



THE STICKY WICKET

DECEMBER 2024



When You Join NCC, You Also Enjoy Some Mighty Fine Food SandyJames Wins High Accolades



James Bartle

Ever wonder who exactly is feeding us such delicious fare at all times of day and sometimes night? Yes, **SandyJames Fine Food and Productions**, our inhouse caterer is one of the great perks of the Club membership. "We started in an abandoned small café on South Dixie Highway in 2002," says **James Bartle**, founder with his friend **Sandy Kuba**, no longer in the business. "The NCC clubhouse was being built and people came over to have lunch. They liked it, and we liked them, so in 2007 we moved in. Then the financial crash of 2008 hit. That was a real setback."

Surviving the 2008 crash, and later the covid pandemic, SandyJames story is history, a history of building a highly successful business catering not only for the NCC, but for many corporate clients, billionaires, party givers, and big events for hundreds of people. In addition to the kitchen upstairs, that growth included acquiring two other locations, one nearby in an old church, and one in Boynton Beach.

What's trending? "Bigger and more extravagant parties," says James. "Champagne and caviar. Seems like a race to see who can give the most lavish party. But our base here at NCC is our home, and we love it. Scott Reiser and the staff do a great job." We agree.



THANK YOU AND HAPPY 2025 HOLIDAYS TO ALL OUR STAFF

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Club President's Column



Tom Lindley

Recovering

Bless me father for I have sinned; it has been almost three months since I last played croquet. Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.

We all know that the NCC courts are great and that, for those of us who play early, the sunrises, the sparkling dew, and listening to the neighbor's rooster crow add to the ambiance. And I know that SandyJames' desserts add both to the ambiance and to my waistline. But the real joy comes from spending time with you, my fellow members of the National Croquet Club, on the courts or the veranda, enjoying the games or the dining or the talks.

Life should not be measured by the number of breaths we take but by the number of moments that take our breath away. Several of those have happened at the NCC.

Unfortunately, an injury and the subsequent surgery have kept me from playing or dining with you all. I hope to be back on both the veranda and the courts later in December but, in the meantime, please know that you are deeply and sincerely missed.

Tom Lindley, President, Board of Directors

Your new NCClub Board



Caryl Firth (Director at Large), Tom Lindley (President), Pamela Groh (Secretary), John Strasser (Vice President), Ruth Summers (Director), Bob Broadway (Treasurer). Not in picture: David McCoy (Director), Harold Denton (Director)



It's end-of-year Giving Time

Be a donor! Save on taxes! Donate to the CFA so they can make those big improvements we want: more courts; new pavilions; refurbished bathrooms; new lockers; upstairs veranda, kitchen & bar; and redecorated throughout!

Be a giver! Help with Special Olympics (contact **John Bannister**); help introduce croquet to visitors (contact **Franck Meunier**); help coach novice players at events (contact **Lynn Foley**); coach new members (contact **Lynn Foley**); join a Club committee (see committee heads); become a tournament manager or director (contact **Priscilla Flowers**).

And don't forget the fun, upcoming CFA fundraisers: The Hall of Fame Gala, the New Steuber Classic, and Snowbirds vs. Flamingos!



**THANK YOU AND
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!**

Tip from the Pro: Zack Watson

Since my return for the 2024/2025 season, I have witnessed an influx of more American rules being played at NCC. This is great news for both NCC, the USCA and a number of croquet veterans around the country. While I am hopeful and happy to help in any way I can with strategy and shot making, I am seeing a few basic mistakes that new players often make. The first and most common rule is STAY WITH YOUR PARTNER. If you are together and clean on one another, a plan can be made and more damage can be done. On the other hand, if you spend most of the game chasing, you will likely end up dead and in trouble for the remaining time. Find a nice spot on the edge of the lawn, set something up and have a go at it.

The second mistake I often witness is forgetting the rotation. Just as in GC, players need to be aware of the danger ball (often called the hot ball) while also paying attention to the "cold" ball. Keeping these things in mind will help you make better choices on when you can leave your ball at your hoop and when you should shoot away. If you would like something answered here or on the lawn, don't hesitate to ask!

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Tournaments

USCA GC Club Teams 13 Clubs and 72 players competed in this popular tournament.



