

## Responses to Rank-Change Letters April 2016 – January 2017

My successes were attributable to 3 regular partners (my wife Sharon-together we earned over 500 masterpoints-Jim Hedden and Roger Hulett-who forced me to learn many new conventions); Cheryl Schneider, Rick Higgins, Dean Ishida and many other "A" players who endlessly answered my many questions; and a lot of enjoyable but hard work on my part.

Dave Maul

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My Silver Life Masters was finally at the Gatlinburg Regional in April. I played with a man from Nova Scotia, a lady from India, a couple from Canada, and others. I enjoy playing in tournaments as you meet so many interesting people. I would encourage bridge players that want to reach the next level to do the same. More points are awarded, especially gold.

We have a wonderful bridge club in Lexington and would welcome you to play. We play every day.

Maudine Frisby



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I feel like D11 is probably doing just about as well as any other district in the ACBL, so no specific feedback on our district.

As for the ACBL I think we should be taking some bigger risks. My impression is that we are a very conservative organization and the leadership is content with maintaining the status quo. I'd like to see a bolder vision that is more targeted. The current strategic vision strikes me as too vague to be meaningful. I like the 5 strategic focus areas, but I've been disappointed with some of the results, especially with IT infrastructure. I think the membership needs to see small wins to regain confidence in the leadership strategy. I know resources are stretched thin with all the recent demands, but I think we are going to have to invest, not tighten our wallets, in order to grow for the future.

Ryan Schultz

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Thank you for your kind note and congratulations. Since learning about points and point colors, I have aspired to become a life master. Getting my first gold point was a challenge and acquiring the number needed seemed impossible. Those gold did come though, and the greater challenge became the silver points. Unfortunately, bridge in the Charleston area is on the decline, and our clubs cannot afford to host sectional tournaments. Attending weekend sectionals in either Kentucky or Ohio and being home for church on Sunday limited the opportunities. For the past two years, I thought life master status could be achieved at any sectional only to learn my points came in fractions and not whole numbers. When Sarah Sentman offered a STAC game in her club in April, I was delighted to get the last fraction I needed to acquire the status. So, I concluded that the achievement came not with a bang but a whimper. The bang came the next

week when four of us attended the Gatlinburg Regional and won the first two events we entered earning just over 25 gold points and 5+ red. At that point, my husband (who does not seek life master status) announced no more bridge, and we played no more! He is my favorite partner, and I hope we will attend more tournaments in the future.

District 11 sectionals are hosted by wonderful people who offer terrific food and hospitality. My husband and I have only compliments for the events we have attended and the local people we have met.

Lucille McClure

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I began playing more frequently in July 2012 (had only 40 MPs). First Regional in Dayton, OH. Found a good, serious, partner-John (also played with my wife Judy who eventually got more serious). At Regionals John would play 2 days and Judy the other 2 days. Judy and I played often through the 45 + years of marriage. We found these tournaments to be a fun way to vacation, and the directors and players were so nice and very interested in providing a great atmosphere for bridge. It was always exciting to see the results-sometimes disappointing but enough times good to keep us coming back. Eventually when I got LM, Judy had 55 MPs-33 of which were colored (10G/15R/8S). John got LM one month before me But he played the full year while Judy and I played 8 months as we spent 4 months each year in the Carolinas.

Thank you for all you do to promote this great game. One final thought- our club requires players to play with a higher level group once you get LM or have 500MPs but the Board is considering to allow up to 750 MPs to play in the lower level room. What is your thought and what do other Clubs do? It is less fun to play against players who have tons of MPs and use bidding systems that are way above those who are still novices- even as new LMs. If allowed to play in the lower room there can always be Stratification which would allow the weaker players to get MPs.

Miles Muhada

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You asked for my story about achieving Life Master status. I often hear people graciously and correctly giving credit to good partners. In my case, that is absolutely the truth of the matter. I sent you a photo of four of us with all four names. The reason I asked you to make certain that all names, not just mine, appeared if you ran the photo is that truly I would not be close to being a Life Master without those three people, with special recognition to Paul Humbles who was my partner for over two-thirds of the gold points I earned -- and that was just in three games! Paul, Helen Hofmann, and David Fee were my teammates on the final day, and they "played their heads off" to help with the third-place finish which got the last of the needed points. In addition to playing well, we all had fun.

For my part, I was spurred on knowing that, if I became a Life Master at the Cincinnati Flying Pig Regional, I'd get my name on..... a flying pig! (That's Pigasus I'm kissing in the photo.) I'm sure a lot of people, me included, thought I'd only make Life Master when pigs fly, so.....need I say more?

