

## **New ACBL Silver Life Master** **Gurcharan Singh Bhatia**

Gurcharan shared an interesting story about his involvement with Bridge.

While he was celebrating his 89th birthday in August, 2020, his only grandson asked him what sports he played when I was a child.

Nobody had asked Gurcharan such a question in the past. He started reflecting on the past. At the age of 14 he became an orphan and head of the family with his mother and 3 other siblings.

Because of a division in India into 2 countries they struggled in refugee camps of Kashmir and Punjab. Based on the religion, Muslims and Hindus, millions of people moved to the newly created country of Pakistan and the other minorities to India. Gurcharan belonged to that part of Kashmir which was invaded resulting in their family moving to India.

All the members of the family were busy with education and working several part time jobs, they never thought of any sports.

Finally all the children received good educations to financially settle down.

Gurcharan studied in Scotland and was exposed to Canada as his next destination in life. With my wife, Jiti, and 1 year old daughter, Priti, Gurcharan arrived in Winnipeg on the December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1964- Winnipeg's coldest day of the last century. In Winnipeg Toshi Verma and her husband introduced them to kitchen Bridge which they liked very much. That was the beginning of their only sport. Gurcharan told this story to my grandson. Later on they attended some classes and participated in tournaments in USA and Canada making many friends.

Jiti and Gurcharan have travelled to Mexico, Brazil, Australia, South Africa and Europe- visiting many Bridge clubs and were surprised with the help they received from the players in touring, shopping, socialising.

In Gurcharan's own words:

“Now in isolation, Online Bridge keeps my mind active and engaged. Sometime I wonder if I did not know Bridge, how unpleasant and boring would have been the isolation?

Bridge keeps me happy, mentally healthy and engaged with many new friends online.”