



THE STICKY WICKET

MARCH 2023



A Day with Special Needs Kids Means Learning and Laughter

It's Not About Winning; It's More About Fun



They arrive excited, full of energy, some in wheelchairs, happy faces, all with white shirts, ready to play. This is a special morning for the National Croquet Club and the volunteer members who greet these Special Needs kids whose enthusiasm seems boundless.

Two weeks ago, Palm Beach Central High School in Wellington brought 21 croquet enthusiasts, and seven others arrived from the Special Olympics program of Palm Beach County. Waiting to greet them were volunteer coaches: **Louis Tyrell, Lou McGrath, Suzanne Turner, Jill Harrold, Lenore Orlowska-Warren, Bruce Hindin and Mary Churchill.**

"This is the most fun I have had all year," says **John Bannister**, who organizes the Special Needs program. "The kids or volunteers, not sure who enjoy it more." Absolutely true. The program aims for a once a month outing at the NCC during the school year.

Each volunteer takes four eager players to the court, then demonstrates the basics same as they do with any new players. Show some grips, take a few pendulum practice swings, then line up opposite each other to hit a ball back and forth over three feet or so. Truthfully, **it's a little rough at first, no question, more misses than hits.** But progress is amazing! Once they get the hang of it, they are off to the wickets!

"My grandfather taught me some golf," says Jake, who then whacks a quite solid hit. "But **how do you get the ball in that small wicket?**" Very astute question. Getting close and right in front definitely helps. Jake then assists his partner and the opponents.

"I don't want to hit Dane's ball," says Charlie when clearing his opponent's ball was suggested. "Dane is my friend." Reminder to the coach: **feelings are sometimes way more important than winning.** Amen to that. Who's teaching who?

Come join the fun. You might learn something. **Next date, April 12.** For more information, contact John Bannister.

Mary Churchill



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Board Liaison, **Ruth Summers***

NC Club President's Column



Tom Lindley

Two subjects: the Board actions and an overview of the Club.

February's Board meeting was exceptionally productive; its minutes are posted on our website. I want to highlight two actions.

First, we created a **Task Force on Board Transparency** that will report suggestions to the Board by May 31. Thoughtful diversity can generate great ideas; we expect great ideas because this TF has very diverse opinions. Please offer your ideas to any member: **John Strasser, Tate Russack, Bruce Fogel, Pam Groh, Kat Robertson, Michael Miller**, and me.

Second, we, together with the CFA, took action to clarify the **recruitment, training and feeding our volunteers** who are vital for **coaching at CFA events**. These events are a major source of revenue for the CFA. We signed a document (MOU) clarifying each party's obligations that is posted on our website.

We thank the CFA for providing the professional help to organize the croquet coaching, and to feed the volunteers delicious meals. **The Club will train event volunteers**, and **create a Volunteer Committee** that will coordinate, recruit, train and recognize volunteers. **Volunteering is both rewarding and fun**. Won't you sign up?

Stepping back from Board business, let me say I am bursting with pride about our Club this year. **The NCC is abuzz!** We have an **extraordinary amount of activity**, everything from all levels of play, beginners to top champions, new members, tournaments, charitable events, luncheons, dinners, lessons, games, lectures (love the Ukrainian idea), up-and-running committees and TFs, and, not least, lots of camaraderie.

As we sit on the veranda, I hear words of gratitude for the beautiful view of the lawns and the players in white, and for **how lucky we are to be here**. It is not just a croquet paradise; **it is a little paradise and a team effort**. **Thank you all** for your part in making the NCC and our Club the world-class croquet center and Club that we are.

Gratefully,

Tom Lindley, President, National Croquet Club Board of Directors



Anne Frost Robinson Brings Her Talent and Experience to NCC

Two Months Makes a Difference

If you see a new, unfamiliar, and, by-the-way beautiful, face in the office or pro shop, please greet **Anne Frost Robinson**, who graciously offered to help the Club for two months, wherever needed. The CFA, and particularly **Ruth Summers**, quickly accepted her offer, realizing that Anne's outstanding talent and knowledge of croquet is virtually priceless.

