



By Chip Dombrowski
ACBL BridgeFeed

Becky Rogers has been contributing to bridge in many ways for over 60 years. A longtime tournament director, she became the second woman to achieve the rank of national tournament director in 1979. She was the ACBL's director of operations from 1987 to 1991, and general manager of the World Bridge Federation from 1992 to 1999. More recently, she served on the District 17 board and Las Vegas unit board from 2015 to 2019. Even now, at 80, she's still an active member of the Laws Commission.

Rogers has been an innovator. She helped create the Standard American Yellow Card, and the ACBL's Code of Disciplinary Regulations and she implemented seeding points for the first team trials. She worked to make a bridge a timed event in the days when it wasn't.

"I think she was the one who invented stratification," said Patty Holmes, a longtime tournament director. "It's hard to know how much she's done because she never took credit for anything."

For all these contributions and more, Rogers has been selected by the Board of Directors as the ACBL's Honorary Member of the Year for 2020. It will be her 70th year as an ACBL member – she joined in 1950 at age 11 while growing up in Topeka KS.

"It's a good choice," said Jeff Meckstroth, with whom Rogers won the World Mixed Pairs in 2002 in Montreal. "She's a bright, gifted player and a really good person."

A Grand Life Master with more than 20,000 masterpoints, Rogers won the Keohane North American Swiss Teams in 2005 and the Senior Mixed Pairs in 2018 with her brother John Grantham, who called her "the best sis ever!" when a day was named for her during the Spring 2017 NABC in Kansas City.

Rogers started directing in the late '60s. "She was an excellent director, very committed to fairness," said Charlie MacCracken, whom Rogers considers a mentor. "She worked extremely hard to make the ACBL a more perfect place," he said, recalling that she would bring work with her to the club in Memphis during her time at Headquarters.

Once while working a sectional in Phoenix, MacCracken recalls, Rogers had gone on a cleaning spree before packing up and driving home. She was about halfway to Tucson when she realized she had put all the entry fees from the tournament in a Big Gulp cup that was among the things thrown out. "So at 1 a.m. she was back in Phoenix in a dumpster looking for a Big Gulp cup."

Holmes first met Rogers as a young player when the director was called to the table when something had gone awry in a slam auction. "I was in a dither," Holmes said. "She calmed me down."

Holmes started directing in May 1986 at the same tournament that Rogers was intending to be her last, and Holmes considers her a mentor. "She was player-, player-, player-oriented," Holmes said. "She's patient. She listens. She delivers the right ruling. Everyone who's worked with her or under her, they all said they learned the most from her."

Holmes describes Rogers as someone who broke up the old boys club and always stood up for what was right. She certainly ruffled feathers along the way.

“She was an iconoclast. She saw things in black and white,” said Chris Compton, who came to respect Rogers despite receiving penalties from her as a young player in the early '70s. “She’s done everything for bridge.”

Rogers worked with Bobby Wolff on developing Active Ethics and worked on developing the old convention charts. During her time at the WBF, Rogers oversaw the first World Junior Championships in Ann Arbor MI in 1991 and the World Bridge Series in Albuquerque NM in 1994.

It was her more recent work on behalf of District 17 that prompted a recent district president, Jerry Ranney, to nominate her for Honorary Member.

“I was very impressed she was willing to step up and help out,” said District 17 Director Bonnie Bagley. “She had done so much already. She was at a point where she could just play. It can be frustrating to be involved in bridge governance. I was impressed she wanted to help. She wanted to make things better.”

For the past five years, Rogers has been district recorder, tournament committee chair and representative of Las Vegas Unit 373 on the District 17 board. She oversaw regional schedules and acted as a liaison between the district board and tournament chairs in the units, which have responsibility for running regionals in District 17.

There has been a lot of turmoil in the Las Vegas unit in recent years when a bad contract with the former host hotel for regionals threatened to put the unit underground. Las Vegas used to host the largest national, largest regionals and largest sectionals in the ACBL. But when they made the move to a new site in 2014, conditions were so bad that the table count dropped in half over a four-year period, causing the unit to owe the hotel more than \$100,000 in unmet room blocks, and forcing the cancellation of the regional for two years.

It was amid this mess that Rogers stepped in to help, said Bob Lafleur, the current unit president. Rogers helped the unit protect its assets amid bankruptcy and negotiated a new contract for the regional to return at a different site in 2020. “Becky’s insight in difficult times, tireless efforts and indomitable spirit have positioned the unit for future success,” Lafleur said. “Without her efforts, the Las Vegas Regional would not be returning to the ACBL calendar in 2020.

“She spent hours and hours working on the details, mostly behind the scenes. She’s a hell of a woman.”