

My Story - District 11 Rank Promotion Perspectives

Here are the stories of our members as they reflect on a recent rank promotion.

8 May 2023 – Dr. Ronald Iacocca, PhD – Club Master



Thanks so much for the nice email. I would be glad to share how I came upon bridge at the IBC.

During COVID, the IBC placed an ad in the Current in Carmel for bridge classes. My spouse knew that I had briefly played bridge in the past. She looked at me and said, “Ron, this is a perfect activity for YOU!” as she is not a trump card game person. We play euchre together, and that’s it. I arrived at the Bridge Center not knowing what to expect, and I met Sharon Austen, Patti Knotte, Bill Bockstahler, Gary Thomas, and so many others who were instructing and answering our questions for the eight-week beginner class and the 0-50 MP class that followed. It was a perfect match. No question went unanswered. Sharon is a fabulous instructor. I am fascinated by the game, and have made a bunch of friends who are as well. I am still trying to convince Brenda to give it a try, but when she hears me talking to another bridge player, she warmly smiles and declines my invitation. Because of the excellent ongoing instruction at the IBC and my own reading, I have been able to advance to Club Master in about 2.25 years. My next goal is to travel to play in regional tournaments around Indianapolis. My next immediate goal is to reach 50 points, where I can participate in the mentoring program as a mentee. In terms of making things better, I believe the board of directors at the centers is doing a great job in ensuring the success of the club. Continued education, a variety of the games during the day, evening, and weekends creates opportunities for everyone. I look forward to the day when I can return the kindness that was shown to me during those early weeks of bridge class.

Attached is my photo. You have my permission to use the above paragraph and the photo. Thank you so much for reaching out to me.

All the best,
Ron

8 April 2023 - Garry Tagg – Sectional Master



It's not much of a journey. I'm 70 years old. I took up Bridge in college in 1971 because I couldn't afford any other entertainment. There was always one or two tables of people playing in the Grill Room in the Student Union; one could pretty much walk in anytime and play or kibitz. There was a Wednesday night duplicate in the Union, so I shortly started playing duplicate. I didn't join ACBL till 1973 so I just threw the masterpoint slips away. We had a regular foursome that include late Life Master Walter Johnson and the late Michael Connors.

The Director at our local game died suddenly. My children were born in 1976, 1981 and 1984 so I got away from duplicate. I was also pursuing a Masters Degree at night. I became active and in coaching my kids and grandkid sports. Other than occasional party bridge, I pretty much stopped playing altogether. I have about 40 books to read and read the daily newspaper column to stay in touch.

About the time my kids were grown and started having my grandkids I began travelling for work. With nothing else to do while on the road, I started seeking out local games. I retired in 2019 and started thinking about getting back in the game. Then covid stopped F2F games. I play for fun and the social aspect; therefore, I have no interest in playing online.

Last June I met my current partner Jim Myers at a game at our local senior center. I resuscitated my membership and my dormant total of 22 masterpoints. Jim and I started playing at the Miami Valley Bridge Center at the 'invitational' games (so called b/c 'jerks' aren't allowed).on Tuesday and Friday. We place consistently , and even had a 72% game in February. I play for fun, for social contact with nice people, and to try to keep my brain for going soft. I won't play tournaments except for our local Sectionals; therefore, while I may accumulate 300 points eventually, I don't expect to make Life Master.

I truly enjoy the games at MVBC. Points are unimportant. Our Friday game especially could use more players, as the game is usually only 3 to 6 tables. Our club is offering lessons starting in May and we are expecting a good turnout.

Thank you.
Garry Tagg

31 March 2023 – James Danzinger – Junior Master



Thanks for your note and congratulations. I have been traveling internationally for the past few weeks and just now catching up on emails.

I don't think there is all that much of a story. I started playing bridge back when I was in Graduate School in Arizona (a long time ago). I moved to Cincinnati and played some duplicate games at the Cincinnati Bridge Center (CBC) in the 90s. However, work, our young children, and other activities took me away from the game for many years. I retired from P&G this past October and one of the things I wanted to do, now that I had the time, was to play bridge again. I was very happy that the CBC was still there and providing the opportunity to play. The people at CBC have been very welcoming and took the time to reintroduce me to the game and the many changes that have occurred since the old days when I played standard Goren. The Saturday supervised play provided a great way to get started and meet all sorts of people - some who continue to provide great instruction - and others who have become my partners. I now play regularly at CBC 3 times per week. I am looking forward to playing in my first team tournament at the District 11 GNT event at CBC this April.

