

New Diamond Life Master John Pulles



Years ago, John played and coached elite level softball, winning a Canadian championship and two Western Canadian championships. When he decided enough was enough for softball John looked for something with that competitive edge, but wasn't quite as time consuming as his softball days. John found bridge—he had played as a young kid as his older sister brought the game home. Their family was a game playing one, especially a card playing family. THEY took to bridge but unfortunately only his sister and himself really loved it. THEY tried the bridge club in Saskatoon one time when he was about 18 (about 1975), but had no idea about a convention card or the scoring rules. They just went to play. Many people were not so kind to us, as they were quite noisy and laughed a lot at themselves.

In February of 1995 they decided to give it another shot, only this time they researched the times, and showed up nice and early so the director could help us with a convention card. John remembers her asking if we played 5 card majors, and he didn't know what that meant. Tuesday evening at the Saskatoon bridge club

was for people 20 master points and under. John showed up with his sister, Eleanor Kennedy, and they played for about 8 or 9 weeks. The director at the time must have seen our enthusiasm and challenged us to try and learn more from mentors and play Wednesday night in the over and under 50 master point game. It was at this point that his serious learning began. John was fortunate to have had some good masters—starting with Lee Von Hagen (who also mentored them at their homes), then moving on to Mike Harris. John learned a lot from both mentors.

He hadn't realized that bridge tournaments could be found just about everywhere. So he went to Penticton with Linda Olbort, and they had a real success—gaining 52 points, and John earned all the gold points I would need. John graduated from Wednesday night (as the rookie) right after that and started playing with Len Mazurkewich on a regular basis in the Thursday open game. About this same time, he met my wife-to-be at the bridge club, and he played a lot with her as well.

Some highlights from those early days were trips to Nationals. John went to Vancouver in 1999 and Las Vegas shortly after. At that time a new face had shown up at the club and Ron Pegg and John formed a partnership that I felt was very strong. THEY teamed up with Brent Moulding and Jay Anderson to play in the Canadian B championships in Edmonton in 2002, and won the event. John found it the most grueling event he had ever participated in for bridge, and to this day he still thinks it was the toughest. That team also went to New York to play in the GN teams, but they lost out early. He also went to NABC's in Long Beach (playing with Cathy Sproule, Ron Pegg and Derrick Furber) and the GN Teams in Atlanta—with Derrick, Mark Churchman, Perry Khakhar, Larry Custead and Don Shatilla. In

Long Beach we lost in a three way to the two teams who ended up in the final. In Atlanta we lost first round.

Most of the last 10-12 years he has played tournaments with Derrick Furber. They started writing their system down, so they had a reference book when they disagreed on a bid. That book is getting larger, but they seem to have fewer disasters now. Along the way John played three Alberta regionals with Tommy Walsh and had had a lot of success in several of the tournaments he played in. Two that stand out—Idaho Falls, where he played with Linda Webb from Fargo, N.D. and Red Deer in 2016 where he played with Jackson Chan, and on a team with Derrick Furber and Adam Thiel. In both of those tournaments he earned over 100 points, and did not play on Sunday.

Recently Derrick and John went to Red Deer and did very well. The bridge community keeps them in touch with friends from afar. In Red Deer they teamed up with Gerry McCully and Rhonda Foster from Victoria for two events and Janet and Chris Galbraith from Calgary for another.

John can't imagine a better game that can be played by young and old, and by all different levels of players in the same tournament.

Several years ago he took up mentoring small groups of people in their homes, and in the latest group he has about 7 members, all of them achieving or getting close to getting their life master designation.

John looks forward to the time when he can retire and play some bridge and not have to worry about coming back from tournaments on Sunday night. Some of his goals would be to try and win the Sask Sectional master point award, and to play in a Canadian Championship. John understands they are coming to Saskatoon in a couple of years, so that might be the time.

John thanks to all his partners, teammates and mentors over the years.