

When I moved to Mandeville in 1990, I knew no one other than my daughter and her family. She suggested I attend a Newcomers gathering where I met a lady who in the course of conversation asked if I played bridge. "Only a little party bridge", I told her. Nevertheless, she invited me to play with her at the Northshore Duplicate Club game where I played my first duplicate game. That lovely lady was to become a dear friend and a favorite partner. The members of the club were very welcoming to me, a rank novice. As I gained in knowledge of the game, I began to occasionally win (.03 or so, handed to me on a small pink slip). There were no bidding boxes, no computers — everything done by hand.

My first tournament was here in New Orleans. When I walked into the room, I was overwhelmed by the crowd and the energy that pervaded there. Many tournaments later, traveling to various cities, I met fellow bridge players from all over the world.

Bridge has opened the door for me to life-long friendships, which I cherish. Through the years, through illness and personal tragedy, these same wonderful friends were a deep source of comfort, caring, understanding and solace.

The COVID year deprived me and so many others of all the camaraderie. Many of our members have enjoyed playing on-line, but I feel that, ultimately, this has hurt our club, and, I'm sure, so many others.

I was elated when our club opened again early this year. Attendance has dropped considerably. Hopefully it will gradually return to a more normal.

Last summer, the club surprised me with a splendid party to celebrate my 98th birthday.

Reaching Ruby was a goal of mine for the year. I'm so happy I made it, but not without the help of so many of my dear bridgemates.

Here's to more and better bridge!