

The Evolution of a Bridge Player

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This month we learn about the bridge journey of Ralph and Martha Chatoian. It truly was one journey that they made together, as they have been married for 51 years.

Ralph met Martha on the last day of her one semester at Junior College in Sacramento. His best friend was going with her friend, so they fell into a dating pattern of house parties that summer. Then Martha went off to Cal, and Ralph having completed Junior College went off to San Jose State. Each summer over the next few years, they continued in a comfortable dating pattern.

After college graduation, they planned an April wedding. But just days before the big day, Martha and her mother were in a terrible car accident which left her hospitalized and in arm traction. Ralph rushed to the hospital and Martha's doctor said, "So, you're the groom? You better get yourself another chickie!". Not wanting to do that, the wedding was postponed until August.

And that's where bridge helped pass the healing time. Martha had played with sorority sisters, so she taught Ralph the game. They continued to play bridge after having their children Rick and Darcy. They even played some duplicate bridge in San Rafael, transferring some old points to SCLH when they joined duplicate again. Meanwhile, it was social bridge at couple's houses while raising kids. Ralph says, "We played a lot of *bad bridge*, but had fun doing it.

They lived in Marin County for 41 years while Ralph worked for the newspaper, the Marin Independent. He wrote a sports column for most of those years. Martha finished her credential and started teaching after the children were in school. She found that Kindergarten was her favorite, probably because of the art involved. Martha is a painter and continues to work on this hobby. After moving to Lincoln they got serious about bridge. Jay and Mona Stryker introduce them to the duplicate club here and helped them learn the new Standard American bidding. Always enjoying their game, they bring smiles to others. Once, as Martha laid down her hand, Ralph remarked that she didn't have enough points to use Stayman. She quipped, "This is Sun City, Mr. Stayman goes out at seven."

They have met a whole circle of friends through bridge. They also share travel, RV camping, and hobbies with some. Ralph plays in a band called "Box-o-Rox" with Jay Stryker on guitar and Vic Albertazzi on accordion. Ralph plays bongos, washboard, and various percussion instruments. Ask him about his clickers.

You can ask them about travels to Italy, Greece, Armenia, and Alaska. They also travel to Hawaii each Spring because they love to swim. They are often

seen swimming laps at the fitness center. It is their favorite form of exercise, besides playing East/West. So greet this happy couple when next they come to your table.