

Gerry Marshall, Alberta's 1st Platinum Life Master

Unit 390's Gerry Marshall eclipsed the 10,000 Masterpoints total effective September 30, 2012, making him the first Albertan to achieve the Platinum Masterpoints category.



Gerry is Albertan through-and-through --- born in Calgary, graduating at the University of Alberta as petroleum engineer. He was introduced to bridge by his parents who played kitchen bridge, ('but they never let him play as they always played late') and started later at the U. of A. "to the severe detriment of my grades". Gerry went overseas after graduating but always knew he would get back into bridge upon return from the overseas (Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia) posting. He started playing duplicate when he returned to Alberta in 1974 and was very 'hooked' on the game from then on. Gerry and Linda married in 1976 and reports "that he was able to write 'bridge'

in their marriage contract". Further "she's been wonderful over the last 35 years and always very supportive of my playing the game, I couldn't have played the game and raised a family without Linda".

Family is the #1 priority for Gerry and bridge provides additional passion and balance to his life. Three aspects of bridge are especially rewarding for him: problem solving, competition, and social. Engineers love problem solving (it's in their DNA!) and bridge offers unlimited opportunities to solve a myriad number of problems. The competitive nature of duplicate is also terrific, whether club or tourney play. The game's social aspect, although not his highest priority about the game, has become more of an enjoyment in the last few years, "as I observe the newer players striving to become better". "I really enjoy being given 'hands' by players looking for answers that are not readily available in a bridge book".

In terms of bridge, the person who most influenced Gerry in a positive way was Subhash Gupta. "He taught me to respect the game as well as being my mentor". "Subhash was very good at always coming up with the best solution to any bridge problem, as well as putting good ethics as the first order of importance in bridge. I was able to play with him for a number of years before he returned to India". Adds Gerry, "the Calgary Bridge Community lost its 'final arbitrator' when Sub returned to India". Luckily Gerry still plays with him on BBO and continues to ask him his opinion on tough problems. The two partners who Gerry has now played with for well over 35 years, Bernie Lambert and Hendrik Sharples "have been my mainstays in 'putting up' with me during my formative, more emotional times at learning the game".

Gerry served (1985 – 1987) as President of Unit 390 "opening my eyes to the administrative aspects of running the game as well as realizing the importance of good volunteers". In 2012 Gerry was appointed as 1 of 3 District 18 representatives on ACBL's Board of Governors. In this new role, Gerry is focused on increased liaison and is specifically interested in opportunities to increase attendance at club games.

Interestingly, in contrast to many others who have achieved platinum, Gerry hasn't tried the pro circuit. "I am too much of a bridge purist to play pro --- it would be very difficult for me to say 'bad luck partner', to a client who had just mangled a hand in the interests of keeping my client paying me". Gerry does have a few pros as bridge friends, so understands their motive in teaching the game to players as well as making a living at it. "My partnership with Hendrik resulted in us playing pro on teams at times, but only as a favor to bridge friends and their clients. I can't say it was particularly satisfying to play bridge in this manner". "Luckily, I had the financial resources in my career and bridge career to resist 'playing pro'". "I think that the way bridge has evolved, sponsors are becoming more important than ever to allow international and top level bridge to continue flourishing. So all in all, a good thing --- just not for me".

Gerry has been very helpful to newcomers and always has a thoughtful suggestion to any bridge question and was asked to share some advice as part of this article. "The standard advice of count, count, count is still the most important advice to any non life master. Since it applies to both defense and declarer play, it is by far the most important thing a NLM can do to improve his or her game. Also, a NLM just has to realize that new 'glitzy' conventions are not a shortcut to improving their game and can actually be an impediment in making progress. The NLM should really play a fairly simple card to start, and then begin adding conventions with favorite partners, taking the time to discuss nuances of each added convention. Most conventions give up something to gain a different 'advantage'". "Kibitzing good players can certainly help a NLM's declarer play, especially if able to talk to the player afterward to discuss the interesting hands. NLMs should try and hook up with a good mentor to accelerate all aspects of their game".

A recent interesting hand might provide some comedic relief to newcomers struggling to make a contract. "I held a fairly nondescript hand, xx, xx, Qxx, Kxxxx. The bidding went 1 diamond on my right, then all change. I led a small club, partner won his ace and returned a small diamond I won my queen and returned a small diamond. Partner won both his ace and king, taking out the 3 diamonds in dummy as well as those in declarer's hand. Partner then returned a club enabling me to cash all 5 of my remaining clubs. I returned a heart after this and partner claimed. We took all 13 tricks. Declarer, in shock, said 'but I had a full 14 point opener'. Her hand was AKQx Jxxx Jxx QJ. I have never heard of opening a normal 1 diamond and going minus 700. All we could say to her in sympathy was 'it will probably be a push'".

On the future of bridge --- Gerry thinks bridge in Calgary will continue to grow, as there seems to be no lack of people stepping forward to teach, promote and volunteer to move the game along. The Calgary area has a lot of talented people from all walks of life who are interested in seeing bridge evolve and welcome future entrants. A dynamic city of over 1 million people should be able to provide the infrastructure that bridge will require in the future. "Personally, I think Calgary should be able to host a National sometime in the future and would certainly be interested in helping this project come to fruition. If Winnipeg can pull this off, surely an Olympic city can also do it. The concern for bridge is always how to increase enrollment, and I share that concern. I think we all have to try and get more 'kitchen bridgers' out to try duplicate, as getting a lot more young people into the game is a difficult proposition in this day and age".

Bridge in 2020 --- "certainly more bridge on the internet as travel, hotel and other costs continue rising. I don't foresee drastic change although the game does evolve on an ongoing basis. Bridge has shown itself to be an extremely enduring game over the years, so I can't envision the game drastically changed in any meaningful way".

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Ken Scott