I had many other partners -- also got gold playing with Carol Ayers, Harry Preston and Linda Benedix. To me, these people represent the spirit and caring of bridge players everywhere, and especially at the Indianapolis Bridge Center where I belong. They help each other not only through the up's and down's of the game of bridge, but also through the up's and down's of the game of life. They along with teachers, mentors, fellow players and club management at the IBC make up important pieces of a jigsaw that when taken as a whole enrich my life more than I know how to say. And also for me, like many others as well, there is the most important piece of my jigsaw: a supportive non-bridge-playing spouse who, while he may not identify with my crazy addiction, knows it makes me happy. (Dick only asks that I stop telling everybody I "kissed a pig," as he thinks they might think I'm talking about him!)

One more thing: if you want to get a feel for this very special bridge center I call home, read "The 8 of Clubs was Good?" by Elizabeth Flynn. You'll likely recognize your own bridge club and your own bridge friends.

Oh, yes ... thank goodness for the 300 master point plan!!

Connie Latas

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Thanks for your note. I will try to come up with a response and a photo (the photo part is easy, since John Nichols, tournament director, took a fun one of my teammates and me). Will send later.

The suggestion I have at the moment (I've had it in mind for about 2 years) is that ACBL try to enlist the help of Warren Buffet and Bill Gates in developing a program for soon-to-be retirees and the newly retired. I know that Buffet and Gates tried to develop a youth program, which is a great idea to preserve bridge into the future. But I think our target market for now is the older crowd. I like what's being done to encourage rubber bridge players to join in for instruction, shorter games (2 hours), "rubber bridge" sections at tournaments, etc. I think what would be great would be to have the prestige of the names of Buffet and Gates -- and, if possible, some money as well to help clubs finance the efforts. My club, the Indianapolis Bridge Center, and others of like size would be great for a pilot program. The program could be developed at the national level with input from clubs. We have a dynamo of a person trying to work on just this kind of project at the Indy Bridge Center -- her name is Pam Rhine. I'll volunteer her without even talking with her first. She'd be great to be a liaison with the ACBL/District 11. She is smart, personable, hard worker, has great ideas. This is just the seed of the idea to help keep bridge growing.

Our CIBA group, by the way, is doing the best job ever. I am a huge fan of what Maribeth Ransell and her group have done. Such hard work and dedication -- truly, truly. They have worked magic. There's a story there, too, I think.

For now, I'll close by saying that I'm happy to be a life master. Along with many others, I'm sure, I figured I'd only make life master when pigs fly. Very appropriate that I achieved this milestone at Cincinnati's Flying Pig Regional! :-). Seriously, it was my Cincinnati pairs partner

and my Swiss teammates who did it. The ability to pick fun partners and teammates who also play bridge beautifully is key.

Thank you and the IBC and District 11 and ACBL for enriching my life.

Connie Latas

P.S. I'm copying Pam Rhine on this since I think I just volunteered her.

Here is the photo I mentioned in my other email. If you use it, please identify my teammates by name.

Left to right: Helen Hofmann, David Fee, Paul Humbles, Connie Latas (the pig kisser).

We played pairs (Paul and I) on Thursday June 2. We played Swiss Teams on Friday, 3rd.



On Friday morning, I learned that if I attained Life Master status at Cincinnati, I would actually get my name on a pig plaque! So.....with something like 1.29 red/gold points to go, I set my sights on the pig. :-). Thanks to my teammates for getting me to hog heaven!

And kudos to Cincinnati for a very well run and fun tournament.

Connie Latas

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Thanks a lot. I'm sorry about the delay. I had a sickness and death in the family, and I've not had much free time. (I had a free week, but I spent it playing bridge in the Flying Pig Regional.) I'm not sure that my story is very inspiring, but it is attached, along with a picture.

Marty Petersen



Thank you for acknowledging my new level of achievement. I recently attended the Effingham Regional. I was quite disappointed when I received 50% of the Gold Points I should have received due to low attendance at the Regional. I feel if that is the case, the Regional Flyer should reflect information regarding gold points awards are affected by attendance. ACBL members should not have to learn about this after the game is scored. We are concerned about where to attend a Regional in regard to earning Gold Points. We deserve to know about the percentage because we still pay the same card fees for a Regional. It does not seem fair we paid \$30 per team member to receive reduced points.

