



Remembering Charlie Gill

Carol Garnett remembers . . .

Carol Garnett, Charlie's wife and bridge partner and long-time active member of our club, has been kind enough to write a brief history of our club and Charlie's influence on it. Be sure to click on the link she provides.



In November 2004, Charles Gill (Charlie) was elected President of the St. Petersburg Bridge Club. At that time, the "club" was actually an umbrella term for several privately owned bridge games held in a small and somewhat shabby storefront in an out-of-the-way location on 62nd Avenue North.

Charlie was a mid-life, self-taught bridge player who loved the game. He had the vision to bring together

several individual games under one management for the benefit of all bridge players. In June 2015, he had singlehandedly raised more than half a million dollars to purchase our current location, sparing us contractual raises in rent which would have necessitated increasingly higher dues and game fees and undermined the integrity of our club.

From 2004 to 2020 we grew to become one of the fifty largest duplicate bridge clubs in North America. Under Charlie's guidance we played in five different locations as we continued to outgrow our space. In short, "We've Come a Long Way Baby!" Under this title you will find a fascinating account and visual history of our club's development in the archived August 2015 issue of our monthly Bulletin. Here is the link: [Aug 15 Club Bulletin](#).

When you have finished reading our history you will more fully understand Charlie's exceptional leadership, business and communication skills, resilience, and integrity. To his ever-present optimism add kindness, loyalty, friendliness, and his love and concern for his fellow man. Mix these qualities together with a large measure of whimsy and you have Charles Gill.

It is ironic that in the final minutes of Saturday, March 14, 2020, as we ended Charlie's Celebration of Life dinner and game, some club members were rapidly preparing to close the club in response to the looming threat of Covid-19. Lights out. Doors locked. The end of an era. It is appropriate and joyful that this coming Wednesday, May 5, Charlie's birthday, we will celebrate the reopening of the club, remembering Charlie, his values and good work.

I regret that I will not be able to join you at the club because my Covid-19 vaccination status does not meet current club requirements.

Barbara Seagram remembers . . .

Toronto's Barbara Seagram, best selling author of bridge books and top teacher of our wonderful game, wrote:

In 2008, I received a call from Charlie Gill, inviting me to come and teach a class at the St. Petersburg Bridge Club. I had never been to Florida (other than flying through the Miami airport). I agreed to come and Charlie and his lovely wife, Carole, met me at the airport. And with that, my love affair with Charlie, the bridge club and Florida were born. In part thanks to Charlie, I have now taught all over the state for a number of years.

Charlie was the soul of the bridge club, as Elaine Garofalo so eloquently put it recently. He was a special man who was gentle and kind. He listened and when you spoke to him, it was as though

you were the only one in the room. You had his attention. He always had a generous smile and a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

He cared passionately about the club and it was largely because of his persistence that the club now owns a permanent location, a superb one. He managed the club for many years as a volunteer. The ACBL named him Volunteer of the Year in 2011. He also cared so much about others and was a volunteer for Guardian ad Litem for many years.

Ask anyone about Charlie and they will tell you what a good friend he was. Everyone loved him. He loved the game, mentored many, and was instrumental in many new ideas that made the club better and better over the years.

We miss you, Charlie, and hope you are bidding grand slams in that big bridge club in the sky. As you look down on "your" club and check up on what they are up to now, I think you will be pleased at how well you trained them and how well they are managing, in large part thanks to your influence and guidance through the years. Thank you for your friendship.

Lydia Jacobs remembers. . . .

Lydia Jacobs wrote the following for a celebration of one of Charlie's birthdays. It bears repeating.

C is for the Care he shows every day in every way

H is for his Hilarious emails! How did he come up with those?

A is for how he will Always find you a partner, with or without notice!

R is because you can Rely on Charlie, he will get it done!

L is for his Launching of new ideas to keep our club going and growing.

I is for his Integrity in dealing with every type of problem put before him.

E is for the Everlasting gratitude we have for Charlie, for everything he did to not just make this a great club, to make us, better people.

Pamela Gorbics remembers . . .

Pamela Gorbics, our President and, not incidental to her story about Charlie, an on-line and in-person director, gets the final word.

Wow, how do you put into words who Charlie was, and the impact he had on our club? My fondest memory of Charlie, that always makes me laugh, was when he would call to say he needed me to come fill in on a team Thursday night. Being the accommodating person I am, I would agree, since three other people would be unhappy without a team. Once arriving at the game, I would be surprised to hear from the other members of the team that they also were told they were needed to fill out a team! Charlie is also the person that convinced me I would love to be a director.