



ORLANDO REPORT

Several members of unit 505 were in attendance at the recent NABC held in Orlando, Florida. The tournament was held at the Walt Disney Dolphin resort. As might be expected, this was kind of a "good news/bad news" situation. The playing areas were actually quite nice with good lighting and, for the most part, good environmental control (neither too hot nor too cold). See some pictures below - familiar faces in the first one).



On the other hand since you were playing in a Disney resort, you were kind of a captive audience. That meant you had a limited choice of places to eat and while the food was good, it tended to be expensive (as was parking for commuters) and the restaurants and bars could be quite busy at times.



As befits a national tournament, the level of bridge was quite challenging. Unit 505'ers frequently were playing in nationally ranked events. In these, you play against the best bridge players in the country and the world. These events are not stratified and pay Platinum points. Most of them are also multi-day events with qualification for later sessions an important thing for players such as myself. When you play in these events you have to also adopt a "Points Schmoins" attitude. And comparisons of results to Regionals becomes problematic. With these proviso's, the results for unit 505 people (with a couple of honorable mentions for former members) are shown on the next page.

Notable finishers were Tony Barre who finished 2nd in the 0-10,000 IMP Pairs event and 10th in the 0-10,000 Swiss Teams event, Bob Etter who finished 4th in the Super Senior Pairs event, Chip Martel who finished 11th in the Open BAM, and Lynn and Phil Benner who finished 16th in the 0-10,000 IMP pairs. Several other Unit 505'ers had high finishes in Regional events.

Place in NABC Ranking	Masterpoints won	Name & Address
160	100.45	Anthony Barre, Marco Island FL
371	55.57	Bob Etter, Sacramento CA
439	48.95	David Grainger, Roseville CA
595	38.05	Teri Smoot, Placerville CA
608	37.70	Chip Martel, Davis CA
1227	20.67	Veronica McMurdie, Sacramento CA
1288	19.66	Katherine Ewing, Sacramento CA
1535	16.09	Mary Ose, Sacramento CA
1604	15.22	Philip Benner, El Dorado Hills CA
1605	15.22	Carolyn Benner, El Dorado Hills CA
1644	14.72	Edwin Ewing, Sacramento CA
2559	6.86	Pamela Hughes, Roseville CA
2659	6.37	Lynne White, Lincoln CA
2740	5.89	John White, Lincoln CA

Team OSMO competed and the ACBL Daily Bulletin included an article entitled, "Team OSMO Making an Impact" about OSMO. Click the link and you can read the article at: <http://cdn.acbl.org/nabc/2016/03/bulletins/db7.pdf>

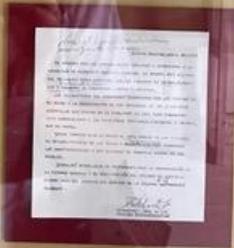
All in all, a good tournament with fun had by all.

Teri



Walt Disney Dolphin Resort

CIENFUEGOS APOYARA CON DIFERENTES ACCIONES LA HUELGA DEL 9 DE ABRIL EN EL LLANO.



This was the battle plan (and pictures from) a battle between Fidel's forces and the then government. Kind of like pictures you might have seen of Washington crossing the Delaware.

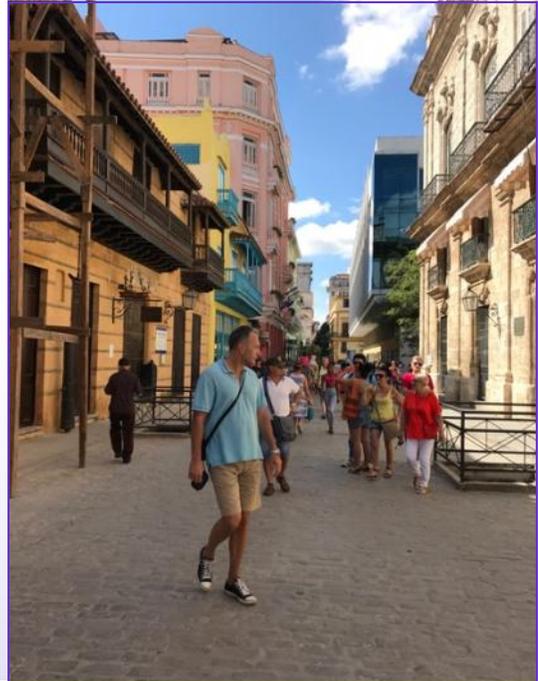
We started in Havana. We stayed in a very nice five star hotel for a couple days and played pairs. The games start late so we had a chance to explore Havana for a while each day. Fun and interesting city. A real mix of architecture and upkeep. City pictures below.