The best thing District 11 can do is to provide strong support to CBC and the live in person games and share the value of that in person experience with the ACBL. I enjoy the interpersonal interactions as much as the bridge play - and you can't get that in online games.

Regards
James Danziger

23 March 2023 - Ernest Dalton – Ruby Life Master

My Journey to Ruby Master



After playing party bridge since college I met Dr. Fred Zigler in 1995 who introduced me to duplicate bridge. Fred was the director of the Middletown, OH bridge games.

Fred taught myself, my wife and my 2 best friends the Audrey Grant series. We became avid bridge players. We played together for many years.

My wife and I began playing in the Miami Valley Bridge Club. It was here I have met and made many wonderful friends as well as several future partners. We traveled with friends to many tournaments across the country and on cruises.

In retirement bridge has been something that makes me happy and stimulates my brain. I play in 2 to 3 regular games each week. I sometimes play when I am on vacation. I don't know what I would do without bridge.

11 March 2023 - Karen Abrams - Life Master



It took years. I have played bridge since I was a child but just started playing duplicate as an adult. I met Mark Ambrose at a tournament when I moved back to Louisville and started working at my current pediatric practice. I couldn't play very often, but we usually played in a sectional once a year through me getting married and raising 3 children. I started playing more with my mother when I became an empty nester. I am still working. We

play weekly when she is home in the summer from Florida and I got my gold points with her in Gatlinburg.

When Covid hit bridge kept me sane. I started playing on bridgebase and I play daily in the robot games. I have amassed over 200 points this way. I just needed a few silver points. It was fitting that I got them playing with Mark Ambrose in the Louisville sectional last month.

Karen Abrams

17 JAN 2023 – Jerry Smith – Life Master

My Bridge Experience – by Jerry Smith

I started playing bridge in 1962 when I discovered that the girl of my dreams (whom I married in 1966 and stayed that way to her untimely death in 2019) and her family all played bridge at every family get together. I figured that this was the way into the family whom for the most part was neutral on my status. My wife Diane and I played rubber bridge heavily through college at The Ohio State University and on into our child rearing years. We did this until we moved to California in 1974 for me to start my new career with the California Department of Corrections.

In those early years after our marriage, we had to teach bridge to all of our friends in order to have games. We taught 10 young couples this wonderful game using a four sided card table cover that was a bridge guide and for ten years played at least twice a week.

The first 20 years in California were practically devoid of party bridge as we couldn't find people to play with. We played every time we were with family and then in 1978, I became a sponsor for an inmate ACBL bridge club at my work at the Soledad State Prison, CTF. The prison administration allowed inmate clubs in an attempt to have them be in contact with people from the "streets." We met on Wednesday nights with just inmates and then on Sunday afternoons with bridge playing outside guests. I was paid six dollars an hour to supervise the group and of course, play bridge. I played with various inmate partners and earned many master points on little pink or yellow slips. We only had four or five tables so I would get .3 or less points. I was helping teach the new players bridge while learning five card majors and weak two bids and so forth. The quality of play was not great, but it was fun to get paid to play bridge.

In 1984, I promoted to a new prison in Vacaville, CSP-Solano, and soon became a bridge club sponsor there, same process as Soledad. As a supervisor in the Education Department (I was in charge of 22 Vocational programs), I had a shared secretary (with the academic side of the staff) but mostly relied on an inmate clerk to help in my office. Finding a good clerk in a prison can be difficult for obvious reasons. I came across a very intelligent inmate with clerical skills and multiple life sentences. My inmate clerk was also in the bridge club. His name was Edmund Kemper and his IQ was listed as 145-150. You might consider him a problem because he is a notorious and actually a very famous serial killer. He killed at least 15 people most of whom were college girls whom he picked up while hitchhiking in the Santa Cruz area. He became known as the "Coed Killer." His prowling days came in the wild and wholly late 60s when hitchhiking, free love, and drugs were prevalent in many California college scenes. There have been several movies about Kemper, and he was the main inmate (actor, of course) in the movie "Mindhunter" which is a true story of how the FBI developed "profiling." They interviewed Kemper many times to learn what a serial killer might be thinking and how they might be characterized in standard profiles.

With Kemper as my partner, I was very successful at getting the ACBL slips that reported some small decimal amount of master points. I did not become an ACBL member in my prison days and by the time I did, more than ten years had passed, and the ACBL would not count my stack of ACBL point slips.

