



Hartford Bridge Club

The with a

July 2021 Newsletter

We have reopened and we're delighted to have seen so many of you in the past few weeks. As we suspected, there are considerable challenges to managing a live and online bridge schedule and we're learning as we go forward. In this issue, we want to address one of the challenges we as a club face. Frankly, we don't want to be two different clubs where some play only in limited games and others only in open games. And never the twain shall meet. Many of you who don't play in open games are fully capable of doing so. We're delighted that a good many of you do play in a variety of games, including open games, and we want to encourage more of you to explore the benefits of playing in an open game. We firmly believe in our education mission as a 501 (c) (3) charity and the educational benefits available from participating in open games. To help us spread that word, we happened to be listening to a conversation between Sally and Bob, two of our newer members—if only in our dreams—where Sally tries to convince Bob to play with her in open games. We transcribed it to the best of our memory and that dialogue leads off this monthly newsletter.

We also want to try to create more of a community between Life Masters and non-Life Masters by hearing from those of you who are newer to the club and have not yet attained the rank of Life Master. As you have noticed, most of our previous profiles and features have involved those who have attained Life Master status and beyond and we want to change that balance. We think you will find the comments from seven of our newer members most interesting. We hope to have more such profiles in the future. These members were asked to write a few paragraphs that would address such topics as: How did you become interested in bridge? What caused you to become a member of the Hartford Bridge Club and play duplicate bridge? What do you particularly like about playing online at the bridge club? Do you look forward to playing face-to-face? What are your ambitions for bridge? Do you play above your rank, e.g., in the 750 or open games and what do you think of those experiences? What suggestions do you have for the bridge club? We also asked them to briefly describe their personal background.

We don't want to neglect those who have achieved significant milestones in their bridge careers and we're continuing to ask our most recent achievers for their reflections on their milestones. We always find those reflections most worthwhile reading.

In yet another effort to encourage non-Life Masters to play in open games, starting July 1, each month we will award a \$50 prize to each person in a non-Life Master pair that achieves the highest percentage score in one of the month's open games. To be a winner, you need to have played in at least two open games during the month—either online or live. We will publish the results in our monthly newsletters, which in the future will come out on the third of the month instead of the first to allow us to tabulate the results for the month.

We will continue to explore other ways to create more of a community between Life Masters and non-Life Masters, including reinvigorating the mentor program and having social events when we feel more able to do so. If you have any suggestions, do pass them on.

Finally, because it is just too burdensome and technically difficult to run masterpoint races when we are both live and online, those masterpoint races concluded—as we said they would—when the club reopened, and the winners in each category through May appear at the end of this newsletter. There were several spirited and close races for the top three positions. We listed the top five in each category. Congratulations to all the winners and thanks to all who registered and participated. First in each category will receive three free in-person games; second, two free games; and third, one free game.

To continue to create interest in our games, the Board of Trustees last month voted to award a free in-person game to those pairs who score the highest percentage in each category of game the club offers, whether online or live: 0-200, 0-300, 0-500, 0-750 and open.

Note: **All** free games are in-person games.

As you can tell, we are continuing to explore ways to enhance your bridge experience because we truly appreciate your support and loyalty.

Donna and Felix

Sally and Bob's Conversation

Sally and Bob are two Hartford Bridge Club members. Sally is trying to convince Bob to play in the club's open games, but Bob is resistant. Bob and Sally are occasional partners.

Sally: Bob, I'm going to try again to convince you to play in the Hartford Bridge Club's open games. But first, let me ask you a few questions. You and I have the same number of masterpoints—about 125—and you've been playing duplicate bridge at least a year longer

than I have. But you rarely venture beyond the 0-200, 0-300, and 0-500 games. Why is that?

Bob: I've developed friends in those groups and I have a real comfort level there.

Sally: Do you want to get better as a bridge player?

Bob: Yes, of course I do!

Sally: What are you doing to get better?

Bob: Well, I read the Bridge Bulletin, I read the daily bridge column in the Hartford Courant and I've read a few books.

Sally: All right. That's a start. What I would like to tell you is that playing in open games is the best way to become a better player and it also can be a lot of fun.

