

Winston Gokavi

New Diamond Life Master

Winston began playing bridge quite literally at his mother's knee. At the age of seven he would sit beside her and observe her playing against his father and uncles and taking their money. As the proverbial story goes one day he was asked if he had an idea of what the game was about in order to fill in for his mother's partner who didn't show. Winston did and fairly soon doubled his dad in a contract. His mom asked me if he knew what double was and he told her that my dad was in trouble. Mom made a little more coin right then.

Winston stopped playing for about 8 years when they moved from Pakistan back to India. He went to work when he was 16 years old and began playing again. Winston was fortunate enough to have a few rich people ask me to play with them in their private clubs and they would give him a share of the winnings but take any losses. Fortunately they won more than they lost. Winston learnt the play ACOL, Blue Club, Neopolitan Club and with a close friend tried to develop a bidding system of our own.

Winston moved to Canada in 1974 and married Cynthia in Regina. He knew her back in his home of Hyderabad for about 15 years. She knew about my gambling habits in India and made him promise to give up any form of cards including bridge. In 1978, after they moved to North Battleford, her sister's boss needed a partner for a Regional in Saskatoon and Winston was volunteered as a partner for him. They did win some points in a 2 session event. Once he got started again he was hooked and joined the North Battleford Bridge Club. Cynthia took up the game when she was laid up with knee surgery for a year and was taught by a couple of ladies from the club. Once she got the rudiments of the game they became partners and won a lot of events over the next 4 years. The highlight was coming second overall as flight C players in the L.V. National in a 4 session event that had 1142 players. They were beaten by half a board by Bill Passell and his partner. They won the 25 gold points required in the L.V. National tournament. Cynthia and Winston played a hybrid system of SA, 2/1 and K/S. They even had 6 bids they invented to fit with the system which they had to clear with the directors at the tournaments.

Cynthia and Winston both made Bronze Life Master status in the 4 years. The other highlight of their partnership was winning their very first team game with pick up partners in Boise. Their daughters Tanya and Tara asked Winston to teach them bridge. Tanya was 12 and Tara was 9. After they had learnt the game Tanya preferred to caddie and became a National Head Caddie under Jackie. Tara decided she would like to be a Life Master when she was 11. Together with Winston she played for the next 3 years culminating in Philadelphia when Tara became Canada's youngest L.M. at 14 years, 7 months and 7 days. He was so proud that she was made the poster child by the ACBL and large posters of her were posted at the National Events. They might have continued playing but she gave up the game when her friend and junior playing partner Erin Berry was killed in a car accident. We believe having to give the eulogy at the funeral was too much for her.

After Tara quit the game Winston had very little motivation to play at clubs and tournaments. He made L.M. in June 1991, B.L.M. in December 1992 and S.L.M. in 1996. It took him another 13 years to make G.L.M. in June 2009. Winston got to G.L.M status in Winnipeg with the help of some very good friends from North Dakota and Minnesota. Then came on-line bridge. Winston joined because he could play these 1 hour tournaments sanctioned by the ACBL whenever he had time. Winston was forced to retire in 2006 due to health problems and played quite a bit on the internet. From 2007 to date he has accumulated over 3000 MPs in BBO tournaments. In the

last 4 years his on-line play has dropped off because he has 2 granddaughters that he and his wife baby sit quite a bit.

Family is Winston's number one priority. After that come church life and his friends. Hobbies besides bridge are playing golf and camping in the summer, exercising in the gym in the winter, and travelling with his wife, children and grandchildren as many times as he can. Winston's favourite destination is Hawaii.

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