

I must confess I wasn't sure what this status meant and my first thought was, "does this mean I get KP duty like when I got my First Class Boy Scout Badge?"

But upon research and further reflection, my more appropriate response is one of recognizing the kindness and goodwill of those I've encountered in the last 8 months as I started playing duplicate bridge at the Nashville Vanderbilt Bridge Club. I've very much enjoyed the fun and the new challenge, but have been much more impacted by the people I've encountered along the way.

First, there is (the aptly named) Grace Whitlow who welcomed me into the 99ers and 299ers games and patiently taught me beginners' bridge. The Prophet Job may have had an easier task.

Second, there is the guy (Jim Rich) who asked me to be a regular partner and pushed me into learning more conventions and challenged me to improve.

Jim also pushed us to play in the open games (fondly named "the sharks") to improve (he probably had second thoughts after my first "Director!" Call. The director exclaimed, "I've never seen this bid in my 25 years of being a director.!" ) We can laugh now.

Third, it's been a privilege to be able to sit under the teaching of Chuck Said, an icon for sure, but a true gentleman in a world where that term has been sadly fading.

Fourth, there are the club Mentors (Carleen Dowell and Art Lowen) who are both patient and instructive. The recently implemented Mentor/Mentee Monthly Game is a brilliant idea.

The last 8 months of duplicate bridge has been both fun and challenging, but the people I've encountered along the way have made the journey invaluable.

Looking forward to many more in the future.