Bob: I've played in a couple of open games and I had my head handed to me and my partner. We scored in the 30% range and I felt humiliated. I didn't like that experience.

Sally: When you learned to play golf, I bet you felt humbled too. Put your ego aside. Please, please get over yourself. And let's look at what you can learn if you're willing. I enjoy you as a partner and would love to play in the open games with you and learn together. First, you can see how really good experts and some world-class players bid and play the very same hands you're playing. When you play online you can, immediately after the round, if there's time, look at the bidding and play of a hand in the history. If not, you can do it after the game. You can do something similar when you play live, only you do it after the game. Just go to results and click on reference data. There you will see what every pair did on a hand, what the par score was for the hand (or the best you should be able to do if everybody does their best) and what can be done double dummy. You need to work a little more to understand where you went wrong but the effort is worthwhile and I find the learning sticks when you have to figure it out for yourself.

Bob: Do you really do all that?

Sally: Not all the time. Most of the time, I just pick a few hands that I found particularly troublesome or did poorly on.

Bob: Does it help?

Sally: You betcha. Several things have happened. I'm a much better player and much more confident. On my best days, I find I can do really well and, occasionally, I score over 50% and those days are real triumphs. I compare it to playing against Serena Williams and being able to return her serve and hold my own. I also find that I'm much more confident playing against my peers and find I do really well even in the 0-750 games.

Bob: Is there anything else I should know about the open games?

Sally: A couple of things. There's nothing like learning from facing the challenge yourself. How you should handle preempts is one challenge that comes up a lot. It really helps to have thought about something and then to see how others, more knowledgeable and expert than you, have handled it. Also, when there's time, I ask questions in the chat box and everyone has been more than gracious in responding. And when I play live, it's even better. I have no hesitation in asking some of the better players what I should have done and invariably I learn something. They are always generous with their time and knowledge.

Bob: Okay, I certainly will play more in the 0-750 games and I am willing to try the open games with you as well.

Sally: Great! I forgot one more thing that's important. The open games are stratified, so if we get enough of our peers to play, we will be competing against them for points as well as against everyone else. I've been paying attention to who does well at the open games and it surprised me to see that on a number of occasions the C players not only did well, but also won their section. How gratifying that must be!

Thoughts from our "Newer" Players

Ellen Deutsch



I learned bridge over 10 years ago but didn't really start playing until a couple of years ago when I discovered the bridge club. I reconnected with Annmarie Gagne, who I graduated from high school with. We both grew up in West Hartford and I hadn't seen her in 40 years. She became my "bridge wife." When the pandemic hit, we started playing at least once a day! I would never have survived this past year without Annie and BBO.

I am slowly creeping up on 100 points. It's amazing how the half points can build up. I love being able to play online but I miss the people interaction and look forward to getting back to the club to play. It will be fun to put faces with everyone's BBO name.

Doug Eitelman



Like many of us, I was introduced to bridge in college. I had always loved card games, but when my sophomore roommate introduced me to bridge, I quickly realized that bridge was a whole 'nother animal. After playing casually in the student union for a few months, we ventured out to a local city's bridge club and played duplicate for the first time. Duplicate fired up my competitive spirit, as it was no longer the team who was dealt the most aces and kings that won, but the partnership that played whatever they were dealt the best.

Back in CT in the early 80's, I met Dan Koepf at a party; we discovered that we both played bridge and for a few years played at local bridge clubs, including HBC, where we were regularly beaten up by the likes of Jim Cleary, etc. Alas, life got in the way and I took a 35-year hiatus from bridge. About 3 years ago, I finally screwed up the courage to show up at HBC's Tuesday night game without a partner. The Tuesday night game was top heavy with players who had masterpoints in the thousands, but were surprisingly welcoming to a newbie like me; perhaps because they needed more players!

The Tuesday night game was directed by Linda Starr, who would usually find me a partner and if she couldn't, would play as my partner. One night, after a particularly dismal performance with Linda as my partner, she offered me some advice that I'll never forget (nor forgive her for!). She said, "Doug, one thing you need to do when you play bridge is THINK!" Unfortunately, I would imagine that the group I regularly partner with (Dan Koepf, Tom Archambault, Mike Shore, Phil Olschefski and Linda herself) would say that I only follow that sage advice sporadically.

