

# GROUPS



# DYNAMIC

BY DAVID VOLK, WRITER

**Randy Multack** may know more about barley and hops than tannins and varieties, but that hasn't kept him from hanging out with wine lovers.

WAC members like **John Birks** and **Frederik Andreasson** are such soccer fanatics they've found a way to play in winter, even if it is indoors and on a handball court.

And birdies fly so fast and furiously in the WAC's badminton round robins that participants call it a two-shirt workout.

Welcome to the world of clubs within the Club, where people convene to share their passions, from badminton, bridge and court sports to shooting hoops or enjoying the fruits of the vine. Some clubs are larger and more structurally organized than others—the Wine Club, WAC Basketball, Squash, Handball and WAC Golf, for example—while smaller groups connect people who might not otherwise know they share such interests as public speaking.

A few clubs spread WAC camaraderie beyond the Clubhouse walls as members hit the open road on their motorcycles, discover new golf courses, or drink wine in members' homes. But whether onsite or off, the clubs within the WAC connect members to each other in no small way.

## DRINK AND BE MERRY

Just like the vines that create its namesake, the five-year-old Wine Club just keeps

growing. Randy thinks the reason is because it educates people about wine without being snooty, no matter how little members know about the subject.

"I probably would have been intimidated to join a club of people who love wine because I knew nothing about it," Randy admits. Good thing his racquetball partner invited him to a Wine Club event. He quickly discovered that members range from sommeliers to rank novices like him who enjoy socializing as much as education. Randy gained confidence in his own knowledge when he saw two sommeliers markedly disagree over which bottle was better during a zinfandel presentation. "If they can't agree, it really is all about what *you* like," Randy says. "So, I'm thinking I'm okay."

After a bit of socializing, the meetings



## Find *KINDRED SPIRITS* in the clubs *WITHIN* your Club

center on member presentations and wine tasting, of course. The subjects have run the gamut from side-by-side comparisons of zinfandels and French vs. California wines to how the shape of the glass impacts the taste of the wine, says club co-founder **Dina Widtmann**. “When we did the tasting, everybody’s eyes were like saucer cups,” she recalls. “They said ‘Oh my gosh, it really does make a difference.’”

### THE WAY THE BALL BOUNCES

The most unusual sports club within the Club may well be International Court Soccer, which sets soccer moves to racquetball rules. Played with a modified soccer ball on a racquetball court, the game allows participants to touch the ball up to three times with their head, legs and feet in an effort to bounce it against the

front wall and back to their opponent.

“It’s an amazing workout,” says John Birks, the sport’s creator. “The fact that you’re not coming up against another player means it’s also a great way to recuperate from injuries if you’re a soccer player.” Frederik Andreasson, a former professional soccer player from Sweden, admits he was puzzled when he discovered the game. “A lot of people walk by [the court] and think it looks a little bit odd, but it only takes a couple of minutes to get familiar with it,” he says. “I got pretty hooked. I really enjoyed it because you improve your skills so quickly.”

Only time will tell how popular the sport becomes. “I don’t think it will ever be a huge sport like soccer or racquetball,” Frederik says, “but I think the people who try it will like it.” Players

meet the first Wednesday of every month.

### THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT

Some of the WAC’s most popular and established clubs within the Club incorporate a workout into the socializing. Regular recreational meetings help members improve their court, ball or golf games while preparing for tournaments both large and small. Pick your team from the following choices, and play ball:

**WAC Basketball.** With 40 teams in five divisions and players ranging from former college athletes to older guys playing for the love of the game, league commissioner

📌 **WAC members get into the swing with WAC Golf, reach for the rim with Women’s Basketball and taste wine offsite with the Wine Club.**

✔ One of the WAC's largest clubs within the Club, WAC Basketball is all about net worth.



night. As an added benefit, members of the racquetball club get a free drink and maybe a bite to eat in the 8th Floor Sports Café during the Tuesday tourneys, says president **John Platt**. And friendly trash talk is a welcome garnish.

**Squash Club.** Name aside, no butternut squash are hurt in the play of this fast-paced game. The group often holds round-robin tournaments on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings. Newcomers are welcome, but be forewarned: Members are passionate about this game. As president **Norman Shaffer** puts it, "Squash is almost a way of life for the people who play it."

**Volleyball.** It may be indoors, but it's just as social as the outdoor game popular at picnics—but this one emphasizes skills and fundamentals, according to coordinator **Ron Rall**. Pick-up games are held every Tuesday at 7:15 pm.

**The Sir Lipton Bridge Club.** Ever since Sir Lipton visited Seattle in 1916 and commissioned a card tournament in his

**Brad Thoreson** says there's something for everyone. Team captains take their passion so seriously that they pick players during a yearly draft. The WAC is also excited about its new Women's Basketball program. Interested players should contact Darin Barr at [dbarr@wac.net](mailto:dbarr@wac.net).

