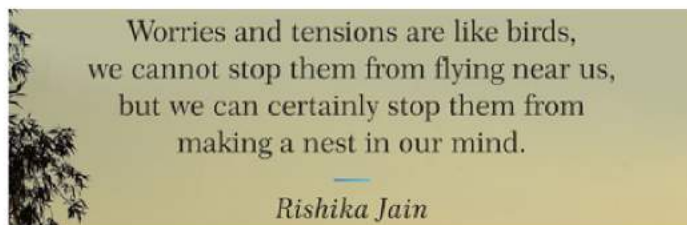
"I was born in Germany and had cancer as a child," she reports. "My Mother and I were separated, and I went to live in Belgium as a foster child. Eventually, after reuniting with my Mother, we were able to emigrate to the US in 1965."

Columbus, Ohio became their new home. After graduating from the College of Natural Health affiliated with Ohio State University, **Sonia pursued her dream of opening a holistic day spa so that she could help others.** The 1990s brought a move to Hollywood, Florida where entrepreneur Sonia founded a major comprehensive day spa, relying on holistic techniques that she herself had used to conquer her own cancer.

A global pioneer in Stone Therapy massage, Sonia authored "The Art of Stone Healing"; her expertise was frequently lauded in the Miami Herald and other media. Her life mission... "I want to make people feel better about themselves. If I can offer someone a ray of hope, if I can make a person's life better for just one day, that makes it all worthwhile."

Her life now? **"I love to play golf, dance, attend concerts and of course, play croquet."** She can often be seen practicing her excellent 6W skills in her signature, very stylish whites. "The Croquet Club has impacted my life in so many ways. I longed to belong to a community where I could grow and flourish. I was searching for my tribe. Now I have found it. I am part of this croquet family."

Barbara Bailey



Rishika Jain

ReNé Valentine, Double Bass Barefoot Drummer



ReNé Valentine

"I've been drumming since I was born," says **ReNé Valentine** breathlessly as she rushes in from a 15-hour drive from Nashville, where she was working with Wynonna Judd. **"I remember drumming on boxes and pots and pans when I was about two to three years old.** As a kid, I became a closet drummer to keep the volume down when I was supposed to be in bed."

"Girls don't play drums," ReNé (pronounced Renay) was told by her first band teacher in elementary school. But before entering high school, this girl was a drummer. Thanks to her mother, she took private lessons from former U.S. Marine Band lead drummer **Bill Laverack** every week. It wasn't long before her career took off. And the beat goes on.

Although females were in the minority, and remarks like "you are really good...for a girl" are not unusual, the music, the rhythm and the talent were more important than the gender of the musician. ReNé' played with **bands such as Harikari, The Ramones' Joey Ramone, Latin jazz great Tito Puente, Jr., and Talking Heads' Jerry Harrison. She was eventually managed, produced and booked for years by Kiss' late drummer Eric Carr.**

A double bass drummer who still performs barefoot, ReNé has come full circle from a shy little girl to an accomplished musician with overflowing enthusiasm for the world of music. **"Playing for the Queen of England was one of the biggest moments of my career.** Now that I'm retired, I'm focused on teaching, working on shows, and as always, documenting my career. My advice to young musicians and drummers in particular is this: Stick to 'embracing' criticism and turning it into something positive; be honest with who you are; don't let anyone stifle your dreams. Practice and keep at it."

Maybe you will find yourself on the courts with her. Instead of drumsticks, mallets will be used. **In both drumming and croquet, "Lucky = talent and opportunity."**

Mary Galasso

From the Desk of the CFA Chairman...

The National Croquet Club (the Club) is the largest in the world, but right now, it's more like a young adolescent with growing pains... and full of promise for a bright future. **Getting to its full potential, however, will take ingenuity, grit, teamwork, resources, and the dedication of volunteers. Those we have.**



David McCoy

For instance, we have our vision of a significant expansion and enhancement of the Center and the plans to get there; we have generous donors who will help fund our expansion plans; we have wonderful volunteers who assist with private events and many Club activities; and we have more Club activities than ever.