Mary Galasso, Caryl Firth, First Flight Winners

USCA GC Seniors – Masters Tournament



Jim Jamison (Winner - Masters Champ.), Alex Galasso (Winner - Senior Champ.)



Richard Allen (Winner - 2F Masters), Rich Rose



Kat Robertson (Winner - Plate Seniors), Linda Trifone



Bill Trower (2nd Masters 1F), Franck Meunier (TD)

USCA Seniors – Masters 6W



David Ekstrom (Winner - Champ. Doubles - with Randy Cardo (not in pic), Doug Moore (TD)



Lynda Sudderberg, Doug Moore, Jodie Rugart



Yen Sullivan



Jan Fisher

Through Hoops to Hope

Jiminy Wicket Special Olympics Expands in the U.S.



On November 20, NCC hosted the second Jiminy Wicket Special Olympics Florida Croquet Invitational. "It was a day of inclusion, joy and friendship for the 32 athletes, their coaches, referees and the volunteers," said James Creasey, who founded Jiminy Wicket in 2015. Jiminy Wicket is looking to establish croquet with the Special Olympics in five states across the country.

James Creasey came to America 49 years ago from Sevenoaks, England seeking new adventure. Settling in Denver, he discovered the Denver Croquet Club. Meantime, his father, Maxwell, was diagnosed with the onset of vascular dementia, and James discovered that Maxwell quickly took to playing croquet, smiling and laughing. They played until his father's passing in September 2009.

In 2009, inspired by his father's enjoyment of croquet, James started a program for the Colorado Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. For more than 12 years it offered inter-generational croquet to thousands of people in the US, the UK and beyond. Just one year ago, James Creasey and **Bev Cardo** hosted croquet at the Special Olympics Florida Youth Summit in Orlando. Since then, he has brought croquet to schools all over Florida. With a plan to add four more states in 2025, James wants to bring croquet to the 2026 Special Olympics summer games in Minneapolis.

James Creasey has truly reached out to those in need through golf croquet, and he also coined, then trademarked, the phrase Through Hoops to Hope® which sums up what he is accomplishing. If you were able to attend the 2nd Special Olympics Florida Invitational that morning you would have seen that happening.

Lenore Orlowska-Warren



Spotlights

Trudy Crowetz Makes It All Look Easy

CEO, CPA and singer



Trudy Crowetz

Trudy started playing croquet ten years ago in the summer league. "It's a game you love to hate and hate to love" she says. "I really like the people and they feel almost like family to me". She loves to go to the club on Tuesday and Thursday nights and Saturdays, socialize and enjoy some wonderful food.

What a schedule she has as the CEO of a large local nonprofit company, *Nonprofits First*. "We help other nonprofits achieve their missions through education, training and leadership development." The first in her family to go to college, she owes it to her love of math and teachers who encouraged her to get her accounting degree and then to become a CPA. Trudy was the former treasurer for the CFA; she stepped down when she became CEO of *Nonprofits First*.

Three or four times a year Trudy plays in croquet tournaments at the Club and elsewhere. Most recently, at the Shark Tooth tournament in Sarasota, she came in Second in her flight and received a Shark Tooth Surprise.

A member of the social committee for five years, she will be chair in 2025, and is planning some never before done or seen events.

Trudy moved down to Florida from NJ when she was four. She has two wonderful children; her son is an IT specialist for a medical technology company and her daughter is a lieutenant in the Pembroke Pines fire department.

Croquet is not her only love. She loves to sing and has sung at the Epcot candlelight procession, a Christmas musical that is performed in the USA pavilion. If you are lucky, you may hear her singing as she plays croquet on Tuesday, Thursdays nights and Saturday afternoon at the croquet club.

Marianne Davidson



David Ekstrom

Croquet, a "fun way of life"

David describes his life in the croquet world as a "fun way of life," with a deep sense of gratitude for the sport that became an integral part of his journey. His love for croquet began through his wife, Martha. David recounts the story of how they visited the Lenox Club in Massachusetts and after returning the next day to hit a few balls, found themselves embarking on a new and exciting adventure. What started as a simple introduction to the game quickly evolved into a passion.



David Ekstrom

At the time, David and Martha were introduced to 6-Wicket croquet, and a birthday celebration turned into one of their first memorable experiences. He initiated the Brookshire Invitational Croquet Tournament at the Lenox Club, which would go on to become a signature event in the region. Over the years, David organized 24 Brookshire Invitational Tournaments, alongside six Massachusetts tournaments and several others.

