



The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club Member News

September, 2024

As part of our continuing series of player profiles, we are pleased Sandy Baker shared with us a look into her life and her life changing near-death experience.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF SANDY BAKER

After my parents told me to be a secretary because we didn't have money for college, I obeyed.....for a year and a half. After three months though I decided I really wanted to be a teacher. In those days I researched and calculated that I could go to Central Washington State University for \$900 a year, so I started saving my money. I graduated in 1966 with a BA and MA. Debt free! Those were the days, huh?

After walking two miles to and from high school in Tacoma, WA and it rained every single day in February of my sophomore year, I told my family that I was going to move where the sun shone all the time. My parents and younger sister and brother just laughed! However, after teaching fifteen years in Italy and Germany, we did return to Winter Park, FL, where the sun did shine almost every day!

My life changed dramatically in May of 1968 when I had a near-death experience at the age of 27. I remember looking down at my body and not feeling upset at all, just watching the people around the table working on my body. They could not see me but I could see them! I was floating into this incredible Light that was pure love and I had no interest in my body. When someone asked me later

what I was, I said, “I was Light in the Light”. I won’t go into the particulars here, but when I returned to my body , I was very clear on my purpose in life and why I was here, and issues I needed to work on. I immediately started studying all things spiritual. In the next two years my daughter and son were born. During this time I realized I had no fear of death and was very willing to be with people who were sick and afraid or dying.

My children’s Dad was a lovely person, but he was an alcoholic, and I didn’t drink at all. After 23 years we parted ways, and a year and a half later Don Baker and I met. Some of you bridge players in the open section remember him – he came with his John Wayne coffee cup. In 2015 a second cancer diagnosis did not stop him from bridge, and he went armed with morphine in his pocket. He played bridge until about 14 days before his transition. He called the Hospice House and told them he was on his way. We were together for 28 years. Don dragged me into duplicate bridge kicking and screaming as I am definitely right-brained dominant, more interested in writing than math! Now I am engaged to another duplicate bridge player, Dave Michaelson. We had played together from time to time in years past, and we have been together coming up on eight years.

I taught school another 23 years in Winter Park and Orlando. Once in Winter Park I started studying meditation, and by 1988 I was teaching it. I still teach Meditation/Journaling at my home to several groups, so really I am not totally retired yet.



Sandy and Dave

Phil Benner – Platinum Life Master

We'd like to extend a big congratulations to Phil Benner for recently attaining the rank of Platinum Life Master. Platinum Life Master is one of the highest ACBL ranks one can attain, second only to Grand Life Master. For those ACBL members who joined before 2010, the requirements are as follows:

A Life Master with 10000 MP
At least 2000 are silver/red/gold/platinum
At least 1000 are gold/platinum
At least 100 are platinum

Only a very small percentage of players ever achieve this rank. Well done Phil!



Phil Benner

Five bridge tips for newer players

1. Don't leave your partner's low-level double in unless you are absolutely sure you can set your opponents.
2. When playing a hand, take your time before playing to the first trick. Many contracts are lost by playing too quickly to the first trick.
3. When planning a cross-ruff, it's usually a good idea to take your side tricks first.
4. Play second hand low.
5. Play third hand high.



How Would You Bid These Hands?

Test your bidding chops with the following hands. This is a great quiz to help develop your bidding skills. Answers later in the newsletter.

The bidding has gone like this:

North	East	South(you)
		1 C
1S	2D	?? what do you bid

This is what you have in your hand:

Hand #	1	2	3	4	5
S	873	9	AKQ2	AK	A92
H	A2	AK93	K4	J762	Q82
D	J73	AQ6	2	986	A84
C	AK762	A10982	QJ10982	AJ98	K987

Simone Biles – Olympics

We all were thrilled to see Simone Biles do so well in the recent Olympics. Sharon Kruger has a fun story to tell about her granddaughter and Simone.