Special thanks to Phil Olschefski who ended up becoming my regular Tuesday night partner. On our second night playing together, he handed me two books on 2/1 bidding and gradually gently bullied me into adopting something akin to modern bidding.

I have enjoyed online bridge far more than I would have expected. It allows me to play more often, particularly since I still work. There are several things I like about BBO, but I think the main one is that being dummy is far more interesting than at in-person bridge because you can see your partner's hand. This affords me the opportunity to get on the phone every three hands when time allows and scream at my partner's misdeeds while, of course, completely ignoring them when they have the temerity to return the favor.

I do look forward to in-person bridge, but will miss the Tuesday night game; particularly post-bridge drinks at the Pug. See you all soon!

Bill Fitts

I played bridge all four years of college and then took a sixty+-year hiatus to take care of family and business. I am not sure how I heard of the Hartford Bridge Club, but I do know that the minute I showed up everybody was not only welcoming, but ready to teach me the tremendous number of bidding changes that had occurred since my college days. I have had tremendous partners who help during every game. I like playing at all levels. The open games show me how much there is still to learn, although I know my major deficiency; I just don't know how to fix it. If anyone knows how I can learn to count all the cards and not just trumps and maybe a couple of suits in no trump, I would love the advice.

I am in the Broadcasting Hall of Fame, primarily for my work as Executive Producer at CBS Sports where I created the NFL Today, played a major part in the development of both instant and slow-motion replay and, for trivia buffs, I was executive producer of Super Bowl I; also for my work as the original executive producer of ESPN, where I put their remote staff together, produced all major events regardless of sport and, for a couple of years, headed up Sportscenter.

My wife and I live in Farmington and are enjoying our waning years.

Barbara Fletcher



My first exposure to bridge was as a child when I watched my parents and their friends play the game. They belonged to a duplicate bridge group of 10 couples and once a year my parents hosted the group at our house. I remember watching my parents set up the boards and set out the *paper* score sheets.

Fast forward to my junior year in college when I actually started playing. Most evenings, we played a couple of hours of party bridge before dinner. I can still hear fellow students walking through the corridor yelling for a "fourth."

After college, there was a very long hiatus (during which I raised a family and pursued a career in health-care administration) before my next bridge adventure. As I approached retirement, I started a bucket list, as so many of us do. Near the top of the list was to take up bridge again. It was a game I thoroughly enjoyed while in college and had the potential to keep my brain active in retirement. As luck would have it (good luck), I was a member of a gym where Bill Watson was also a member. It was through Bill that I learned of the Hartford Bridge Club, so the winter after retirement, I summoned up my courage and wandered into Bill's supervised novice game on a cold Thursday afternoon in January 2017. I limited myself to the supervised novice game for several months and then ventured into the Wednesday afternoon 0-500 game. Many thanks to the directors who paired me with Bill Winger, still my most regular partner, as good-natured and forgiving a partner as one could hope for.

In addition to playing in the limited games, I have also played in the Tuesday morning open game. My most thrilling moment at the bridge club was one Tuesday morning 2-3 years ago when Bill and I came in first! The sun, moon and stars must have been aligned just so and, of course, we had some help from our opponents. I still remember one of the hands from that morning like it was yesterday.

My other hobbies include ballroom dancing, cycling and volunteering at both the New Britain Museum and Playhouse on Park.

During the pandemic, I upped my participation to 4-5 games a week from the 2-3 at the club. The online games provided important structure to those long, cold winter days in 2020-2021.

I took advantage of the mentoring program offered by the club twice in the last four years and had the good fortune to be paired with two patient and knowledgeable partners. (Thank you, Pam and Mary.) Thanks to our directors, officers and board members for nurturing such a friendly, welcoming club. And special thanks to Laurie for the mini lessons

after the Wednesday online game and to Dan for his ongoing Tuesday series. If I could just remember half the tips and lesson material I would be happy!