"A tournament is successful if you can create a memorable experience for the participants," he shares. "This means providing a favor that helps them remember the event, a nice dinner with food and wine that fosters a club-like atmosphere and sending the guests off with a promotional item—like a shirt or bag—that keeps the spirit of croquet alive." David speaks most fondly of his family. His heart warms when he mentions Martha, recently deceased, their three children, six grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. "I miss Martha a Lot," he says with emotion. "She was the vein in my life in croquet. I wouldn't have accomplished as much as I did without her."

David's dedication to the sport has earned him a place in the Croquet Hall of Fame, a recognition he cherishes. Reflecting on his evolution as a player, he notes that early on he believed croquet was about being aggressive and competitive, but today, he sees it as "all about having fun." The shift in perspective has made him appreciate the camaraderie and joy the sport brings even more.

"I appreciate those who have supported the sport - financially, competitively and through fostering friendship." His parting words sum up his philosophy perfectly: "See a ball, hit a ball, have fun."

Mary Galasso

Croquet Strategy Inspires Holiday Cooking

By Diane Waterfall

I love all things Thanksgiving and Christmas. I love the planning, preparing, baking and hosting. This year my customary feelings of competence and anticipation quickly became ones of intimidation and unease when informed a 93 year old matriarch (and excellent cook) would be joining us for Thanksgiving. As I was chopping cranberries, it occurred to me that the feelings I was having were similar to those I feel when having to play croquet with or against a seasoned veteran, a person I only know by glowing reputation, or someone I have watched in awe from afar. "Hmmm", I wondered, "Could I use some lessons I have learned on the court to make this easier on myself?" The answer, surprisingly, was yes!



Diane Waterfall, Chef and Croquet Enthusiast

I did not focus on what mistakes I might make or that my guest (opponent) may be a better cook (player). I reminded myself to focus on one culinary task (shot) at a time instead of the end result whether it be the holiday meal or final score. Though many culinary tasks (strokes, strategies) have become habit, it was important to stay focused, and when I was deciding whether to try a new recipe or not, I correlated it to deciding whether to go for the shot I am confident with or the more challenging one. As with many lessons in life that are interchangeable, I imagine I can apply kitchen lessons to the croquet court as well. I only perfected gravy making after a lesson and much practice. I imagine it will be the same when I finally take a lesson on how to make a jump shot and keep practicing it! I'm committed to doing that... as soon as I finish this leftover pumpkin pie! As my thoughts turn to Christmas get togethers, I intend to mix kitchen and croquet as a recipe for success.

This year I am thankful that the game of croquet has provided me with a new interest, new challenges, a new skill set and especially new friends.

OUR NEW MEMBERS

The Membership Committee and National Croquet Club are happy to welcome our new members:

**Ron & Barbara Backer, Jerry Fitzgerald,
Robert Goergen, Arnold & Dale Goldstein,
Donn & Michele Hamilton, Lynn King,
Matthew & Debbie Kosiak, Walter & Anne
Krauss, Cristina Montana, Adam Peck,
Caroline Robinson, John & Nora Watson,**

Editor's Note

The *Sticky Wicket* aims to inform, educate and entertain, to provide information that illuminates what we do and who does what. It is not the purpose of this newsletter to take sides in controversies; it is, however, very much the purpose of this new newsletter to communicate, to provide an additional level of news and information each month. We are observers. We are also cheerleaders.

While the Club office sends out notices, The *Sticky Wicket*, on the other hand, reports on backstories and tournaments as well as lesser-known activities, where the fun of playing is the whole point. Highlighting Club members whose careers and talents will interest others will be another feature. We are all people in white. And we are so much more! We hope The *Sticky Wicket* encourages you to participate in the numerous social happenings and many opportunities to play. And we want to hear from you. You, too, are an observer. If you are a writer, we would very much like to hear from you.

In the spirit of this 2024 holiday season, we wish you all the Joy of being a member of a community of croquet enthusiasts. Gratitude, gratitude.

Mary C. Churchill

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Nancy Sansalone, Lynn Foley – Event Coaches

happy holidays

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To better communicate with the members and communities, the Club has relaunched its social media presence. Like us! Follow us! Tag your pictures and comments. We want to hear from you!



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