As many of you know, Mary and I (and others) played in the National Bridge Tournament in Orlando.

We left that tournament to come to what we thought was the national bridge tournament in Cuba.

What we got was not quite that. It's more like a bridge cruise but we are playing several sessions of competitive bridge each day (only doing so-so so far).





It's been quite a busy few days here.

As I had said before, we were here to play bridge. Well, the event ended Friday night and we finished right in the middle of the pack.

While there though, we played in the afternoon so had time during the day to do stuff.

We went for an extended bike ride one day and then went to a Cuban baseball game on Matanzas. That was actually quite fun - like an American game in lots of respects.

Old cars all over the place.

Most used as taxis - officially or unofficially.



STAY TUNED . . . Mary says, "we will have another article about our upcoming January trip to Singapore, Australia, Hawaii."

ADVENTURES IN CUBA

Mary Ose

"How can we afford to not go?" Teri Smoot and I simultaneously spoke these words near the end of October.

We and several other Team OSMO members had decided many months earlier to play in the national tournament in Orlando in late November. Unsure where I'd go from there, I didn't yet have a plane ticket out of Orlando. Neither did Teri.

As I was trolling the Internet searching for the best air fare deals, up pops an ad suggesting tickets to Havana from Orlando were readily available for \$53. \$53? Havana? Yep, Americans can go there now - so long as our travel purpose fits into one of 12 categories (which cover just about anything legal and peaceful you might want to do). Just check the appropriate box. Without hesitation, we bought our tickets, checking box #7 for "athletic and other competitions." We were going to play bridge!

Frustrated after striking out seeking bridge clubs in Havana on the Internet, I wandered virtually around Central and South America bridge sites looking for national tournaments. I'll be darned: there's a bridge festival in Cuba AND IT STARTS JUST AT THE END OF THE ORLANDO TOURNAMENT!!

Within hours I had "coerced" (yeah, right...) Teri into agreeing to go with me.

Back in Sac at the bridge club one day in early November, Dave Vidaver inquired about my recent and upcoming travels. When he heard the word Cuba, Dave yanked out his calendar and said he wanted to go, too. Perfect! 2/3 of the tournament would be team games and we would need teammates! Robert Null subsequently heard "Cuba" and voila!, Dave and Robert became the two newest members of Team OSMO's men's auxiliary! We're off to Cuba!



Teri and I arrived in time to play in the 3-day pairs event. Robert and Dave arrived on the 3rd day to join us for the 5-day teams event.

At the Orlando airport we each had to shell out \$50 for a tourist card (visa). After landing in Havana, and completing the requisite "Sanitary Statement for Travelers" (health screening), our belongings were Xray'ed (think TSA but this was as we were EXITING the airport, not departing on a flight).

Teri and I arrived during the week-long mourning period following Fidel Castro's death. Everything was relatively somber: no music (imagine that in Cuba!), no drinking (but foreigners were allowed to drink inside). It was a unique experience. Of course, all flags flew at half mast. "Cuba Es Fidel" and similar signs were prominent.

The first day we were all 4 there together we explored Havana in style:



In the evening that same day with the mourning period now over, all the bridge players joined a large audience for a Cuban/Vegas-style cabaret show with dinner. Although the singer and band were quite talented, Teri stole the show, wowing the audience with her dance moves:

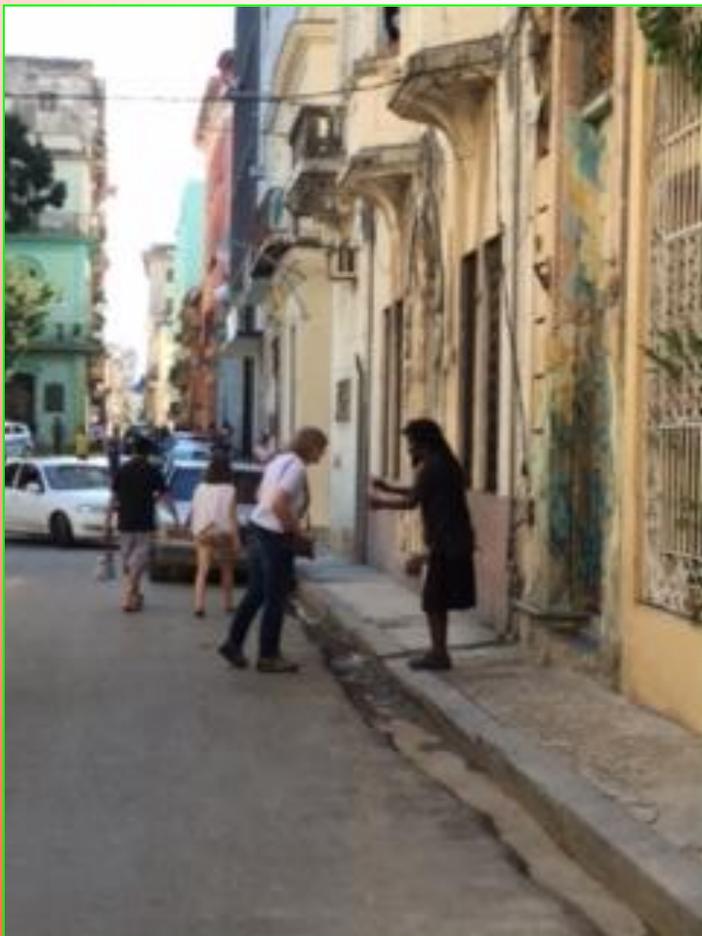


The 4 of us all enjoyed walking around vibrant Old Havana. As elsewhere, we met many lovely Cuban people. Post-mourning, there was lots of jazz and Caribbean music emanating from bars, cafes and clubs. Of course, the old cars were everywhere. Decades of neglect resulted in widespread disrepair but efforts are underway to restore/preserve the magnificent buildings and plazas. There is an interesting mix of old and new architecture.





More
sightseeing
in Cuba



A Cuban woman celebrating her 15th
birthday (Quinceañera) in the traditional
manner:



For the teams games, everyone boarded 2 buses and travelled east a few hours to the town of Varadero where we stayed and played in an all-inclusive Atlantic Ocean-front resort.



Now, finally, about the bridge itself. The festival was fun. It was very small, with fewer than 100 attendees overall.

However, most were top-notch players including a number of world champions.

Participants came from at least 13 countries (Cuba, US, Canada, Norway (a brigade of 12 with matching yellow shirts), Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Costa Rica, Italy, Poland, France, Germany, Sweden) and to a person were pleasant and enjoyable competitors.

Although we fought to do well against such a terrific field, our results did not earn us any stardom.

One of the differences we encountered was that many players did not have convention cards. This meant that alert and announcement procedures also differed.



Play generally started at 4:00 in the afternoon. This gave us a chance to go exploring.

Dave and Robert went snorkeling. Dave, Teri and Robert went bicycling.

All 4 of us went to a baseball game in Matanzas, about a 45-minute drive from the resort.



We detoured to the Bay of Pigs where we explored a small museum documenting that era. Lots of anti-imperialism and pro-Castro exhibits, as we had seen in the Museo de la Revolucion in Havana.

Some interesting things we were told: Just after Castro took over, he and Che instituted a nationwide anti-illiteracy program for people of all ages; they say it was eradicated in just 2 years. Castro also socialized right near everything else including agriculture; rural communities today have large community gardens to feed the local residents.

We were told that agriculture is completely organic except within greenhouses. It is illegal to use chemicals outside.

Today, if a foreign company wants to do business in Cuba (example: hotels and resorts) the Cuban government owns 51% of it.



Largest industry: tourism. Largest exports: sugar (cane) and tobacco products.

The Cuban infrastructure leaves something to be desired. Buildings everywhere (literally) are in disrepair. One exception is a beautiful east-west highway that connects Havana with Santiago de Cuba in the southeast. However, only about 15% of Cubans have cars so "taxis" range from classic cars to yellow newer cars to horse drawn buggies (abundant in the rural areas) and pedicabs.

Hitchhiking is commonplace and safe; almost everyone does it. We regularly passed lines of people alongside roads waiting for rides.



A terrific trip for all of us!

Mary