When I retired, I moved to Nampa, Idaho and my wife I started playing bridge again several days a week often at the local Senior Center. One of the better players at the Senior Center asked me if I would be interested helping her teach bridge class which ran through the local Recreation Department. I would teach the beginning class so that she could start a more advanced class. She suggested I join the ACBL and join her in some duplicate games in Boise which I did in 2013. We played only a couple of times before she became and ill and couldn't participate any more and I was the proud owner 1.25 master points.

In June of 2018, my wife and I moved back to Chico, California to be closer to our kids and grandchildren and we joined the Bidwell Bridge Club. We started playing only duplicate bridge. I love duplicate bridge and try to soak up everything related to bridge I can find; books, different partners, a weekly bridge class, and more. I won all of the Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs awards from 2018 to 2020.

My wife died in July of 2019, and I moved to Ohio in July of 2021. With the pandemic like most players, I started playing on BBO with all of my old friends in California. I have now earned about 280 master points but had little access to red or gold points. Earlier this year I started playing live bridge at the Aloha Bridge Club and have gone to several Sectional and Regional events. I did get the pigmented points I need for the "Regional Master" status but know that points are not overly important when you start in duplicate as late as I did. But they are useful to know how you compare with others at your level and beyond. I play bridge seven or eight times a week and love it.

For the record, I am also very involved in horseshoe pitching and have been a National Officer in the National Horseshoe Pitching Association (NHPA) for almost ten Years. I manage all of the horseshoe pitching leagues in the US. Between bridge and horseshoes, I stay very busy and that is the way I like it. I think bridge has gone ahead of my NHPA work as my favorite pastime, but don't tell anyone.

7 December 2022 – Ron and Carol Edge – Life Master

The Longest Race



We began playing duplicate bridge, the only bridge we ever played, in our 30s in Nashville, Tenn., an avidly bridge-playing city. As much as we loved the game, we thought of ourselves as lifelong novices, even when we picked up black, red, silver, even gold points along the way. To become life masters didn't actually occur to us, much less become a goal. Both of us worked full time and had a son to raise, so card playing time was always limited. Our son might argue that

taking him along to our regular Thursday night game, where he watched TV and fell asleep, made him a bridge orphan!

From Nashville, we moved to Bloomington, a small town with a much smaller bridge club, where practically everyone was an advanced player. We were about to be tried by fire! We played as often as we could and made many good friends in the bridge world. Eventually, as midlife activity pushed cards aside, we stopped playing duplicate entirely. For a while we played in a couples group (all hardcore duplicate players) then dropped it so I could return to school.

At long last, we picked it up again after retirement in our 60s. Still feeling like novices in the shallow end of the bridge pool, we discovered that after our 15-year hiatus we seemed to understand the game better than ever. Still, it came as a surprise when *The Bulletin* address label informed us that we were regional masters. What did that even mean?

While we weren't paying attention, bridge had become more aggressive in competition, and some of our old conventions had been supplanted by sleeker new ones. Best of all, there were now bidding boxes, a boon for my loss of hearing.

As we gained confidence we attended District 11 tournaments in Indianapolis, Evansville, and Cincinnati. Suddenly, *The Bulletin* address label said we were less than two gold points away from life master rank. How had that happened? Truth is, we were just having so much fun playing and celebrating little victories that we failed to notice the big picture. Points add up, even when you're not counting. Perhaps feeling like a novice is simply recognizing how much more there is to learn. It was time to make life master rank an actual goal.

Just before the covid pandemic struck, we attended an Indianapolis regional in February 2020 but everything went wrong and the gold remained elusive. With no bridge of any sort for more than two years, and then no regionals we could attend, it seemed the race was over for us. Until the Louisville–Lexington regional in November 2022.

On the first day of play, we won more than enough gold to make our goal, then went on to win more gold and red during our three days of play. The third day was Swiss team. We applied at the partnership desk and truly lucked up with a skillful and amiable pair as partners.

We didn't know in advance, and only found out when we saw an issue of the Lou–Lex newsletter, that this particular tournament maintains a trophy, topped by a race horse and rider of course, on which they inscribe the names of any player who attains life master rank there. What a lovely bonus to reaching our goal! More than 40 years later, the end of that race — but just the beginning of the next.

— Ron and Carol Edge

8 December 2022 – Muffie Conover – Ruby Life Master

Thank you for your kind words.

I know you are ending your term but there is one request you could make to the board before you retire from this position, that would improve my bridge experience and help me achieve my next bridge goals. Eliminate the vaccine mandate. The Indianapolis Bridge Club (IBC) is waiting for ACBL to eliminate the vaccine mandate before IBC eliminates it. So, my bridge playing is limited to online. I miss playing F2F, contributing to the IBC, and playing at tournaments.

