

Almost eleven years after I joined ACBL, I finally made Silver Life Master. What took so long some would ask? It was a long row and took a lot of hoeing.

One of the most important lessons I have learned these past years is that you need to play with a partner that you like and that you can click with if you are going to spend several hours straight with them playing bridge and compete well. You need a partner that will put you in the right contract and that will make you look good. In addition, you need opponents that give you gifts. I have learned something that helped improve my game from about every partner and from many of my opponents.

I grew up playing card games like Hearts and when I went to college, I started playing Rook much too often. Rook has some of the features of bridge. I went into the army, finished up my degree, and started my first professional job. All of this consumed about ten years and I did not have the opportunity to play cards all that while.

I started graduate school and began to play Rook several times a week. Then when I was in my mid thirties I started playing lunch time bridge at work and played party bridge on an occasional night at a friend's house. I played bridge about fifteen years this way. For the past forty years I have tried to study the daily bridge article in the paper to help me improve.

After I retired I kept thinking about starting to play bridge again. Although all of this card playing made me familiar with card games and helped me learn to memorize what had been played, when I joined the ACBL I soon found out that I was a novice and had to learn a lot more and learn a system before I could compete and play well.

Before playing in HSV, I played about five years in the Hot Springs game a couple times a week. Soon after I started playing, Millie H. asked me to play on Wednesdays. I only had about 30 points when I asked Millie to play with me in my first Regional (2010). I got my first red points with Millie. Millie has been very patient, with me, putting up with me making all kinds of mistakes. I learned a lot from her. She said many times "you can't do that" as I passed on a forcing bid or some other bidding mistake. We got several first place finishes at Sectionals. We have played over ten years together and it has been a joy to play with her.

One of HS club members, Gary S., needed over five gold to make Life Master and I played with him at another Regional and we came in 2nd place morning and 2nd place in the afternoon in the Gold Rush and he got the gold that he needed.

About 2014, I started playing at HSV, was introduced to Emil D., and started playing with him frequently. Emil had made a Bergen presentation to the club and he let me have a copy. That was the beginning of me learning a complete bidding system. I studied Emil's thirty-eight power point slides every day before I played with him for about an year. Emil and I play well together and we continue to play BBO online.

Emil and I played in a 2016 Regional Knockout with Randy L. with his partner Sharon. We came in second place for twelve and one half gold.

In 2018 the Regional was being held in HS and I only needed a few points to make Life Master. Deb C. said she would help me get it and quickly put a team together. My partner in the knockout teams was Linda S. and she carried me and threw me across the finish line with me kicking all the way. I am truly grateful for my team and the enthusiasm they had in getting me over that mountain to make Life Master.

After making Life Master, getting Silver Life Master a year later was just a case of learning more tools to use in the game and of me putting the time in required to get the points. And most importantly, time to develop the discipline required bidding properly, focus on the game, doing proper planning and playing my best.

I am grateful for all the people who have donated their time and energy to make playing bridge a pleasant and rewarding experience for me.