

Meet Ed Helpert



I grew up in Rochester, New York, and it was there that I “learned” to play bridge while kibbitzing my parents’ weekly social game. The first thing I was taught was how to hold 13 cards in my hand without dropping them! My mother was left-handed, and so I became a left-handed bridge player although I’m a natural righty.

Spending my teen years in New Jersey, I graduated from Morristown High School, then Rutgers University in Electrical Engineering, Princeton in Electrical Engineering, and the Courant Institute at NYU in applied math.

My Dad took me to my first duplicate game when I was in high school. I don’t remember how we finished, but I’ll never forget declaring 6NT facing a club lead where the dummy held Kx and I held xxx. It took me some time to work out that my only hope was to put up the King, and it held!

I met my first wife while in college. We married after she graduated and had three wonderful daughters in the next seven years. Our daughters have their own families now.

My first job was at RCA Laboratories in Princeton, and it was there that I started taking bridge seriously. I was very fortunate to have a Life Master as my mentor and regular partner for our daily lunchtime game and weekly duplicate sessions. Starting off with Roth-Stone, then Kaplan-Sheinwold, then Canapé (must open a 4-card major before bidding your 5-card minor!), and finally Eastern Scientific, I tried my luck at Regional tournaments in NYC, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, and learned the hard way that getting those coveted red and gold points wasn’t easy!

Along the way, I had the privilege of playing in pair games against Al Roth, Oswald Jacoby, and other bridge luminaries. My partner and I played light, lead-directing overcalls (QTxx or better), and I remember overcalling 1 spade with QTxx and out against Benito Garozzo and Lea DuPont. When my hand came down as dummy, Benito’s eyebrows went up about an inch!

Subsequent years found me moving back to Rochester to work for Xerox, and then moving to Los Angeles to work for Dataproducts, a printer company. My marriage didn’t survive that move, and it was there that I met my second wife and love of my life, Paulette. I taught her how to play blackjack (left-handed!) and we enjoyed (and still do) our many trips to Las Vegas.

Work occupied most of my time. I took a 10-year hiatus from bridge, moving to Rhode Island (we miss the seafood), then Paso Robles, CA, then Denver, then Chicago. What a surprise it was to see bidding boxes, 2/1, and all the new conventions. I finished my working career in Chicago but didn't play much bridge there. Paulette and I retired to Tucson 17 years ago (where does the time go?).

I hope to see all of you in person soon. It's nice to not have to drive to play bridge, but I miss seeing and chatting with you in person.