

When I earned my first points, actually just a partial point at the time, I never dreamed I would get this far!

I grew up in a family of seven children all of whom were fair-skinned and easily sunburned. This was during the time before sunscreen was invented and treatment for sunburn was an awful vinegar bath! Summertime brought my mom's standing policy that we were not to be outside in the sun between 10 and 3. So we occupied our time with puzzles and games and LOTS OF CARDS.

Anything from BATTLE and GO FISH and CRAZY EIGHTS with the little ones to CANASTA and SPADES and PINOCHLE and RUMMY and even CRIBBAGE. And then poker games as we got older. Bridge was my parents' game of choice and they cherished their one night a week without kids. As a teenager and college student I was allowed to watch them play and even filled-in when they needed a "fourth". They gave very simple instructions on what I could and could not do! But then after I moved from home and forged on in my career(s), I didn't play.

Tennis became my game of choice and I spent 35 wonderful years enjoying the competitive and social aspects of the game. I played 2-3 times a week and always thought that when I retired I would play even more. But when I hit my 60's my knees informed me that they had had enough. I knew that I had better find another game to play!

My sisters and I had always said we would learn bridge. So one sister and I signed up for the freely offered bridge lessons at the local club, Louisiana Bridge Association in Metairie, Louisiana. The plan was we would learn and then teach the other two!

And so my new addiction began!! My need for competition and social contact was fed by this new endeavor. I had just semi-retired and found myself doing this 4-5 times a week and my knees didn't even complain. I made some great new friends and was greeted by smiling faces. We formed study groups and practiced together. Occasionally I was even offered a meal as part of the game time. I was pleasantly surprised to see so many former tennis opponents now sitting across the bridge table from me. I guessed I wasn't the only one looking for a new, lifelong game.

I have always been an avid reader and love to learn new things. My careers in accounting and teaching served me well as I honed my new bridge skills. The complexities and nuances of the game fed right into my desires to "keep the brain going" and maintain different avenues of social endeavors. I was blessed with some great instructors at the club and then, as my self-studies flourished, by some great on-line instructors and programs as well. I even began helping in the Beginner classes because I wanted to share my love of the game.

When the pandemic hit, I was already using BBO to practice my skills and was elated when they partnered with the ACBL to continue my club play. Although I couldn't see their faces, I learned to recognize the BBO names of my club associates and was still able to greet them and share thoughts for the day. My addiction continued to be fed by being able to play 4-5 times a week - all while maintaining the social distancing required to keep my family safe.

As you may know, in order to advance in the ACBL rankings, "gold" points must be added to your Bridge resume'. The gold points are only offered at regional and national events that are held throughout the country. This was going to be the halting aspect of my moving through the ranks. You see, my husband is a cancer survivor and also homebound because of other health issues. I am unable to be away from home for 3-4 days in order to attend these events. And so except for the rare time when the regional event was held locally, I would be restricted in my access to those gold points. But this awful, devastating pandemic offered one small benefit. I was able to virtually attend Regional events and begin earning gold points. Enough so that I attained the recently awarded ADVANCED NABC MASTER status.

It is my fervent wish that the ACBL recognize the need to continue to offer virtual Regional Tournaments even after the arrival of the long-awaited end to this pandemic isolation. There are others like me who cannot or will not travel to other cities in order to play - some for health issues and some because of the financial burdens of travelling. The online venue offers the opportunity to play opponents from all across the nation. This makes the competitive nature of the event much higher and the awarding of gold points rightly justified. Again, I strongly urge the ACBL to consider this in future plans of tournaments.

My competitive nature will continue to seek the title of LIFE MASTER. But I know that even if I never achieve that status due to constraints beyond my control, I will continue to love this game and be its goodwill ambassador.