Thank you,

Gail Holman

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Thank you for your very nice email of Congratulations. It is appreciated.

I would love to tell my bridge journey and will send you the story and photo as soon as I can gather my thoughts on the past years. I can say it is wonderful to be back playing on a regular basis.

Regards,

Karen Angelou

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I am SO excited to get to 5 points!!! My bridge experience has been great so far. No suggestions for improvement. Thank you for the email.

Vicki Stogsdill

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I suspect that my journey to Silver Life Master was, maybe, the longest and most unremarkable of any. It began after I retired from work and took over 23 years to complete. It might never have happened, except that a fellow named Bernie Casselman (now deceased) took me under his wing urging that I attend the necessary Sectional and Regional Tournaments to acquire the required color points. Without his encouragement and help as a partner, my becoming a Life Master would have been very doubtful. Still I did persevere (with my wife's permission, and occasional support at the bridge table) to this lofty, for me, level.

Thank you for your congratulatory note and offer to publish further description of my bridge path. I think, however, that this is enough.

John Lauter

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Thank you Beth. The Cincinnati Bridge Center has provided me with excellent support and educational opportunities since I joined early this year. I have made many new friends and have always felt very welcome.

I enjoyed playing bridge in college, but quit playing regularly after graduating. My wife did not play bridge, and my focus changed to raising a family and advancing my career. In the fall of 2015, I lost my job during a global reorganization and my wife of 40 years died. I decided not to pursue another full time job, so I had the time and interest to resume playing bridge. Bridge is intellectually stimulating and it can be played in any weather. It is also a hobby that provides the opportunity to meet interesting and intelligent people, can be played at any age and is very inexpensive compared to most other hobbies.

The Cincinnati Bridge Club welcomed me to come in and play the first day I called to inquire about the schedule. I chose to play duplicate bridge because I thought it provided a better opportunity to recapture my skills. I quickly learned that modern bridge is much more complex than the bridge I played in college, but it is also more interesting. The Cincinnati Bridge Club provides many opportunities to learn every week, including supervised play and review of the boards after a session. There are games for all levels of players and there are home-style games for those who prefer "rubber-bridge" to duplicate.

I have many interest, but intend to continue playing bridge and improving my skill since I like the people at the club and it is a hobby I enjoy.

Kind regards,

Steve Messinger

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Thanks so much. My parents taught my sister and me to play when we were in high school. They wanted to play a rubber after dinner. I joined the ACBL when I was 21 - 50 years ago. My Silver Life Master Award works out to be 20 points a year! I did take bridge leaves of absence over the years. My husband was a blind date and, fortunately, a bridge player. We often stop and play at clubs when we are traveling. I am so pleased to be a part of the ACBL. Bridge is great for retirees! I hope to play at a tournament in Cuba in December.

Elaine Jarchow

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Thank you for your note. I love playing bridge and I've advanced thanks to John Meinking. However, I really would like to keep a low profile. At my age I'm not too keen on recognition. Thanks so much for your notification.

Adrienne Freiberg

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Beth, thank you for the nice note!

I am not sure you want my story. I love to play bridge, master points are not a priority. I keep track of the points because our Knockout captain needs our totals.

ACBL is doing a good job. I will look for you at the next event!

John Griffin

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Thanks, Beth. My wife and I playing again after a 30+ year absence. Two biggest differences? Bid, bid, and then bid again. The second difference . . . the important one . . .

is how congenial the atmosphere is. Incivility is no longer tolerated. Our unit is well run.

Ted Kissell

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Use as much or as little of this as you want now. I hope you will be asking me the same question in about 2 and half years when I expect to become a life master.

My father (Alan Frantz, currently of Oberlin OH) played bridge my whole life and recently (March 2016) became a gold life master. He gave me an introduction to the game and even took me to a beginner's game once or twice in high school or college. However, I did not join the ACBL and life got in the way. I had a few other brief encounters with bridge and have been a life-long player of an assortment of other card games.

I still work full time. In July 2013 within a week of sending my youngest son to college; I decided to go to a zero to 100 point game at the Indianapolis bridge center. The people were very nice and they paired me up with another woman who knew the game some, but was both new to the area and new to the ACBL. I started playing once a week and took a few lessons. Before long once a week was not enough and I was playing in games with higher point limits at the club. Then I got talking to other players and started going to some tournaments. Now I have at least half a dozen fairly regular partners and play 2 to 3 times a week at the club (when paying work does not get in the way). I also have a core group that I now travel with to many of the tournament within a reasonable drive (and occasionally farther). I also play with my father at some tournaments now. So I got to 200 total points in a little over three years with just over half of those points silver, red and gold because I do travel to tournaments. I am proud that aside from some points earned with my father most of my points (including about 90% of the gold points) came playing with players that are also not yet life masters (but we all are working to change that fairly soon).

