

I'm absolutely thrilled with this Life Master upgrade!

My journey to ACBL Gold Life Master status has certainly not been that of the average player. I became a Life Master back in 2001. I had only 300 masterpoints at the time, and the 2,500-point plateau needed for Gold Life Master seemed light-years away. Reaching it seemed virtually impossible. But perhaps the "unattainable" could be reached if I lived long enough and played often enough. Of course, I'd need the help of some good partners along the way.

The bottom line is that it took almost twenty years, but I've made it happen. And I had to do it the hard way. Due to the onset of a global pandemic, we bridge players have been relegated to online play for the past year or so. For me it's been much longer than that. I haven't been to a bridge club, or a tournament for that matter, since 2012. A debilitating condition known as scoliosis (curvature of the spine) had become so acute that I was physically unable to attend. From that point on, all my bridge would have to be online. And it wouldn't take me long to learn that online awards are not nearly as generous as those available at clubs and tournaments. Accruing enough fractional points necessary to reach my goal would require countless hours in front of the computer: day after day, month after month, year after year. And there was more—much more—to it than that. I had to overcome physical obstacles even while seated at the computer. My spine is so badly curved from top to bottom that raising my head is next to impossible. When playing bridge at the computer, I place my left hand beneath my chin to hold my head up while mousing with my right hand. It's been a really difficult situation for me, but I persisted out of sheer determination. It was the only way that I could possibly attain my goal. But it finally happened after all those years! And again, none of this would have been possible without the help of some excellent partners. I'd like to make special mention of Jim Kaplan, a Ruby Life Master whose "Going for the Gold" columns appeared in the [Bridge Bulletin](#) some twenty years ago.

The next milestone along my bridge journey is the 3,500-masterpoint plateau. I'll need one thousand more points to achieve ACBL Sapphire Life Master status. There's no guarantee, but perhaps that milestone will be reachable if I live long enough and play often enough. But it won't be easy because my handicap will not allow me to return to clubs and tournaments once they reopen upon eradication of the global pandemic. I'll have to do things in the way I've been doing them since 2012: accruing online "fractionals" day after day, month after month, year after year until I make it happen. When in front of the computer screen, I'll mouse with the right hand while holding up my head with the left. But yes, it can be done. After all, where there's GOLD there's SAPPHIRE!