Cindy Martin



My journey with bridge began in March 2018. A friend called looking for a partner to play bridge and asked me to take lessons at the Hartford Bridge Club so we could partner together. Knowing nothing about bridge other than from the puzzle section of the newspaper, I called and began lessons the next evening. I continued with lessons through the spring and summer and played in the novice game on Thursday afternoons. I found it to be a complex and challenging card game with many intricacies and I was hooked. My soon to be partner was anxious for me to play in a real game. I did not feel at all confident to play with the big boys and girls, so I continued with the weekly novice games and lessons. My first real game was the annual meeting of HBC held in October. From there, I began playing once or twice a week at the club, gaining more confidence the more I played. The members and directors of HBC were supportive of my beginner's experience, guiding me with tips and pointers—and, boy, did I need them.

In 2019, I attended a couple of regional and sectional tournaments and continued playing at HBC. I had joined the ACBL and was now starting to collect those colorful fractional masterpoints. HBC continued to offer lessons and educational opportunities, which I embraced. They opened a 0-49 game in the evening where I began to play with other partners. It was still a challenging game, frustrating at times, but I was addicted, determined to learn this game and play it well.

2020 came and playing at HBC came to a screeching halt with COVID. But the club jumped to this enormous challenge and set up virtual games online through BBO. I started using the partnership desk and playing with different partners. I play with people I probably would not have played with at the club. HBC offers various levels of games, trying to find the right mix so all levels of players can participate. Right now, I play in the 0-750 games, three times a week. They are not as intimidating as I first thought they were. I really enjoy the evening games. The time works well for me. I miss the socialization of going to the club, but have embraced texting and Zoom to maintain the camaraderie that had developed over the last two years.

Now that the club is reopening, I will go back and resume face-to-face playing, but will continue with BBO to fill in the blanks.

Bridge was never on my radar. I had been retired for two years from Hartford Hospital (RN) when I got that fateful call to learn bridge. I will always be grateful to my forever partner.

Debbie Prince



My friend and longtime Hartford Bridge Club member, Lea Selig, had often told me she thought I would enjoy bridge. A year or so after retiring as an actuary from Aetna, I looked into lessons at HBC and took the 6-class beginner series in March 2017. I continued with any beginner courses HBC had to offer.

I began playing regularly in the Thursday afternoon supervised games. I thought that was where my bridge career would happily settle. Thursday afternoons meant bridge, great friends and a lot of hand raising. Less than a year after those first lessons, Bill Watson encouraged my partner and me to play in the Cromwell tournament. We planned to play two sessions on the first day. Having scored a small fractional point in our first game encouraged us to stay and play a third session that evening (an open session, but no charge to those with fewer than 5 MP players, so why not)? Playing that evening against much better players sparked a greater interest in learning the game and encouraged me to work toward graduating from the Thursday afternoon supervised game. In addition to the Thursday afternoon game, I played in the Tuesday night 0-49 game and an occasional afternoon limited-point game.

When the pandemic hit, bridge was the perfect antidote! Without the comfort of the in-person supervised games, I played regularly in the limited-point games online. One partner and I took some online courses together. We studied our hands on BBO after the games and took Dan Finn's Tuesday night lessons and Joel Wolfe's defense classes. We played a lot!

I am looking forward to playing in person back at the club to reconnect with friends and to put faces to people I only know by their BBO names. I'm less tentative now about playing "up" so I will play in the 0-750 games, and maybe an open game!?! I'm pleased there will still be some online games to play from the convenience of home.

Thank you to the HBC leadership and directors for all they did to keep and enhance the club during the pandemic. I am now forever connected to this game and am so grateful for my early teachers, Bill Watson, Laurie Robbins, Donna Feir and Linda Starr who shared their deep knowledge of the game that launched me and my beginner cohort on our bridge journey.

Sherwood Willard



I started playing bridge in college and learned the basics from a good friend who was looking for a partner and taught me the game. I played a lot and preferred a rubber of bridge to homework. That did not work so well and I gave up bridge. (Parents thought that was a good decision.) Played social bridge with my wife off and on after we got married, but did not pursue bridge seriously. Just after I retired as an attorney for various companies, I started playing again informally.

