

Journey to Ruby – *Frank Kelton*



I first cut my teeth on duplicate bridge at Ted Horning's club in Thorn Hill Ontario (circa 1980), when Ted ran evening club games and the odd money game whilst writing a delicious Canadian syndicated bridge column. I had not as yet joined the ACBL (that came much later in 2004). I thought I knew a fair bit about bridge having been taught rubber bridge as a teen by my father. I attended Ted's club with a friend (Rick Jotcham) who's brother Ray was a technically brilliant player at Ted's club we and played against the likes of Ted, Fred Gitleman, Ray and many other terrific players. Fred interestingly enough, started Bridge Base on-line from a small beginning in the early 1990s. As most of us know, Bridge Base Online has grown to become the largest on-line bridge club in the world. Some of the people you will see on BBO include Fred Gitleman and Uday Ivatury, - the original owners and programmers. It quickly became clear, with all deference to my father, how little I knew about bridge. The intrigue of the game and the fascination with hand patterns and playing techniques including looking for end-plays, squeezes and avoiding finesses, when possible, piqued my curiosity and also taught me a thing or two about humility. Then of course bidding systems, defense and opening leads added to the necessary learnings if one were to enjoy competitive success – beyond the socialization benefits of attending clubs.



Original Toronto Star caption: Short-suited in hearts: Audrey and Ted Horning feel Toronto authorities are short of heart: too: in forbidding them from opening a private bridge club at 491 King St. E. Their game on sidewalk with oversize cards dramatizes effect on them of city's crackdown on body-rub joints and pornography.

I joined the ACBL in 2004 after moving to Calgary years earlier and a good friend (Rob Hason) and I joined the Martinique club. We played 2 or 3 times per month – sufficiently long enough to get my sectional master status that year and my regional master the following year. Then, after a 5-year hiatus from bridge for health reasons, I earned my NABC and Life Master in 2010. It took 10 years of occasional play to earn my Silver Master in December 2020 and less than a year later (Nov 2021) I earned my Ruby Life Master! Despite the ravages on Club play due to COVID, Bridge Base on-line has been a godsend for some of us! And it is interesting how things have come full-circle - from cutting my teeth at Ted's club and playing against Fred Gitleman to joining and enjoying Fred's BBO invention to receive my latest rank achievements!

I have many people to thank for my success, including my regular partner of the past 5 years – Garth Wiggins. Garth has been patient, a mentor and a friend. I am grateful to have met him and to have him as a regular partner. I also want to thank some of Calgary's finest players that I have had to pleasure to play with including Dan Bertrand, Dan Kramer, Al Simon, Steve Lawrence and many others, including Judith and Nicholas Gartaganis whom I have had the odd occasion to play *against*. Like many pursuits in life, we tend to find success when we play with and against players that are more skilled than ourselves. I could have received the "loudest of eyerolls" from partners and opponents over the years for my gaffes and play, but for the most part, these mentors have been both didactic and encouraging. I encourage everyone to find patient, tolerant and better players if improving your game is a goal. And then we might consider giving back to the newbies who likewise wish to improve their game!