

Just over a month ago, I made sectional master with the help of my sister, Deanna Stewart, mom, Janice Kirkpatrick, and partner/friend, Janet Slay. At the beginning of November, I was just over 2 points away from moving from sectional master to regional master. At the same time, I was in the last semester of my Ed. D. in Educational Leadership and was busy procrastinating finishing chapter 4 of my study.

About a week before the Birmingham, AL Sectional, my sister and I toyed with the idea of a trip to play and try to get some silver--Deanna needed about 11 silver to help her move to life master. My sister and I are both early risers, and she called me Tuesday morning, November 15th (the tournament in Birmingham was the 18th) and asked if we were going. As I needed to write chapter 4, I told her I better skip out, but my sister rarely takes no for an answer. She told me "you can write today, tomorrow, and in the car Thursday if you have to, but let's go to Birmingham!" The boss had spoken, and I wrote for two days, finishing the draft easily enough that I could edit it after the tournament.

Since her daughter had an interview for Physical Therapy School in Jackson Thursday afternoon (she received word in early December that she was accepted), we detoured up Hwy 49 before heading to Birmingham--it's a 3.5-hour drive for us but it's gorgeous. We played Friday morning in a pairs game and were just shy of placing--I made some mistakes. :) That afternoon, we were teamed up with a lovely pair from Birmingham, Steve & Caroline, for a Swiss Team game. We won 3/4 matches (two of them by 20+ points) and we placed that afternoon winning 3.12 silver for the session. I had what I needed to move up, but we played again Saturday morning and won another 1.84 silver. I guess the long drive and two days of play made my brain go to mush and I bombed out on Deanna Saturday afternoon. My sister and I had not spent that much time together in probably 40 years, but it was a wonderful weekend of long talks, good food, and good cards. I can't thank her enough for mentoring me as I try to improve at this game.

I come from a family of bridge players--my late father, Robert Kirkpatrick, was a life master and had 3500 points at the time of his death. My mom (life master), brother (Russ Kirkpatrick, life master), and sister (advanced NABC master) all play as does my sister's son, Griffin. I have three beautiful grandchildren who say they want to play cards like Nonna when they get big. I sure hope they play and love the game as much as we do. I am excited to continue my bridge journey and hope that I can reach the next level by March 2023--need a little red and gold to make that happen.