

## Blackwood Lives On



Easley Blackwood

**Cathy Lindholm's** training was in music. She was surprised to find that Easley Blackwood, a composer and pianist, had a father by the same name who was prominent in the bridge world. Little did she know how soon their paths would cross and that she would play a major part in bringing one of Easley's dreams to fruition.

Indianapolis, in the mid sixties, had a full-time bridge club, founded by Easley and named the Blackwood Bridge Center. Cathy found her way there and took lessons. After only six weeks, she and her teacher, Nancy Weir, went to the North American Bridge Championships together! Cathy soon became friends with Easley and began directing games at the club.

In the late 60's, Easley left his club to go to ACBL headquarters in Connecticut to become what was then called the General Secretary of the League. The organization was struggling and Easley is given credit for turning it around. He made it profitable and, under his leadership, set it on a course for growth and prosperity. Meanwhile, Cathy left bridge to raise her children. The years went by as a series of different people ran the bridge club but, eventually, there was no longer a full-time club in Indianapolis.

By the mid 80's, Easley was determined to re-establish a full-time bridge facility. He contacted a few players with the idea. They formed a committee and away they went. Players in the area were asked for help and donated anywhere from \$50 to \$5,000. They found a site and started the club ... but it needed a manager!

"Easley called to try to bring me out of retirement to supervise the new club," says Cathy. "I knew what a headache this might be, so I declined. But Easley Blackwood was a difficult man to say no to."

Cathy finally agreed to do it, but only for a couple of years and under one condition. "I knew that in order for a club to succeed we needed new players and we couldn't have them frightened off. So, the only requirement I had for taking the job was the authority to get rid of the 'bad apples.' I was assured that I could do this ... and this was long before the zero tolerance policy." **Sharon Austin** became the assistant manager and the club was launched.

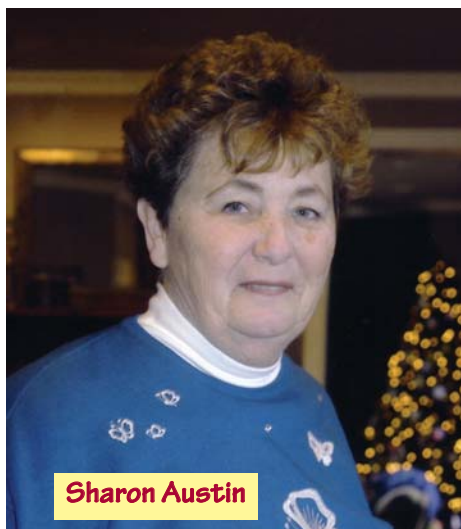
The club started slowly. The first year it lost money every month. "And then the Teacher Accreditation Program came to town and everyone who even thought they would like to teach attended the sessions. The club paid for many of us to attend because we felt it would be a good investment. Was it ever!" The lesson program grew by leaps and bounds. After the first quarter, the rookie games had doubled and tripled. The club finally started to break even, and then make a little money to put in the bank.

"The success of our club is due to two things," Cathy explains, "the lesson program and our volunteers. Our players volunteer for everything from serving on the Board of Directors to cleaning the carpet and coming up with ideas to improve the club. One board member, Sandy Siddiqui, suggested a summer twilight game. It would be a short game starting at 4:00, giving players a time afterwards for a cocktail and a nice dinner. It's been so popular that it's now a game for all seasons." It's been sixteen years since Cathy Lindholm took over the 'short-term' management of the bridge club in Indianapolis. It has expanded steadily and has again outgrown its space. Easley Blackwood's vision of a full-time bridge center for Indianapolis is alive and well.

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Cathy Lindholm tutoring her grandchildren



Sharon Austin