I soon discovered that I knew nothing about the current style of bridge with new conventions that were a mystery. I started taking lessons and tried to learn the new conventions and playing strategies. A friend suggested I try the Hartford Bridge Club, but that was a scary proposition assuming everyone was really good and would probably not have much patience with a new player. I was convinced to try the Thursday afternoon game where you could ask questions and learn how to play. That was very helpful and emboldened me to play in the entry level games. I soon joined the club and have been playing duplicate since, mostly in the 0-200 game.

The club offers great learning opportunities and I have taken many classes sponsored by the club, which have been helpful. I have occasionally played at higher levels and played on teams a couple of times. My partner and I have sometimes done pretty well against advanced players. I have limited ambitions for my bridge. I have many other time commitments and I will not play enough bridge or go to tournaments to achieve the necessary points to be a Life Master. I enjoy the game, enjoy the company, enjoy going to the bridge club and that is enough for me.

Since Covid, my regular partner and I have been playing online, which I like. No travel, so you can decide at the last minute to play. We get to "chat" with friends we played with before Covid. You can stand up and walk around between hands without disturbing anyone. The games move along pretty quickly. It is quiet. Now that the club is starting face-to-face games, we will participate, but I will miss the online games.

Milestone Achievers

Lesley Meyers: 5,000 Masterpoints-Diamond Life Master



Back in the 80's when I was playing bridge in a local women's group, one of my friends "dragged" me (I know....hard to believe, right?) to a Tuesday night novice duplicate game run by Florence Filkoff. At that time, the HBC was located over Waldbaum's at Bishop's Corner and Florence taught a 20-minute lesson prior to the game accompanied by her yummy homemade

treats. The people were delightful, the lessons valuable (I had never taken any) and the sweets were delish. I was hooked!

Since my children were then small, I only had Tuesday nights to improve my bridge skills. Little by little, I gained more knowledge and confidence, and was also lucky enough to glean more about the game by watching, kibitzing, and picking the brain of the brilliant Jim Cleary.

In the ensuing years, I managed to attend enough tournaments to accumulate the required points to make LM. Those were great times and the friendships I acquired have been wonderful, including those of the "Newton Four," consisting of JoAnn Scata, Joyce Marino, Rachel Brown and me. What a blast we had at that particular tourney for many years!

Since retirement, the HBC has become my second home and, until Covid hit, I was there on a daily basis. I've made many friends and love socializing (too much, according to Tom!). We were all deprived of the schmoozing during Covid, so now it's terrific to return. Thanks to all who worked so diligently to make the reopening happen.

Among many others, I thank my current partners, all of whom contributed in pulling me over the line to make Diamond LM: Bill Watson, Tom Joyce, YL, Laurie, Susan Pat, Trevor, Susan Pf and Ellen.

I suppose only other bridge players can fully appreciate the ongoing excitement and complexities of this incredible game. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the original innovators and proponents of whist and ultimately all types of bridge.

Reg Harvey: 2,500 Masterpoints-Gold Life Master



Bridge has been a mainstay in my life since I discovered the game in college. Once work became all absorbing, I briefly limited my bridge playing. Then I met my longtime bridge partner, Tom Lorch, and bridge became, once again, my main hobby. The Hartford Bridge Club became more than a place to play the game. It is a source of socializing and friendship, for which I am grateful. This achievement is a byproduct of the play of the game as well as the social aspects of club membership. Thank you to the many people who have made the experience possible. Special thanks are due to Tom Lorch, Laurie Robbins, Paul Pierson, Paul Hassett, and Donna Feir.

Masterpoint Race-Winners

0-99 Masterpoints

Ben Bishop	31.79
Cindy Martin	25.79
Virginia Bishop	25.48
Deborah Prince	23.33
Janice Bazzini	21.93

100-299 Masterpoints

Bill Wininger	44.84
Barbara Fletcher	43.64
Doug Eitelman	34.53
Barbara Willard	33.12
Fred Gagnon	32.12

300-999 Masterpoints

Rollin Shank	30.44
Lori Leopold	28.13
B. Lynn Tavormina	25.94
John Boettcher	25.94
Jan Rosow	25.39

1000+ Masterpoints

Trevor Reeves	69.90
Felix Springer	57.15
Tom Lorch	36.18
Rober Sagor	36.04
Philippe Galaski	35.23