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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Fall always seems a time for reflection to me, so I am considering again the history of BDBC:

How did we arrive where we are, here in Pelham? Our newer members likely know none of that history and I knew very little before my inquiries. What has been a success, or not, and why?

BDBC has “lived in” multiple locations since its founding in 1953. The club always rented facility space, which was consistently less than ideal. In 2002-2004, a decision was made to purchase a building-in-construction on Columbiana Road, which sadly proved to be an ill-fated venture. Remember, then as now, this is a volunteer organization and was perhaps not operating as a business entity in the strictest sense of the term. Our members - devoted lovers of bridge and of our club itself - donated significant personal effort and monies to that project. Tragically the BDBC portion of the building was not completed and the investment money was lost. Still our members persevered ...

For some subsequent years BDBC continued in rental space but members yearned for a place to call home. What factors were deemed critical to the success of our bridge club?

Space Needs

1. A space large enough and faceted enough to host convivial parties and celebrations such as our Pot-Luck Games, Tailgate Parties and other special events.
2. A space large enough to host Sectional Tournaments in our own club. Members recognized that an opportunity to win silver points is a key need for our players hoping to advance in duplicate bridge rankings. In fact, there was no ready access tournament space available for BDBC to use. FYI here: bridge players, especially at tournaments, are not tidy folks. The Vestavia Civic Center declined to allow BDBC to host repeat tournaments at that facility as did the Richard Scrushy Center at the Grandview Building.
3. Improved cleanliness and appeal - which were lacking in the rental spaces that were commensurate with the club budget.

Adequate parking

A sufficient number of parking spaces for both regular games and for tournament events.

Safety

A facility in a safe neighborhood with safety for both vehicles parked and for players returning to their cars after games.

Here begins a story of truly remarkable courage and commitment by a group of volunteer bridge lovers:

Our members continued to wish for a better facility in which to play bridge. **Adversity and opportunity arrived in 2008.** The lessor to BDBC for a different Columbiana Road space sought to evict BDBC in favor of a more lucrative tenant contract. Despite the dismaying result of the earlier attempt, a **Real Estate Committee** was formed. Multiple members were instrumental in this search. **Gregg Oliver** plotted the addresses for active members, located the geographic center for our folks - then at Acton Road and I-459 - and a geographic plan was determined. **Beth Fletcher** and others in real estate began seeking a suitable facility within the budget and location constraints. Despite a lengthy search, no suitable property was located for many months. **The massive constraint was the needed money** - most spaces appropriate for our needs were simply vastly beyond our assets or reach with a manageable mortgage. The present location (144 Business Center Drive) fell about 2 miles outside that geographic center and was located by serendipity. **Barbara Wall's husband Dink** was by chance in the neighborhood, saw the "For Sale" sign and the rest is happy history.

The **late Dick Baggett** was then Club President and led the membership to a decisive vote. Members voted to commit nearly all the club savings, almost \$100,000, to the purchase of the \$437,500 property. The facility was not as we see it today. Many very intensive labors of love, skill, money and general dogs-body undertakings were to follow over the next several years with contributions of all kinds by many, many members.

The move-in date was August of 2012. Where are we now in our ownership quest?

The fifteen-year mortgage balance of approximately \$140,000 will be retired in 4 years. A major contributing reason for our financial stability (despite the COVID-induced adversity of losing folks to online games and decrease in club attendance)

has been our designation as a **501(c)(3) entity**. **Linda Oliver**, a retired CPA and member, navigated the complex and myriad steps of a year-long application process to achieve this status with the IRS. Once this status was granted, the further benefit is that the state of Alabama /municipality of Pelham grant a property tax exemption.

Even I am having trouble following my story but stay tuned please - the best news is next: each year **BDBC is exempt from property tax payment**. For 2023, that would have been about \$9500.00. **That benefit continues into our future as long as we do not jeopardize our status as a 501(c)(3) organization**. Our facility must be used exclusively for religious worship, for schools (our multiple education ventures qualify us) or for purposes purely charitable.

Is this location perfect? Of course not. I wish we could drive down 280 on auto pilot (which may be possible sooner than one imagined) and arrive within 5 minutes of departing downtown (we all know that's unlikely). I wish we had night classes and weekend classes and games convenient for younger, working people. I wish, I wish, I wish ... But I am very grateful for the wonderful facility we enjoy, thanks to those imaginative and bold members who sought a space, approved a space and bravely voted to purchase a space. Thus far we have happily completed 11 of 15 mortgage years toward our purchase of this space - this home for BDBC.

As always, isn't it wonderful to belong to a club with so many knowledgeable and generous members? Thank you to all those who sustained BDBC in the past and to those who will work to maintain a secure future for us to enjoy together.

Enjoy your game,
Michele