"It's a treat for me to be here at the NCC, visit with my mother, Lee Little, and volunteer for the sport of croquet," says Anne, who lives in Niagara on the Lake, Ontario. "The NCC is a really special place with so much happening, I'm finding plenty to do." She has already made a big difference, according to **NCC General Manager, Marie Sweetser**.



Anne Frost Robinson

Anne is no stranger to NCC. A lifelong National patron of NC Club, a Hall of Fame member since 2013, Anne's career and life have involved croquet since she was recruited by **Jack Osborn** when the headquarters of the USCA moved from New York to PGA National 35 years ago to be membership director of the USCA. Since then, she has excelled both on and off the court. Rising in the ranks of the USCA in various executive capacities, working with **Bob Alman, Dick Brackett** and other greats, Anne also edited the over **30 issues of the Croquet News**. **She was also President of Croquet Canada**.

On court, Anne was the **first woman to win** the US National Singles Championship in First Flight in Mission Hills, CA. and in 2012 won the New York Croquet Club Osborn Cup First Flight Singles. Among many other honors.

Could the NCC be any luckier to have her? Welcome Anne and thank you!

Many “Quogeess” Migrate To NCC Yearly

Every year it begins. The great annual snowbird migration. The season changes. Temperatures plummet. The snowbirds who summer in Long Island’s **Quogue and Westhampton** prepare to leave their not-so-snug Northern nests for palmier and balmier West Palm Beach. The sacred migratory tradition began just a few years ago when budding players came to croquet schools at NCC and fell in love with the place. “We love returning to NCC,” says **Jan Allison**. **“Don and I are eager to volunteer, see old friends and meet new ones.”**

Large and impressive, the migratory flock, known as **“Quogeess,” (pronounced kwahgees) numbers more than 60 strong** and lands on NCC’s grassy turf much to their, and our, delight. The **Westhampton Mallet Club**, boasts a heritage of members with last names like Osborn and Prentis and also founders of the USCA. Together with the **well-established Southampton Meadow Club, eastern Long Island offered plentiful grounds for summer croquet. The Quogue Field Club**, traditionally a tennis and golf club, installed a full-size court three years ago, and the sport has exploded.

Quogeess Bev and Randy Cardo, who share their champion-level croquet in Florida between the Beach Club and the NCC, feel very fortunate to have such great venues. “This area is a paradise of croquet,” says Bev Cardo. “The NCC with its 12, going on 18 lawns is the great center of croquet in the US. **Sometimes the lawns have ‘character’** around the wickets that challenge the player. That makes it fun.” And retired **Quogue Justice, Alan Lazarescu** says “I like it here because the lawns are fast, and the natives are friendly!” Welcome back, all snowbirds. Welcome.



Don & Jan Allison

Sheila Petersen



Bev and Randy Cardo, help granddaughter Winnie with her David Spivey mallet.

For Mike Gibbons, March Means St. Patrick’s Day and All Things Irish

A Legacy of Building Friendships and Helping Others

“Sure’n if it ain’t St Paddy’s” month, time for all good Irish men and women to celebrate their heritage, their ancestors, the good and the not-so-good. Here in the time of the wearin’ of the green, we highlight one of our own, not only a **truly an outstanding Irishman, and but also an outstanding croquet player and promoter of the sport.**



Mike Gibbons

Mike Gibbons, 2001 Hall of Famer, 2018 Club Champion, CFA Executive VP for many years, and most illustrious, the **Grand Marshal of the 2009 St. Patrick’s Day parade** up Fifth Avenue in New York City. On that day, the Grand Marshal, aka the Grand Pooh-bah, is the toast of all New York regardless of ethnic background. Moreover, he’s a father of four and all-round fun fellow.

“I have an affinity for all things Irish,” he says with a grin. “My parents came as immigrants to the Bronx. and from there I later became involved in everything Irish in NYC.” Those activities included, among others, **President of the Ireland-U.S. Council promoting business**, chairman of the International Center assisting refugees, and the Eugene O’Neill Theater Foundation. Mike’s entire career was spent at **Estee Lauder Inc**, where he headed up Clinique and Aramis before retiring as Executive Vice-President in 2007.