Thank you.

Muffie Conover

7 December 2023 – Larry Klein – DIAMOND LIVE MASTER

Thanks AJ. Thought you retired from this activity. No "story" to tell. Just slugged it out over 43 yrs with half the total in a 4 yr stretch from 2002-5 when Norm and I were touring a lot. Still have 32 Blue Ribbon and 5 Silver quals.

When am I going to see you again at the CBC? Love to play sometime.

Have a great holiday season!

Larry Klein

7 December 2022 – Larry Cohen – Sectional Master

Thank you for your correspondence. In the ensuing time since I wrote the essay, I have attended a few Sectionals and a Regional with a specific partner and play 3-4 days a week with a variety of partners in an effort to expand my game. I have continued my education with classes offered at the Indianapolis Bridge Center including subjects such as Defensive Play, Play of the Hand, No Trump Bidding and Slam Bidding. I, also, am proud to report that I have just been elected to the Indianapolis Bridge Center Board of Directors for a 3 year term beginning January 1st 2023.

In the early 1970s, I and a good friend, David Wides, started playing Duplicate at the Blackwood Bridge Center located at 52nd and Keystone in Indianapolis Indiana. At the time, there must not have been various strata, as I remember playing against experienced and decorated players. We had a modicum of success and accumulated a number of Master Points. One highlight for us was the hand that Easley Blackwood turned to us and complemented us on "perfect defense". That inspired us to continue to pursue the game and try to expand our knowledge.

After 2 years, David was accepted into a medical school far from Indianapolis ending our partnership. David promised that should he return to the Indianapolis area we would resume our partnership. At the time that ended my Bridge journey. Not only was I not confident in my ability without David but life “got in the way”. Of, course my MP and even my club member number went by the wayside as record keeping was not yet computerized.

Then David passed away and I found other pursuits.

Every once in a while I would find an acquaintance or colleague that I would approach for a possible bridge partnership but no such venture ever panned out. Over the years, I would occasionally read a column or article on the subject but really didn’t have an idea how to get re-involved.

Then, this past summer, a friend of my wife’s, Mona Loft, called me. Over the years Mona and I had had a few discussions on her passion for bridge and she knew the back story of my long-ago foray into Duplicate. Mona’s call was to tell me that the Indianapolis Bridge Center (IBC) was offering a free 8 week class for beginners...no partner necessary.

The same week, I happened to be with the younger brother of my late bridge partner, David. The brother reminded me that David always spoke enthusiastically of our “time at the tables’. Seeing this as an omen, I contacted IBC for information about the classes. Because I share my name with a world famous bridge player, there was some question from the instructor as to whether my inquiry was legitimate but eventually I was forwarded the information.

At the first class beginning in August, I, along with over 100 people, were warmly greeted, made to feel most welcome and given a free copy of Audrey Grant’s Basic Bridge book #1. Over the next 4 weeks the class, at the able direction of several of the clubs Directors but primarily Gary Thomas, we methodically worked through that book and concluded each session playing several practice hands to reinforce the lesson learned that week along with the lessons of previous classes.

The next 4 weeks we were given Audrey’s 2nd book and learned and practiced the art of competitive bidding. During these session friendships were forged and many of us found partners for future games. The final session of the classes was pure play with the opportunity to ask for a Director’s help whenever a bidder was uncertain on how to apply the lessons learned.

Before the final class I also attended a Tuesday session that is geared to beginners (0-50 MP) and allows for help from Directors. I was paired with a player with more experience whose regular partner could not make the session. With her strong play, and her unbounded patience for my limited knowledge, we managed to finish with the top N/S score of the evening, earning my first Master Points in almost 40 years.

From then on I have been participating in Sunday and Tuesday sessions. I have developed a separate partner for each of those days and on the occasions that they are absent I have been fortunate to know enough other players as to have success with a variety of partners.

The Indianapolis Bridge Club deserves recognition not only for the education they have provided but also for their unfailing commitment to making bridge fun and advancing the education of the game. The Directors all put forth so much effort to educate and facilitate that I cannot commend them enough. They found a path to grow the number of local residents who are actively playing bridge and thus have ensured the future of IBC.

On a personal level, I have found each of the Directors to be encouraging and helpful, especially to expand my knowledge of the game by suggesting books and on-line exercise that can lead me to the next plateau.
