



Meet Ken Hajek

At 6'8" Ken Hajek is a standout in both stature and life experiences. Moving here from Northern California, Ken and his partner Kathy were welcomed by the members of the McKinney Duplicate Club when they started playing twice a week in October, 2022.

Ken grew up in California and attended UC Berkeley as a freshman during a rather turbulent period. He states that someone in his dorm taught everyone there how to play bridge and soon 70 chemistry, physics, and engineering students kept several tables going 24/7. "We would take occasional breaks to attend class, watch the riots, the Hari Krishnas, and street people," he quipped. Realizing that it was entertaining but not conducive to an education, Ken transferred from Berkeley and took a hiatus from bridge.

After playing collegiate basketball, spending summers fighting fires with the U.S. Forest Service, and receiving a biology degree from UC Davis, Ken spent 4 years in dental school. He got married, had a son, and practiced dentistry in the Central Valley of California. Following a divorce, he became a half-time parent. There was no time for bridge until his son reached 16 and grabbed the car keys.

Ken's life took another turn when it evolved into half-time dentistry and half-time agriculture. He consulted on crops like grapes, walnuts, tomatoes, cherries, etc. with an emphasis on soil nutrition, microbiology, and pathology. He started farming a few acres of strawberries, melons, and peaches. He says he used his dental work to support his farming habit!

Ken started playing bridge again in the late '90s. He partnered with a high school math teacher who taught him the Precision system. They played intensively for about 5 years until Ken took a consulting position on an agricultural development project in impoverished Northeast Africa. This led to another long pause in his bridge playing. After returning to the States, in 2010 he began to play again and met Kathy Beasley at the bridge table. They hit it off and have been together now for a decade. Although she had played party bridge for 30 years, she quickly adopted the Precision system as well and they became formidable partners.

In 2017 Ken and Kathy moved to a 5-acre parcel of land where he planted 175 fruit trees, 50 grape vines, and a wide variety of berries and vegetables which they sold in a fruit stand they operated for 5 years. They still managed to play bridge twice a week and even sold fruits and vegetables to fellow bridge club members. Along came Covid and in-person bridge was halted.

After selling their fruit stand last year, Ken and Kathy moved to McKinney to be near his son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. Ken states, "We were delighted to find such a congenial bridge group" where they once again play twice a week and often attend area tournaments as well. They have made a wonderful addition to MDBC!

Submitted by Nancy Connors, Secretary of the MDBC