

Fred Sego New ACBL Regional Master

As a teen in a very rural and remote community in his home state of Montana, Fred found himself, along with a neighbor girl, filling in when some ladies could not play what he later learned was 'rubber' (Fred likes this more definitive term rather than 'party') bridge. It was about 1950, and Culbertson was the pre-eminent authority. Later, in my 20s, Fred played for a few years in an engineering office during his 30 minute lunch break. They usually could get in at least 2 rubbers. (His current Bridge Club would like that!)

Playing with his beginner wife and three other couples after retirement, Fred eventually discovered duplicate, when a group in their town (Polson, Montana) started or resumed the weekly game. When his wife developed Alzheimer's, the club welcomed her as she sat beside him with her needlework. When he moved with her to a nursing home, a few of them in the independent living section played bridge. Learning that some residents in the 'Memory' (dementia) section who had played before their current condition wished to continue playing, some of them volunteered to sit with them to help when needed. So much of their skills remained, it was inspiring to be able to help with little reminders.

After his wife passed away, Fred moved to Kalispell, Montana, and started playing (a real novice) with the Flathead Valley DBC. Joining the ACBL in 2011, as could be expected, masterpoints were slow in coming. By February, 2017, and thereafter, his monthly Bulletin kept reminding him that he was "0.02" silver points shy of Regional Master. Attempts to attain that 'miniscule' fraction repeatedly failed.

At the last minute, Fred decided to play in their (FVDBC) annual Memorial Day Tournament this year. Contacting their Club Rep. who aided with pairings, she connected Fred with a lady from California, Liz Ashby, who had about 40 masterpoints. A phone conversation with Liz soon gave Fred the belief that she was much more knowledgeable than her masterpoints indicated. True to form, together they played all four rounds on one day, garnering silver points in every round.

So here Fred is! At age 84, and having remarried a few years ago, Fred assured his younger wife (reinforced by physicians' assessments) that he would be around for 20 more years. Continuing to teach and dance all styles of couples' rhythms several times each week, Fred has a modicum of confidence. Having run long distance races, including marathons, for 30 years didn't hurt. (He changed from running to walking at age 75 to save his knees for dancing.)

Bridge, like chess, golf, and dancing, for Fred will never reach perfection, but continuing to learn is the stimulus. And although Fred has no bent to attain the next masterpoint level, he will accept whatever life (and his Guardian Angel) gives him.