



Meet Ron Vickery

I was born and raised in Waco, Texas—home of Dr Pepper (created in 1885), Fixer Upper, and the infamous David Koresh Branch Davidian siege. My cousin's husband actually defended David Koresh in a dispute over ownership of the compound—

Koresh gave him his motorcycle as payment for his efforts, which he still has in his garage to this day! Growing up, I played a “lot” of baseball from an early age—we easily fielded full teams on multiple sandlots. Our little league all-star team got beat in the 1960 state finals in the bottom of the final inning on a ground-rule double between me and the center fielder. I tried desperately to “build a high wall” as I saw the ball bounce toward the fence; just a little more funding from Congress and I would have made it! The Ft Worth team that beat us went on to the Little League World Series, where they lost in the championship game. I was introduced to tennis when I was 13 and that became my sport, although I continued to play in summer baseball leagues until I was 17. I played high school tennis and taught at the Charlie McCleary Tennis Center during summers. Mr. McCleary founded the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame, for which he was later inducted.

I attended the Univ of Texas (Austin) from 1966-1972, earning BS & MS degrees in Mechanical Engineering. During my graduate school years at UT, I lived with a family that my fraternity big brother introduced me to. The family across the street was desperate enough to ask me to be a 4th in a game of bridge. I knew nothing about the game, but they patiently raced me through the basics—I wanted to learn more and they suggested I read *5 Weeks to Winning Bridge*. I did and I was hooked. Another friend of my college family played duplicate bridge and, recognizing my addiction, easily talked me into learning the Schenken Club and playing at a local duplicate club. At this club, I met another addicted grad student; we hooked up and played until he dropped out and left Austin to play rubber bridge for money!

Somehow, in addition to getting through my growing list of bridge books, I managed to focus on school work, finish my thesis and get hired by McDonnell Douglas Aerospace Co (MDAC) in Huntington Beach, California, as a Guidance and Controls Engineer on the Delta satellite launch program. Over my engineering career, I worked for four different aerospace/defense companies: MDAC, Litton Guidance & Controls (Woodland Hills, CA), Texas Instruments Defense System Division (Lewisville, TX), and finally Raytheon Missile Systems (Tucson).

After starting work at MDAC, I quickly got lured into a lunch-time bridge game with a group of very good life masters. One of them partnered with John Swanson, who partnered with Paul Soloway in World Championship play! They were all very helpful in my growth as a bridge player. I met my first wife, Shane, at a local duplicate game. Shane lived in Bel Air, CA, in her high school days and actually had a date with George Hamilton (who was an established actor at the time)! Shane's parents were both avid bridge players and tennis players, so I was a welcome addition to the family. Shane's parents were both retired and lived on their avocado ranch in Fallbrook, north of San Diego. There was a log cabin on that ranch, where the Perry Mason writers would hunker down to write TV episodes. Shane's parents also owned and raced thoroughbred horses with jockeys that included Willie Shoemaker. My first marriage was mostly a union of two people who enjoyed each other's company, but that could only last so long, in fact only 2 years—but we remained close friends thereafter.

Shane introduced me to Billy Handy, who became a regular partner. Billy quickly turned me on to a Big Club system that featured a 10-12 point NT, known at that time as the Kamikaze NT. As my partners know, I insist on having solid understandings of all the conventions and treatments we play. For this system, I literally compiled a manuscript of our extensive notes. Billy and I had our best games with this system—so much so that Max Hardy approached me and told me I owed it to bridge to "make a contribution to the game" by publishing it. He offered me his vast list of press release contacts and guided me through the publishing process. Long story short, I published the "Hybrid Club, An Action System" in 1980. With the manuscript nearly complete, Billy and I won our district's Grand National Pairs event and a free trip to the Fall Nationals in Norfolk, VA. While playing in the National Men's pairs event with Gene Simpson, I managed to find a successful line

