



Daily



Bulletin

Washington, DC

81st Summer North American Bridge Championships

Editors: Brent Manley and Paul Linxwiler

Hall of Fame takes five



Hall of Fame inductee Mark Lair, center, with Mike Passell, left, and Eddie Wold.

(right) Aileen Osofsky and her son, Alan.



Sportsman of the Year Peter Boyd with longtime partner Steve Robinson.

Defenders out in top GNT flight

The District 14 team captained by Bob Balderson, holding a 1-IMP lead against the defending champions with 16 deals to play, won the fourth quarter 50-9 to advance to the round of eight in the Grand National Teams Championship Flight.

Five of the six team members are from Minnesota – Bob and Cynthia Balderson, Peggy Kaplan, Carol Miner and Paul Meerschaert. The

sixth, Bill Kent, is from Iowa.

They knocked out the District 9 squad captained by Warren Spector (David Berkowitz, Larry Cohen, Mike Becker, Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell). The team was seeking a third straight win in the event.

All four flights of the GNT – including Flights A, B and C – will play the round of eight today. All four will conclude on Sunday.

Richard Freeman 1933 - 2009

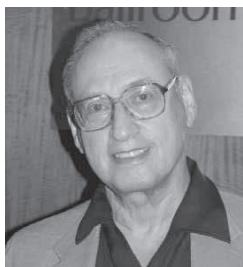
Hall of Famer Richard Freeman, a key member of one of the most dominant teams in bridge history, died June 29 in Atlanta of complications from pancreatitis. He was 75.

Freeman, part of the Nick Nickell team, became ill during the United States Bridge Championship in White Plains NY, where squads were competing for berths in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl. After Freeman returned to Atlanta for treatment, the team went on to earn a spot in the world championships in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as USA2.

Considered a genius by many who knew him, Freeman was a radio "Quiz Kid" in the Forties and a student at the University of Chicago at age 12. He had the first of three college degrees by the age of 15. He took up bridge in college and became ACBL's youngest Life Master at age 18 in 1952. He was also a tournament director and became legendary for his speed with a pencil in the days when games were posted and scored by hand.

The partnership with Nickell, for which Freeman is best known, dates back to their days at the University of North Carolina. During the early Eighties, they played serious bridge "semi-regularly" while Nickell, now a New York City resident, lived in Atlanta. In 1991, they put together the team that has won three Bermuda Bowls and numerous North American championships. The squad has been especially dominant in the Spingold Knockout Teams, winning the event nine times. Freeman's major titles total 30.

Nickell said he was continually impressed with Freeman's approach to bridge: "He had a lot of



energy and an infinite capacity to think and analyze things, and he saw stuff in the cards that mere mortals don't see. He went to the bridge table with one objective - to win."

The team's Bermuda Bowl triumphs came in 1995, 2000 and 2003. "Dick was very proud of the fact that he was the oldest person to win the Bermuda Bowl," said Nickell.

Although he praised his longtime partner for his bridge expertise, Nickell said he mourns more for the loss of a friend. "We were soul mates," Nickell said.

Freeman's wife, Louise, said tried to talk her husband out of playing in the team trials in White Plains, but he could not be dissuaded. "That team was so important to him. It's comforting to know he went out a winner."

Although well past the age when most people retire, Freeman was still working as an executive at Oppenheimer & Co., an investment firm in Atlanta.

Frank Stewart, Bridge Bulletin contributor and syndicated columnist, knew Freeman as an opponent. "I had the honor of playing against him several times," said Stewart. "He was a virtuoso bridge player. I was always an admirer of his."

Mike Becker, one of ACBL's top players, offered this take on Freeman: "Dick was a magnificent person - a gentleman, a great player and someone I looked up to my entire bridge life. In his early bridge years, there was no one younger than him who was better than him. In his later bridge years, there was no one older than him who was better than him."

The following is an example of Freeman's skill

Continued on page 9

If standing ovations could be converted to masterpoints, three of the five inductees at the Bridge Hall of Fame dinner on Thursday evening would be instant contenders for the Barry Crane Top 500.

Time after time, members of the audience were on their feet, applauding a sterling new class for the ACBL Hall of Fame. Enjoying the accolades were:

- Mark Lair, many-time North American champion and one of ACBL's top players.
- Aileen Osofsky, ACBL Goodwill chair for nearly a quarter century and the 2009 Blackwood Award winner for contributions to the game.
- Peter Boyd, winner of the Sidney Lazard Jr. Sportsmanship Award.
- The families of two late stars of the game – Agnes Gordon, winner of the von Zedtwitz Award, and Jerry Machlin, winner of the 2008 Blackwood Award.

There were somber notes at the dinner as moments of silence were observed for Dick Freeman and Gene Freed, two bridge luminaries who passed away recently, but emcee George Jacobs kept the audience loose with lots of jokes during the extended ceremony as tributes were paid by friends and relatives of the new members.

Mike Passell, who was presented for membership in the Hall of Fame last year by Lair, returned the favor for his longtime friend.

Passell said the two first met at a rubber bridge club in Oklahoma City in the early Seventies. "Mark was the best natural card player I had ever met," Passell said. The two eventually formed a

Continued on page 7

Goodwill Message

Welcome to Washington DC and the Summer 2009 North American Bridge Championships.

Tournament Chair Margot Hennings, Co-Chair Fred King and their group of volunteers, staff and sponsors wish everyone good luck. They have worked hard to make your stay in Washington "A Capital Event."

I look forward to seeing and greeting you at the table.

*Aileen Osofsky, Chairman
National Goodwill Committee*

