

You Owe it to your Partner to Keep Learning!

By Paige Hamner

Unit 356

After reading other autobiographical sketches, it's apparent that my duplicate bridge life cycle is quite common.

The start - a LOT of bridge in college. And then, social bridge with wives' clubs and couples. A friend introduced me to duplicate bridge in Wichita, Kansas in the early 70's. I didn't realize it at the time, but it was brave (or maybe desperate) of her to take me to my first tournament. I remember I bid out of turn, and the director explained the ramifications. Then, I bid again! I'll never forget her face when she asked, "Why in the world would you bid again?" I imagine we got a very bad result on that board.

After a life of moving frequently with the Air Force, motherhood and a career in computer programming and database administration, I retired. Many years before, I had acquired the rank of Junior Master, and I thought I'd renew my membership and get back into duplicate. However, the ACBL had assigned my number to another player. I guess after twenty-five years, they decided I was no longer interested. Well, I received a new number, kept my rank and got back into the game.

Being drawn to the beach and boating, my husband and I decided to divide our time between Tucson, AZ and Cape Coral, FL. During our months spent in Florida, I became good friends with a partner who really solidified my interest in competitive bridge. Patty and I played at least once a week and went to many regional and sectional tournaments in Florida. We had a lot of fun in Tampa, Naples, West Palm Beach and Sanibel. We garnered the gold and red we needed to become Life Masters, but I still needed quite a bit of black and silver points to achieve life master status. Finally, the recent online games offered silver points, and I was over the hump. Whew. Everyone has been very gracious and congratulatory. Thank you.

I owe my partners my commitment to continue learning. After our games, Patty and I would huddle with a glass of wine and go over the hand records and our results. I learned so much during those postmortems. I recommend that you put away your ego and analyze your results every time. This analysis works out the kinks in your methods and conventions, exposes you to different options, expands your knowledge and creates more trust and comfort between you and your partner. Having such good history on BBO really enhances this experience. Scrutinizing other tables' bidding and play can be very instructional. I recommend using the Double Dummy option in History.

I also recommend continued study – the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, books and classes. If you don't, you stagnate. All new techniques and conventions are challenges to learn, but also opportunities for success.

The game has changed a lot since my early days – 2/1 system, more conventions, more aggressive bidding and more signaling. But it is always interesting and stimulating. I hope every one of you continues to play honestly and courteously in order to ensure a fair outcome for you and your opponents – win or lose.