of passive defense against Dr George Rosenkranz. After the session, Eddie Wold (Rosenkranz's professional partner) asked me to partner with him in the men's pairs and a team event in the upcoming San Diego regional at the beautiful Coronado Hotel in La Jolla. Naturally, I accepted. Before the men's pairs event, Eddie and I played a doubles tennis match against Eddie Kantar and Bob Crossley— with Peter Weichsel spectating! Very 1st board we played—in 1st seat, white vs red—against the #1 EW seed in out section—Eddie opened 1nt with seven hearts to the Jack and out. Playing 16-18 HCP NT in those days, I bid 3NT with my balanced 9 HCP—down 5 undoubled for a good result. Nice start—we finished 2nd overall. Over the next two years, we would play together when Eddie ventured to California. Billy and I got to team up with another big club pair in a regional KO event in Riverside (Ron Anderson & Kathy Wei). We made it to the finals against Marshall Miles' team and were winning going to the final board. However, we lost when I went down in a 4H contract that made at the other table—boo!

Around 1980, after my divorce from Shane, a girl friend insisted I join her in group ballroom lessons at a local junior college. That was my intro to ballroom dancing. I was now hooked on a second passion. I started taking private lessons at three different studios! Something had to give. Bridge lost out.

I met my current wife, Marla, at a Long Beach dance studio in 1983. At the time, she was teaching jazz, tap, and ballet to children of Hollywood stars like Adam West (Batman) at the Buddy Ebsen studio (remember Beverly Hillbillies?) in Pacific Palisades near Malibu. Marla traveled the world as a professional dancer along with her sister to Japan, Canada, Mexico, and cities throughout the US. They also danced in the HBO production of Burlesque USA, hosted by Red Buttons, which also toured across the US. We were married in 1984 and our son Shawn



In Our Competition Wear

was born in 1986. I had taken a job with Litton Guidance & Controls in Woodland Hills in 1985. Marla and I danced competitively until 1989, when I was hired by Texas Instruments to work at their Defense System Division in Lewisville, TX. We lived in a planned community called Highland Shores in Highland Village, TX (20 miles North of Dallas), where Bobby Goldman also happened to live. It was a beautiful layout off Lake Lewisville with tennis courts located in multiple areas of the community. There were several ex-college tennis players that I managed to hook up with on a regular basis. Our daughter Robin was born in 1990. Naturally, the whole family learned how to play tennis. Although we didn't dance competitively anymore, Marla and I taught ballroom dancing on the side and got into C&W dancing. Marla managed and taught at a nearby jazz/tap/ballet studio, and ran the annual talent show at our children's

school. At work, I joined a group of good bridge players for a lunch-time game and played occasionally in local tournaments, managing to win several sectional and regional pair and team events. We had a disappointing loss in the finals of a regional KO against Goldman's pro team, which we were winning by a slim margin going into the final board. Goldman bid a slam off the AK of hearts, which I held in my hand and failed to cash due to a misunderstanding of my partner's signals – my partner was right and I was wrong – ouch, it hurts to say that! I took an interest in golf around 1997 and between tennis and golf, bridge was out.

In 1997, Raytheon acquired TI's Defense System Division and moved us to Tucson in 1999. We chose to live in Oro Valley. Bridge totally died for me once I left the Dallas area. At this time, I dropped out of the ACBL and cancelled my *Bridge World* subscription! When I retired from Raytheon in 2012, I hit the golf course 3-4 times a week until 2014, when I had lumbar fusion surgery. Don Barnett, a very

fine bridge player and avid golfer at our El Conquistador club, talked me into playing bridge at the former Adobe location. Don's regular male partner was Byron Economidy, Ann's former husband! Byron & Ann were a very successful pair in Southern Calif at the time I was there, plus Byron grew up in the small town of Bomerton, TX, where my mother grew up—small world!

I had the bridge bug again and began playing and teaching at Al Spaet's bridge club in Catalina. Since resuming bridge, I have had the pleasure of playing with Don and Judy Barnett, Jared Boulds, Donna Depesa, Ann Economidy, George Good, Ed Helpert, Steve Maltzman, Max Limbocker, Bill Lundgren, Joe Olivier, Al Peters, Sundaresan Ram, Greg West, and Jack Wholey. Like everyone else, I'm looking forward to getting back to live bridge.



Going Out on the Town