

My Bridge Story – Pete Bowman



I learned to play bridge in the lunch room at Bell Laboratories in 1974. There was no one in particular to teach so we just bought books by Goren, CC Wei and others and read about systems like Kaplan-Scheinwald, Precision and the like. For a couple of years it was an enjoyable way to spend an hour eating lunch and playing with a lot of smart people.

One day someone discovered that bridge was played in the real world by finding a flyer about something called a sectional tournament in Chicago. A few of us went (sometime in 1976 probably). It was quite a shock. After the first round, the room was so full of smoke, that you could hardly see your partner across the table. The opponents were nasty to each other and to us constantly. It was not a nice experience. We did manage somehow to earn something called a silver point or two. Thinking this was just a bad experience, I went to another one of these sectional tournaments, earned another silver point or two and had an even worse experience with the nasty behavior of the people. So having earned 3.25 silver master points, I never went back to another tournament and never knew about clubs and eventually stopped playing in the lunch room as well.

Fast forward 27 years to 2001. After being a retired computer/electrical engineer for 5 years, I decided to try bridge again. Truth is that I had little or no memory about the game. I joined an adult education class in St George Utah for beginners to bridge. I got up my nerve to play in a club game (very scary event) and played two times in the unsanctioned Tuesday community club game in St George. I then went to Michigan for my summer. I got up my nerve again and played in one of the two games in the Traverse City area. I was set up with a life master partner for my first game. On the first hand, my left hand opponent opened and my partner doubled. My right hand opponent passed and I, assuming that a life master knows what they are doing when they doubled, I passed. The ensuing actions reminded me of the definition of a take-out-double. After surviving my initial efforts at duplicate bridge, I was hooked.

I played as much as I could that summer and then returned to St George Utah in the Fall. Sometime during that winter of 2001-2002 the then owner/director of a small game asked me to consider becoming a certified director and running his small club on Thursdays. My thoughts were that I would like to do that for a few reasons. The games in Michigan were somewhat problematic and there were a few unpleasant people that reminded me of my experiences in the 1970s. There was a little bit of that in St George as well. So armed with about 30 master points, I went to the spring 2002 Houston NABC (national level tournament) 3 days early and attended the workshop to become a certified director.

When I returned to Michigan in 2002, one of the club owners/directors asked me to direct the game for her that summer. I did and became somewhat comfortable performing the task which I did for the next two summers as well. When I returned to St George in the Fall the new owner/director of the Thu game

asked me to direct that game which I did for two months. In early winter, I decided to not direct the game and created my own game on Fridays. I also directed the Tuesday community game fairly regularly as well. The Thu game eventually ended and I also added a Thursday game to my Friday game. These games were small compared to the Tuesday community game but they were slowly growing. I also lobbied to get a sanction for the Tuesday game and that finally passed the vote of the participants.

Over the 14 years that I have been a club owner/director, it has been my goal to improve bridge in the St George community any way I could. I have mentored other people to become directors and to help them settle in with the job; I have urged players to join the ACBL and to support this governing body; I have mentored some promising serious new players as I was helped and mentored by better players when I was in my largest learning curve; I have taught a course in the 2/1 bridge system; and I'm an available resource face to face, over the phone and by email for anyone asking any bridge related question. However, my most important efforts have gone into making the club level game an enjoyable, socially rewarding place to spend 3 ½ hours playing this great game of bridge while still maintaining the competitive nature of the game. I do this by constantly reminding players to be kind and supportive to their partners and opponents. I also try to rein in bad behavior by urging any player that is not behaving like a good bridge citizen to shape up.

I mainly play bridge at the club level with perhaps one or two sectional or regional tournaments per year and have done this for a while. I'm proud of my accomplishments helping other bridge people and in running nice club games. I hope to continue this path for as long as I can.