The most fun in NYC, he says, was the **First Friday round table** when Irish writers and various cognoscenti met at Eamon Duran’s restaurant/saloon on Second Avenue. Among the faithful were the **brothers McCourt (Frank of Pulitzer Prize fame and Malachy of sense of humor fame)** Ed Burns, top cop, Terry Moran, playwright John Patrick Shanley (“Doubt”) and, on occasion, **Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill.**

The friendship with the McCourts was long and strong. In 2006, Mike and his wife Cynthia (now deceased) brought them to NCC for a **“McCourt Cup Croquet Tournament,”** where humor and playing were equally revered, an event well reported in the Croquet News (edited coincidentally by Anne Frost Robinson). Other frequent players included playwright **Arthur Miller, Mia Farrow and author Denis Smith.**

“I love the NCC,” Mike enthuses. “This is croquet heaven. I too started playing with Jack Osborn in Central Park and got hooked on the game. When Charles P. Steuber, Digby Bridges and others launched the NCC, I was all in. Today, the Club is first rate thanks to David McCoy and others.” And **where will Mike Gibbons be this March 17?** At the parade in NYC of course! Mary Carey Churchill



We Play Croquet! GC,AR,AC



Sunday Hot Shots: Lin Irely, Pam Groh, John Strasser, Sheila Peterson



Franck Meunier, Charlene Nobel, Phil Robinson, Gay Cinque Geri O'Neill, we miss you!



Bill Sadowski keeps the score



Jodie Rugart



Bob, Jesse and June Rochedieu



Volunteering at NCC events is Important!
Bill Sadowski, Barbara Perlman, Tom Lindley, Franck Meunier and seated, Jane Gunderson, Bob and Jane Smith.



Don Whalen and Magda Pappalardo
Wine and Wickets winners

"A community that is engaged and working together can be a powerful force"

-Idowu Koyenikan

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.

Jill Harrold, Cardiac Nurse, Ballroom Dancer and Birder



Jill Harrold

If you see a beautiful, slim blond playing croquet on courts 1 or 2 helping the new members, that's our **Jill Harrold**. She first came to Jim Grady's lessons seven years ago and got hooked on croquet. "I played tennis for thirty years. Croquet is better because you have a clubhouse, social life and lovely birthday parties."

Jill was a cardiac nurse for many years. "People who have heart surgery need lots of care," she says. "I loved being able to help people in recovery." While working at Jupiter hospital, a colleague suggested she try line dancing. She was hooked. **First line dancing, then country, then ballroom dancing.** You can now find her dancing the foxtrot or cha-cha around the nearest dance floor.

Then there are Jill's environmental causes: bird watching, the **Audubon Society** and trees. Living in the City of Atlantis, a natural bird sanctuary, Jill loves the birds she sees right from her window, and is sometimes an official bird counter. She also plants native trees, such as the Gumbo-limbos, that benefit the environment. They are called tourist trees because their bark peels just like a sunburn tourist skin peel!

Here's an incentive if you are a good player. **Jill bakes banana bread. "I will trade banana bread for instruction,"** she says. Sounds great!

Marianne Davidson

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Helena Drori, Leslie Leslie Heilakka, John Hooper, Geoffrey Johnson, Steve Laciak, John Niblack, Linda Philips, Gundi Seifried, Douglas Simmons, Diane Wren

The upcoming New Member Mixer is on April 2 at 2pm at the NCC

Do You Love the NCC Clubhouse? Lawns? Bar? Thank Digby Bridges

Eighty-seven-year-old, **Digby Bridges**, whose architectural vision defines our Club, has a birds eye overview of the history of croquet and NCC's place in it. "Croquet blossomed in the 1930's and 40's, but then fell into decline," he says. "The interest, discipline and desire for this sport, once shared by the rich and famous, fell on poor soil. **Over fifty years later we are experiencing a croquet renaissance.**" **Today's croquet is a blend of the old and the new.**



Digby Bridges

Digby grew up and was educated in South Africa. Moving to England in 1952 to work in the London Society Council, he later **completed an architectural advanced degree.** The Hurlingham Club, one of the most famous clubs in the world, captured his love of croquet. Later, like many of us, he came to Florida. He likes the good life.