“Can you recognize the gymnast on the left? When our granddaughter was around 9, her gymnastics team went to a camp in Texas. Simone's team along with several others was also there. A meet was held at the end of the camp. In this picture Simone, who would have been around 11, is standing on the silver platform and my granddaughter Karsen is on the gold. Not many gymnasts can say they beat Simone - at least one time!”



Simone and Karsen

Trip Reports

Alaska

Rich Seidman and Gladys Mikel went to Alaska recently. Rich tells us:

Our Alaska vacation on the Celebrity Edge started with a flight to Seattle and a stay overnight there. We got to visit their famous Public Market. The next day we boarded our cruise ship which made stops at Ketchikan, the Dawes Glacier (pass by), Juneau, Skagway and Victoria BC. It was the first trip there for both of us and we were struck by the incredible scenery wherever we went. Huge snow-capped mountains seemed to be around us constantly.

One of our highlights was a visit to a Musher Camp in Juneau. These camps are where the huskies are bred, raised and trained. There were over 170 dogs at the camp we visited. We were pulled in a 500-pound sled loaded with 6 adults and a musher by a team of 14 dogs and they moved us quickly and easily. When fully trained, some of these dogs will end up in sled races, including the famous annual Iditarod Race. After our sled ride we got to hold 3-week-old husky puppies who were adorable.

Another of our highlights was at the Skagway stop. We took a bus ride up to a park with a suspension bridge at the Canada/US border. The park is in both Canada and Alaska and the time zone runs right through the middle! Again we saw beautiful scenery, waterfalls and mountains. The train ride back to Skagway went through an area called the White Pass Trail which earned the nickname Dead Horse trail because of the 3000 pack animals that died there.

Our weather was actually pretty good for Alaska at this time of year. We were told that this is the rainy season but we only had one full day of rain. Even that day it actually slowed to a light drizzle while we visited the Musher Camp. Ketchikan has an average of 300 days of rain a year but on our visit we had only sunny skies. I took an excursion with a boat ride to a Rainforest but never had a drop of rain.

We both felt that it was a real learning experience and the lectures aboard the ship really enriched our excursions. We learned quite a bit about how the gold rush of 1898 helped settle many parts of Alaska including Ketchikan and Skagway. Everyone told us before the trip how wonderful it was and we have to agree and would certainly be considering going back again.

Bill and Jennie Cleary also recently took a cruise to Alaska and they said one of the highlights of their trip was a day cruising through Glacier Bay National Park, a World Heritage Site. Glacier Bay features a series of fjords only reachable by air or sea. The scenery is stunning – rugged mountains, dynamic glaciers, and wild coastlines. Bill mentioned numerous humpback whale sightings, as well as sightings of porpoises and eagles, and of course, glaciers. Bill and Jennie also enjoyed learning about the Klondike gold rush. Of about 100,000 would-be prospectors who tried to reach the Klondike gold fields, only 30,000 did – and of those 30,000, only about 4,000 actually found any gold, and only about 200 became rich (from gold). Those who got rich tended to be the merchants.



Glacier Bay

An Exciting Trip out West

Gary Bowron recently took some time off from bridge to travel out west. Gary shares with us: The first two weeks in July, I took a trip out west to visit some of our National Parks. This also gave me a chance to do something I have always wanted to do since I was a youngster - play cowboy like Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy.

I started my journey in Rapid City, South Dakota, after flying there from Orlando. I rented a car there and visited Mt Rushmore, The Badlands and Devils Tower. My next stop was Cody Wyoming where I learned all about Buffalo Bill Cody, went to my first rodeo (see picture), and went river rafting.

My final two stops were at Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks where I had pre-arranged local guided tours to give me a chance to see buffalo and other wildlife and of course all of the beautiful scenery.



Gary Bowron

Oman

George Sonnichesen will be giving a talk on his trip to Oman at the World Wide Foreign Travel Club meeting on Thursday, September 5 at 4:00, at Laurel Manor. The trip included exploring Muscat, sailing in the Fjords of Musandam, visiting the Hajar mountains and “Grand Canyon of Arabia”, staying in the sand dunes of the “Empty Quarter”, seeing frankincense trees, watching sea turtles lay eggs, walking in wadis and exploring Salalah.



