

MY BRIDGE STORY

July 8, 2020

My bridge story began in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on December 20, 1955, when I married Larry Lloyd during our sophomore year at Tulsa University. Bridge was “the thing” in those days, and Larry fell for the game head first, with no turning back! Me, not so much! After graduation in 1958, and still playing what we, at the time, called bridge, with friends on most Saturday nights, Larry discovered duplicate bridge during the summer of 1959. He came home from work one day, saying he had discovered a game of bridge where everyone else had to pick up the same lousy cards he picked up! That game was at the Cavendish Club, run by Mary Lou and Phil Merry, I think, national directors at one time. It was in an old house near downtown Tulsa with dim lighting, thick smoke, and very serious people! Larry loved it! Me, not so much! After playing at the Cavendish Club a couple of times, we found out how much we didn’t know about bridge, even though Larry had read several books by that time and had minimal knowledge of the game. I was six months pregnant with our first child, and studying bridge was definitely not on my agenda that summer! However, we did continue playing with friends at home, with Larry patiently trying to teach me some of the basics of the game. In September, bridge was put on hold, as we were now learning the parenting game. In November, with first-time grandparents eager to babysit, Larry decided we should play in a game at the TU Student Union on Tuesday nights. What a rude awakening! It was a twenty-table game with over half life masters, almost all with those same serious faces I encountered at the Cavendish Club! Larry loved it! Me, not so much! I balked! However, I persevered, barely, and we joined the ACBL in January of 1960.

There were no bridge classes in Tulsa at that time! Our classroom was at the game itself, with most opponents anxious to share their knowledge, graciously, but seriously, with the babies. Of course, on several occasions, the sharing of knowledge could be a little harsh, as there was no such thing as Zero Tolerance back then. Larry was loving it! Me, not so much! I persevered! The many wonderful, seasoned bridge players in Tulsa took us under their bridge wings and started us on our real bridge journey. We went to our first tournament, a sectional in Tulsa, toward the end of 1960. At that time in bridge history, some sectionals were as large as some regionals today! We didn’t do very well that day, but I must tell of an incident that looms big on my bridge journey. We were playing against two extremely good players, the declarer on my right being Byron Greenberg, one of those serious faces I have referred to before. Byron led a club toward the AJ9xx in dummy, and after fumbling my cards, probably for a full minute, I played my intermediate card. Byron played his Jack, and Larry followed with his King. Byron immediately straightened up in his chair and said to me, very ungraciously: Just what the Hell was your problem? Before Larry could intervene and protect his very bruised partner, he heard me say: I am trying to learn to give count! Just what the Hell is your problem? A sly grin came over that serious face, and Byron got up out of his chair, came over and put his arm around me and said: Honey, I’m going to teach you how to play bridge! Byron became a

good friend, teaching, drilling, and encouraging us to be better players! His first lesson was on defense, and I did learn to give count! Larry loved it! Me, I was weakening, but still not sold! After three months playing most Tuesday nights at TU, we finally came in 4th one night! We had won our first increment of a point, and we were off! Larry loved it! Me, I was getting there!

Larry became a director in 1961, directing a charity game at a private school in Tulsa until 1964, when we moved to El Dorado, Arkansas, where once again the established players became our mentors. At that time, I was expecting our third child, so our bridge journey was put on hold until around 1978, when we slowly resumed playing a little bridge at the weekly game in El Dorado, and venturing out to play in some of the tournaments close by. We became Life Masters in 1979. Larry loved it! I loved it!

Larry retired from Murphy Oil Corp. in 1992, and we moved to Little Rock, presumably to be close to family, but I think the real reason was the LRDBC. We were already well acquainted with the Little Rock bridge community, as we had been playing in their weekend games occasionally and attending their tournaments. Larry started directing again, and, of course, studying the game with full force, and encouraging me to do the same. I didn't! Sadly, Larry died of cancer in 1998, and I found my bridge journey now at a crossroads! I stopped playing for a few years. I started back and tried playing again, but found it just wasn't the same game without the person who had taught, encouraged and dragged me, at first, into this wonderful world of duplicate bridge! I retired in 2006 and started to play again, with around 1500 hundred registered points, almost all won with the same partner. Since that time, I have had many wonderful partners who have contributed greatly to this Sapphire status. I wish to thank each of you for joining me on this journey and helping me to be a better player. I am also grateful for my many mentors, who are no longer at the table, for their patience with me and for their devotion to the game!

When I joined the ACBL in 1960, while still trying to hold on to my love of just plain old bridge, little did I know that eventually, through the efforts of many, I would some day amass 3500 points. However, even more important to me, than points, are the friendships made and enjoyed during these last 60 years of life on my duplicate bridge journey. I look forward to making new bridge memories and friendships in the future and will strive to continue making this journey, joyfully and humbly, and honoring the memory of Larry and all the wonderful friends who have contributed to my new Sapphire status in the ABCL. I, too, love this game!

Mrs. Larry Lloyd (Jeanne)