The three big tournaments in January were exciting but also inconvenient for non-participants who had to give up some court time. I apologize for that inconvenience, but those are a critical part of the CFA's mission. February onward should be more equitable for everyone. Once our six new courts are completed, that should no longer be a problem. **It has been a difficult task, but we're very close to having the approvals and contractors to get that done.**

Yes, we know there are concerns, even frustration. Please know that your CFA Board, responsible for the financial health, the personnel, the grounds, and the overall operation of the Center, is working hard to smooth out the problems that come with rapid growth. **We continue to work with the Club Board to address areas of concern.**

Are we fortunate to have such a fun sport, a beautiful location, and great members? Yes, we are! So please, be patient and stay positive while we expand and make the transition to an even more beautiful and smooth-running organization. **We'll get there if we all pull together** and keep our eyes on the vision. I'll have an update on our exciting expansion plans at the Dine and Discover Luncheon on February 24. See you there.

David McCoy, Chairman, Croquet Foundation of America Board of Directors

The Mallet Heads



Lovejoy Duryea

Scenes from Club AR 6W Singles Tournament



Jan Fisher watches and waits



Kat Robertson and Larry Lynch spectate



Randy Reid



Tim McCormick, Nanci Hunt

Mark Your Fun Calendars!

- **HALL OF FAME GALA**, February 17 - Honoring Hal Denton, Rory Kelley and Bob Alman
- **CABARET AND TALENT SHOW**, February 23, 6pm. Let us see your talent!
- **DINE AND DISCOVER** February 24, noon. Craig Kirsner, MBA on Financial Planning, and CFA Chairman David McCoy on NCC Expansion Plans

Sandy Knuth Competes in AC World NZ

In Her Own Words...

The Women's World 2023 New Zealand Association Croquet competition was spectacular, brilliant, and very educational. Players shared an unusual bond, dare we say an addiction of sorts, to this wonderful game. **The hoops were set with the goal of 1/64" clearance at bottom and 1/32" clearance at top,** called Quadway adjustables. The locals were used to them, but yikes, **they are bouncy!**



Sandy Knuth and partner Dawn Jupin

The finalists both casted at least a dozen times for most shots, no matter how close or far the shot was to go. We had intermittent rain, puddles on the lawns, Antarctic wind, all part of the fun. No trophies for my bookcase, but lots of wonderful memories. Now back to my hospital radiology practice!

TIP FROM THE PRO

More Croquet Drills (Ugh)

No, not "ugh". Performing drills using your best croquet form is what makes you a better player. Do you want to clear that opponent ball? Score that wicket? Learn how in your drills.



Dick Scherf

Put out one or two sets of balls. Shoot one ball, let's say the red solid ball, about **25 feet away**. Then from your position, and using your best croquet form, **shoot the rest of the balls at the target ball**. Try to make the collection of balls at the target as small as you can.

You need to repeat this drill at least three times at each practice session. Keep your head down and your eyes on the impact of mallet and ball. Your aim and "feel" for the lawn will improve with time. Be patient.

The 20-wicket drill: Place a ball 9 inches from the opening of a wicket. Score the wicket. Now, without moving the ball from wherever it stops, score the wicket again from the other direction. Make 20 wickets in a row. If you don't score on a shot, then begin all over again from 9 inches. Frustrating, but once again, use your best croquet form on each shot. It has been done!

What to do when it's your turn? We'll discuss that next time. Practice!

Ever Thought About Grass? No, Not That Kind. Our Beautiful Green Lawns.

Here's the dirt...

What is croquet but a madly challenging game with a lust for lawns? Lawns... green, hard, level, and lush. To the avid croquet player, a perfect lawn is a given; with any luck, it guides the well-hit ball to its precise destination or smack through the jaws of the wicket.

At the NCC, we play on beautifully manicured **TifDwarf Bermuda Grass**, developed in 1965 and named after the area where it was developed in Tifton, GA. by the Dept. of Agriculture and the Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station.