Sand Dunes in the Empty Quarter, Oman

How Would You Bid These Hands? Answers below:

- #1. The correct response is double. Your partner replied 1S over your opening 1C bid. You don't know whether he has four spades or five (or more). Your double is a support double, telling partner you have 3 spades. How does he know you don't have four spades? Because you would have bid spades to raise him. A support double is a very useful bid and comes up all the time.
- #2. Bid 2NT. You have 17 HCP and a double stop in diamonds. If partner has a minimum 6-7 points, he will pass.
- #3. Jump to 3S. Your singleton diamond becomes very valuable when East bids diamonds, plus you have 15 HCP and the three top spades.
- #4. Pass. You told your story when you opened 1C. It's up to partner now.
- #5. Double. A support double again showing three spades.

Jay Greenstone, a former member of TVDBC moved away two years ago to Waterman Village in Mount Dora. Jay is 91 years old, and and enjoys writing poetry. This is one of his poems:

Bridge

Bridge is a game
For all to play
It is the same
At home or away.

To play the game
Four players are best
Each has a name
North, East, South, and West.

The cards are divided,
The same for all hands
Then the bids are made
And the last one stands.

Make the contract
Is the aim
Get a good score
And win the game!....Jay Greenstone

Bridge Cruise

Marilyn Williams is organizing a bridge cruise which will take place in February 2025. See the flyer at the end of the newsletter. The prices are all inclusive...drinks, Wi-Fi, gratuities, taxes, port charges, travel protection, bridge games, and round trip transportation from The Villages to/from the cruise port. Marilyn said they did this in December last year and it was really a fun time!

A big thank you to all who participated with their articles. If you have member news to report, have an interesting background or experience you'd like to share, have been involved in a fun activity or have a trip report, we'd love to hear from you. Pictures would be great. What's the most interesting thing that has ever happened to you? What's the one place you'd like to see? A special birthday or anniversary coming up? Please send your articles to Buck Buchanan at [**BuckandMauri@aol.com**](mailto:BuckandMauri@aol.com) or Jennie Cleary at [**wkc44@comcast.net**](mailto:wkc44@comcast.net)



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BRIDGE CRUISE SPECIALISTS



THE VILLAGES DBC AND GO AWAY TRAVEL PRESENT:
THE VILLAGES DBC SECTIONAL AT SEA
February 9-16, 2025

Please join us as we sail round-trip Tampa to the Western Caribbean on Celebrity's Constellation. You will have the opportunity to play and earn Silver Points two times every day in a card-playing area reserved exclusively for our group. This will leave you time to explore the ports and enjoy the many amenities of the Celebrity Constellation.



ITINERARY: Tampa * Day at Sea * Progreso * Day at Sea * Belize * Costa Maya * Day at Sea * Tampa



SPECIAL OFFER ONLY FOR RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGES:

BOOK BY SEPTEMBER 30TH AND WE WILL INCLUDE FREE ROUND-TRIP TRANSFERS TO TAMPA!

*Prices are per person, based on either single or double occupancy and include the following: All taxes and fees, travel protection, bridge games, classic beverage package, basic Wi-Fi & gratuities.

CAT	CABIN	DOUBLE	SINGLE
A2	AQUA	\$2225	\$3800
C1	CONCIERGE	\$2100	\$3600
V2	VERANDA	\$1950	\$3325
O2	OUTSIDE	\$1775	\$2950
I1	INSIDE	\$1700	\$2825

A deposit of \$500 per cabin is required and is fully refundable until the final payment due date of October 31st 2024.

CALL & BOOK NOW! Contact John Sobel at Go Away Travel
PHONE: 954-349-2800 | EMAIL: BestBridgeAtSea@GoAwayTrav.com

If you do not reserve your cabin from Go Away Travel, you must register with us prior to the cruise.
A \$750 per person non-refundable bridge fee will apply.