"NCC is special because **I helped design the clubhouse and the courts in 2000.**" The long balcony and old-fashioned bar at the Hurlingham Croquet Club inspired him as he drew the original design for the NCC long veranda, traditional bar and 12 full courts.

"The ceiling of the NCC veranda is painted blue like the sky to keep the birds from building nests, something I borrowed from India and South Africa. My intension was to give anyone playing or watching croquet a feeling of **participating in something magnificent.**" **Well done!**

"The time for expansion, however, is now," he continues. "I have helped design a future project for NCC, including a second story balcony and the now-planned six full-sized croquet courts. It's an exciting time.

Mary Galasso

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 carylfirth@gmail.com

American Six Wicket (ASM)

Do You Know What a Deadness Board Is?

Find Out Here From John Blamine



John Blamine

Standing beside all the courts at the NCC are large boards displaying colored squares in both horizontal and vertical alignment - Blue, Red, Black and Yellow, some with a small sliding flap that can be used to show or not-show that color. By a strange coincidence these are the same four colors as the balls we hit with our mallets. They are called "The Deadness Boards" and **you may notice seasoned players scowl as they walk past them.**

Uniquely in the ASM game, the deadness boards are there to remind you and your opponent(s) what is happening during the game. Every time your ball (the one you are playing) hits a ball of a different color you go "dead" on that ball and in theory you should **walk over to the deadness board, find the color of your ball** then look along the row of colors next to it and move the sliding flap so as to reveal that color and record for posterity that you are now "dead" on that ball.

What this means for you and your game is simple - you cannot hit that colored ball again unless and until you pass your ball through the appropriate next wicket. If you do hit a ball you are "dead" on, either by accident or forgetfulness, this is a fault and both balls must be replaced in their original position and your turn is over. Some penalty!!

Such deadness carries over from one turn into the next, and the next and . . . well, you get the idea. The only way to relieve this curse is to pass your ball through its next wicket, a task that becomes more and more difficult as you go "dead" on each of the other three balls in play.

On my gravestone I want carved the legend "At least I'm not three ball dead at wicket six"

Mark Your Fun Calendars!

DINE AND DISCOVER presents the end of the season Grand Finale. Reserve tables early. You won't want to miss this one.

Thursday April 6th 12:00 - 2:00

1. Keynote speaker Karen Leader, FAU'S Art History Professor Topic: "COLOR, LIGHT & LEISURE". Exhibiting a taste of FAU's art collection from the FAU History Lab gallery
2. The 2022 Launch and Debut of the virtual NATIONAL CROQUET MUSEUM. Presented and showcased in the Ballroom. Highlighting the collection of Croquet Memorabilia. Created for the use and enjoyment of croquet enthusiasts.

Come Play!

It All Starts with Grady



Jim Grady hosts Saturday Golf Croquet for Beginners and Advanced Beginners at 9:30 every Saturday morning. For the last seven years, every beginner entering into the NCC world of croquet has probably started through volunteer Jim Grady. Here's his lesson in his own words.

I have always stressed four basic elements!

First, Train tracks. It is extremely critical that one's feet be placed parallel to each other. This is first and most important of the **four ways to aim your shot.**

Second, I illustrate the four main grips and demonstrate the pluses and minuses of each grip. (Standard, Solomon, Split Solomon and Irish or Open).

Third, I talk about the term Core which is the part of your torso from hair to waist. You have to have the correct **angle for your Core** in order to achieve a proper stance. Fourth, I illustrate how proper stance leads to desired 'pendulum' swing."

Later play and I point out the four colors of the balls and both their importance and sequence. I then demonstrate the three additional methods of aiming a shot, which is (**stalking, casting, and leaning**) and to always keep your head down. **If you look up, you won't like what you see.**

Jim is truly an icon to the National Croquet Club as he has been a member for ten years, and was Vice President of the Board of Directors for five years. Thanks for the reminders, Jim.

Lenore Orlowska-Warren