Don't be fooled by its pretty face and soft texture; this lawn is one tough crop. The best turf must be much more than merely a pretty face. "Our croquet lawns need to be laser level, and **the grass needs to withstand very heavy usage, salt air, high temperatures, and very close mowing,**" says David McCoy. "To thrive, it has to be aerated periodically by taking out cores, punching holes, and Verticutting; then top-dressed with sand to fill the holes and help keep it level. It also gets rolled weekly or more often to keep it as level as possible."



Our lawns must also tolerate faulty jump shots, shots scraping the surface, and be lightning fast to recover from damage. They also must drain quickly after a heavy Florida rainfall. After all, the games must go on. If you think that a lot is expected of this lovely turf, you would be correct, and TifDwarf Grass fits the NCC bill perfectly.

Sheila Petersen

THOSE ANGLE SHOTS GIVING YOU ANGST?

Here's Some Sage Advice on the **Croquet Shot** from that Renowned Sage, **John Blamire**. Seen here is self-portrait, better than Van Gogh.



At the heart of this very special sport, probably about 800 years old, but evolving into its current form around 1852 and popularized by a failed poet, failed novelist and failed inventor (but that is another story for another time!) has at its heart a shot using two balls that can result in great **success, or even greater failure**, to and for every player that has ever tried it. **The Croquet Shot!**

In the American Six-Wicket (ASW) version of the game when your ball strikes another ball (friend or enemy) it is immediately considered to be "ball in hand". **As the term suggests you have to imagine that the moment the two balls meet, your ball is automatically removed from the lawn and put in your hand (hence the name).** Your ball is then put into contact with the ball you have just struck. It can be placed anywhere around the full 360 possible degrees, but the two balls must stay in physical contact.

All you have to do now is strike your ball with your mallet at an angle and in a way that make both balls move. You don't even have to think about it. **The laws of physical mechanics take over**, and your balls move away from you. Your ball (if you have done it right) should move towards its target, usually the next wicket you need to go through. If all goes according to plan, you get one more shot (through the wicket, I hope!!) and you can start all over again. Simple, right?

When it works, the croquet shot is beautiful to behold and is the most used and abused shot in the whole game. The concepts of "Continuation" (discussed last time) and this "Croquet Shot" are two of the fundamentals of this game. Next month: deadness.

By the way the self-portrait done in digital oils at the top of this piece is quite accurate. I am that good looking!

SHARE YOUR PASSION FOR CROQUET

You love croquet and want to share your passion with first-time players? The Croquet Committee is looking for **volunteers to help** with the Golf Croquet lessons, offered to the non-members on Saturday morning. For information, please contact **Caryl Firth** at carylfrith@gmail.com

REMEMBRANCE OF BOB ALMAN

Edith Hall

Bob Alman will be Honored posthumously at the Hall of Fame Gala on February 17.

Robert Lewis (Bob)Alman meant the world to me. He still does. The first time we met through mutual friends in 2008, he announced he was registering us as partners in a Doubles Tournament at NCC. I had never played before. It was daunting!



Our friendship flourished. I admired his knowledge. NCC member and friend Sue Varey recently pointed out, **not only was Bob a superb organizer, player and promoter, he was also croquet's and NCC's chief historian.** And while his eccentricities were often misunderstood by many, I found them endearing, probably because he was the only person I knew who was missing a mean streak. **"Bob Alman is an acquired taste," I'd say in his defense. Truly there never had been, or would be, a dearer, more generous pal.**

We spent most days of **the pandemic** together, masked and exploring outdoor cemeteries, parks and sculpture gardens until we graduated to empty movie theaters that mercifully had remained open.

As I entered his hospital room for the last time, he was smiling. "What have you got to smile about?" I teased. **"Thinking about Edith coming to visit,"** he replied. Five days later he was gone.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Kevin Alvarez, Janet & Peter Brav, Sims Bryant, Debra Chalhoub, Gerry Gibian, Rhonda Gordon, Stan Green, Judy Ann Lang, Virginia Laytham, Linda Munn, Marybeth & Timothy Sotos, Elizabeth Thiele, Nancy Treuhold, Eldon Trimmingham, Jacob Turner, Marjorie Yasher.