A **WAC Golf** club with 120 members is no mean feat, considering that the only holes at the WAC are in the bagels at the Sports Café. While golfers never need excuses to hit the links, WAC Golf introduces them to courses many members wouldn't otherwise see, says president **John Higgie**. Once they arrive, they play in tournaments that are more social than competitive. "I think of them more as social outings with prizes," John says.

**Handball Club.** "This is the club that started the WAC," says president **Brian Henson**. And what's not to like about a group of gents who envisioned the WAC as a place for a haircut, a game of handball and a beer? After more than 70 years, the

group remains strong, hosting occasional Saturday round-robin mini-tournaments and one of the biggest handball tournaments in the nation every January. Players from the WAC and all over the country have competed in the Annual Handball Classic for 23 years, right here at the Club. Future members often start with a free introduction provided by **Joe Cox** on Sundays at 5 pm.

**Badminton.** This isn't your backyard birthday-party game, says coordinator **John Rowley**. For starters, no one smacks his little brother. Instead, it's what John calls a "two-shirt workout," requiring speed, agility, flexibility and endurance. Think professional table tennis, and you get a good idea of the sport's speed. The group meets Tuesday nights year-round in the 8th Floor Gym.

The **Racquetball Club** season runs September to May and includes quickie tournaments every Tuesday



✔ The legacy of Bridge at the WAC.

◀ Left: Is that a birdie? It's plain: Cutthroat badminton at its best. Below: The Motorcycle Club poses in leather.



JONATHAN SCHMIDT (3)

▶ Brian Henson and Joe Cox demonstrate handball, the Club's founding sport.

honor, area social clubs have battled for the title—but only in the most genteel fashion, says team captain **John Weinberg**. Tux and tails are no longer required, and women play now, too. But some things never change: Members still play each of the six rounds at local social clubs following a civilized meal.

**Women's Interclub Bridge.** No formalwear is required, but a love of duplicate bridge and the intestinal fortitude to play all day with the same partner certainly helps. The group plays once a month April through October, says team captain **Cindy Glad**.

### SPEAKING OUT

While most clubs focus on what people love to do, Toastmasters teaches its members to love what they might otherwise fear. This long-standing organization helps people learn to speak in public at plenty of meetings around town, but the WAC's club is different. The area's only morning meeting has the advantage of catering to a professional-level

membership, says **Lee-Lee Miao**. "Most of the people in our club are either already established professionals or are already starting off in a professional career [and] are fairly focused on improvement and career enhancement," she says. "We encourage people to talk about work-related subjects."

Local architect **David Nordfors** did just that when he gave a 1994 speech on efforts to fix that famous tower in Pisa. Although he has spoken about everything from researching a Prius purchase to the Princess Diana Memorial in Hyde Park, Dave says, "people really liked that speech."

### LET'S RIDE

Members of the Motorcycle Club talk about their bikes a lot, says club president **Dale Freidig**. Speakers also talk, about topics such as safety or changes in the motorcycle world. A recent presentation on bike maintenance spurred a field trip to a motorcycle shop.

While the club doesn't typically organize rides, **Scott Driver** says members have been known to email each other when they want company on upcoming road

trips. Several people in the group recently ventured to the Anacortes Oyster Festival, while others enjoyed a scenic ride along Chuckanut Drive.

Scott says social opportunities are the club's biggest draw: "It gives those of us who ride motorcycles an opportunity to ride with fellow club members and enjoy the camaraderie."

Camaraderie is the common denominator of all clubs at the WAC, whether large or small, organized or merely gathered. And while the WAC has plenty of existing clubs, who knows what other clubs are just waiting for the right members to find each other—the next one may start with you! 📧

*For more information on recreational clubs within the Club, contact Darin Barr, Athletic Program Manager: 206.464.3074, or dbarr@wac.net. For the Bridge clubs, contact John Weinberg: 206.236.0668, or Cindy Glad: 206.523.7618. For the Wine Club, contact Rebecca Haas: reba@teamreba.com. And for Toastmasters, contact Lee-lee Miao: 206.292.3272, or mlbb02@aol.com.*

## INSIGHT ON SITE WITH THE WAC'S ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CLUBS

Clubs within the Club aren't the only ways WAC members network and get more involved in the community. There are also established outside clubs that have held their meetings at the WAC for years.

The Wednesday lunch meetings of the 40-year-old Seattle Execs club are more than just a networking opportunity, says **Executive Director Glenna Thomas**. They're also gatherings where business owners can talk about their challenges, get advice, find vendors, build strong ties and establish mentoring relationships. "That's why many of our members stay [in the club] a very long time," Glenna says. Seattle

Execs can be reached at 206.352.3955.

The Emerald City Rotary Club also holds its Tuesday morning breakfast meetings here, making it convenient for WAC members and downtown professionals. The chapter offers the Rotary's standard mix of camaraderie and community service with one small difference: "We are a singing club," says president **Art King**. "We start each meeting with a song."

"It certainly made it memorable," says member **Joe Follansbee**, who recently spoke about his book, *Shipbuilders, Sea Captains, and Fishermen: The Story of the Schooner Wawona*, after a rousing rendition of the Beach Boys hit "Sloop John B"