I already said the Indianapolis bridge center was good to me when I started, but I need to say more. It is a wonderful home club. There is a nice variety of games and friendly atmosphere. The classes, teachers and directors and experienced players have all been very helpful to me. Finally, the center has greatly enhanced my social life. I regularly have meals with or do other things with the partners and friends I made at the Indianapolis bridge center.

Kathy Garrity, Zionsville IN

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Here is my article.

My name is Robin Baugh and I am a duplicate bridge addict! I became one the moment I walked through the doors of the Muncie DBC. My fix is playing 4 times a week.

The members in that club are very knowledgeable and very friendly. Within 10 days of joining the ACBL, I have gone from Rookie to Junior Master!

Tom Charles is the Manager. The "Three Wisemen": Jack Madsen, Darrel Peckinpaugh, and Larry Bryant are the Directors. These 4 men are very efficient and helpful!

Words like Jacoby or Texas Transfers are now in my daily vocabulary. A convention is not a group of delegates but a way to bid.

Anyone who just plays party bridge should participate in an ACBL club nearby. New friends are waiting for them.

My friends know the Muncie DBC as the "BIG Boys". They are the "BEST" and I hope one day to play at their level and be called a "BIG GIRL"

The world is now "My Oyster"--It could be yours too! Walk, no, RUN to the nearest ABCL-- Friends, Fun, and a True understanding of bridge awaits you!

Robin Baugh

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Thank you for your kind words and for all your hard work for many years. I have enjoyed reading your articles over the years. If I get caught up on my holiday to do's, I hope to get back to you with a story. You have probably already heard that many people with less than 300 points are very unhappy with the 500 system. I have been a member for 13 years and enjoy my "back room" friendships. I believe the low tournament attendance recently is mostly attributed to the 500 system. I hear a lot of "I don't care about getting my life masters," "I'm never going to live long enough," "Why on earth did they change it?", "It's not important to me", "I could care less about getting my life master's". People need immediate rewards-- basic behavioral strategy--immediate and generous. The upper level people are very far removed from the backbone of the local clubs, in my opinion, and in the opinion of the many people who just don't come back.

Chris Yarbrough

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Thanks for the note on achieving Silver Life Master. As my friend/partner John Peer suggested I am going to do a brief write up on this amazing 7 year trip.

Almost 7 years ago on 12/19/2009 John and I walked into the Indianapolis Bridge Center for the first time to inquire about joining and learning to play duplicate. Sharon Austin, club manager, encouraged us to join both IBC and ACBL as the requirement for Life Master was about to change from 300 to 500 Master Points. Never in our wildest dreams did we





envision the next 7 years.

John and I quickly became hooked! We made Life Masters in 2 ½ years on the same weekend at our Indianapolis Sectional tournament and both became Silver Life Masters within a week of each other.

We have attended four Nationals and numerous Regionals and Sectionals. The real story here is not really about bridge, but about the journey. We have had the advantage of great teachers including Sharon Austin, our manager, and Jerry Clerkin, a nationally known player and teacher at our club. Additionally the Indianapolis Bridge club members have been great mentors, friends and advisors. The life masters at our club have played, advised and helped teach us how to play.

We have met and played with and against some amazing people. What an amazing game. Endlessly fascinating and always interesting. We are continuously learning and growing as bridge players and will try and help others as we have been helped.

Lastly about my friend and partner John Peer. He is understanding of my faults, ever patient, always encouraging and always a friend! And John feels the same way about Jim.

We have been fortunate to have a great partnership and a great club to play and learn.

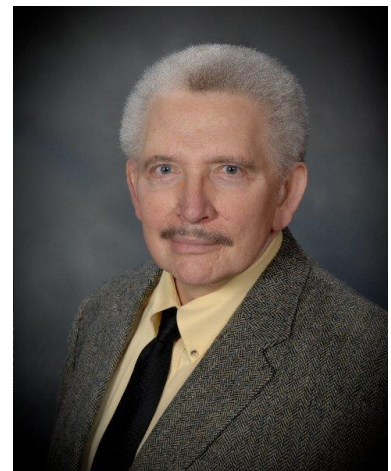
Jim Rowen and John Peer

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I learned to play bridge when I was a junior in high school, and first played in minor tournaments in college. When I married Charleyne Adolay in 1971 we took advantage of the happy fact that there was a local bridge center just a mile from our home in Indianapolis. It was called the Blackwood Bridge Center, and it offered two duplicate bridge games every day (one in the afternoon, one in the evening). So we decided to try playing there.

What we didn't know was the "Blackwood" in the title was the famous bridge expert Easley Blackwood, the inventor of the most used bridge bidding convention in the world, and this club was run by him and his wife. *Wow!* For Charleyne and me it was like diving into a pool of sharks. What we should have done is sign up for bridge lessons, and that would have eased us into the game.

But, stubbornly, we are both autodidacts (people who like to teach themselves), so we bought books and practiced a lot at home, while getting routinely bloodied by the BBC crowd (who were great people, but dangerous opponents). At the end of the first year however, Charleyne and I were entering tournaments (playing in the beginner's sections) and even winning them (a great thrill!). It was the start of a lifetime of duplicate bridge that continues to this day. Charleyne and I even managed to play as partners for a year or two after our marriage ended in 1976, finally quitting when it became too difficult to get together to play (she was in still Indianapolis, but I had moved to Columbus, Ohio). I should also mention that playing with your spouse has to have certain set rules ("Your marriage must not depend on what you lead," "No discussion of hands is



permitted on the ride home unless both of you agree," "No frowning when your partner makes a really stupid bid," etc.).

During most of my professional career as a law professor at The Ohio State University and other schools I played little bridge, but once I retired from full-time teaching in 2004 I returned to regular play. By this past spring I had over 350 ACBL points, and the only thing that kept me from attaining the rank of "Life Master" was lacking .36 gold points. Try as I might in tournament after tournament this year, I couldn't acquire that stupid tiny amount. However, my steady partner, Lewis Rakocy, and I went to a Regional Tournament in Dayton, Ohio, on Friday, September 29th, and managed to come in third in a large field of players, earning 3.78 gold points, and—just like that—I became a Life Master, with a handsome certificate from the ACBL to prove it.

They say that it costs a bridge player about \$10,000 in gas, hotel bills, tournament fees, meals, etc. to become a Life Master, and that seems about right. It was long and expensive road to travel, but well worth the journey.

Douglas Whaley

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My climb to Club Master was a long one because of personal issues, medical problems and work interruptions. I joined the ACBL in April 1, 1982 in Miami, Florida. At that time I was computer repair engineer traveling the world to fix computers. So my playing time was interrupted and then stopped in 1985 when I lost my job due to the company closing. At that time I only had 11.13 Masterpoints

After losing that job, I was immediately hired by another company but did not stay in Florida long because they transferred me to Anderson, Indiana. Well in 1990, I went through a divorce. After things settled down, I started playing bridge again in 1991-1992 in the Muncie Club.

At that time, I only had 12.13 Masterpoints. Work again stepped in and I was traveling teaching accounting to the military and in 1996 I got married again.

This time traveled to Nashville, Tennessee where I worked at Saturn Corporation managing several instructors teaching a variety of courses. Well as luck would have it EDS, my company, lost the contract and I had to find another job which brought me back to Bloomington, Indiana. Well I worked there a few years until that company went bankrupt, then I went to work for ITT Technical Institute teaching business courses. Finally in 2012, I left that school and formed my own tutoring company operating under the Club Z franchise. Then I retired and sold the company in 2015, so it was long that I got bored and joined the Indianapolis Bridge Center in April 2016. Now I have 21.03 Masterpoints and have made Club Master.

My advice to all Bridge Players is not give up, it has taken me 34 years to make Club Master so it is possible for anyone to make what they want.

Bill Salin

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Thanks, district 11 director.

I do love bridge ... every day is different, the people are mostly great, it's a constant challenge and provides a lifetime of potential learning.

but as you know, if you play enough you're going to log the miles. My story is no different than any other .... you start playing, take a few lessons, read a few books and do your best to learn the game. I still feel like a rookie, and still need to work on so many basic parts of my game.

and hoping someday I'll be good enough to win a national competition, too.

Let me know if you really want any other info ...

Larry Newman

a couple suggestions for ACBL:

- more incentive for team play
  - more opportunity for national competition (don't know if there's enough volume, but perhaps one or two more levels ... *so that more people have the opportunity to represent their district at a national event .... divisions at 500, 1500, 3000, 6000, 10000, open*)
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