



Volunteer Profile



Sharon Biederman

Sharon Biederman is the heart and soul of Bridge Brigade and Long Beach Bridge!

Her enthusiasm and work ethic inspire a regiment of volunteers that includes student and veteran players. Volunteers find it hard to say no when they see Sharon working by their side—usually arriving first and going home last. And, of course, if any volunteer cannot meet a deadline, Sharon willingly assumes the commitment as the primary and first volunteer.

When Sharon took over Bridge Brigade and then Long Beach Bridge, she implemented changes—making them nonprofits, greatly expanding the education program, and making

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May 2020

Table Talk

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Special Events May 2020

Long Beach Bridge Center has joined on-line Alliance Bridge Club. *More games, more options, more points and more money goes to Long Beach Bridge.*

Daily Open Games

7:00 a.m.	\$7
10:00 a.m.	\$8
1:00 p.m.	\$8
4:00 p.m.*	\$7
6:30 p.m.*	\$7

Daily Limited Games

0-299	7:00 a.m.	\$7
0-499	8:00 a.m.	\$7
0-1000	8:30 a.m.	\$8
0-299	10:00 a.m.	\$8
0-1000	11:30 a.m.	\$8
0-299	12:30 p.m.	\$8
0-1000	3:00 p.m.	\$8
0-499	2:30 p.m.	\$8

*except Saturday and Sunday

Our ALLIANCE games are held at www.bridgebase.com.

1. If you are a member of BBO, Log in as "Remember me" and proceed to step 4.
2. If you are joining BBO for the first time, click "**BECOME A MEMBER**" and Register. Be sure to include your **ACBL#** on your registration form.
3. Add funds with the "**BB\$**" button.
4. To register to play in a game, choose "**COMPETITIVE**".
5. Select "**ACBL VIRTUAL CLUBS**".
6. Look for **ALLIANCE BC** games (Host VACB266064).
NOTE: Games are listed 2-hours before the game time
7. Register yourself and partner, or find one at "**PARTNERSHIP DESK**". Note: Both partners need to be logged in at the same time to register.

If you are blocked from signing up, press the gray VACB266064 box and in the section that says "message," tell them you are from Long Beach and ask them to add your BBO name to the friends list. Wait at least 15 minutes. If you still have problems, text Sharon your BBO name, at 714-624-3455.



Sharon Biederman, Jackie Hess and Susan Hafen

Continued from page 1

the Open games more welcoming and supportive of newer players. “Everything I do is by example,” she explained. Initially working closely with Dalia Hernandez and Renee Hoffman, she would “show what I want people to do instead of telling them.” This Show-Not-Tell strategy has transformed Long Beach Bridge and its programs.

Sharon’s ultimate goal is to get enough volunteers for both entities to operate without her. She wants “so many people involved that I make myself dispensable.”

Sharon is also a volunteer member of Unit 557’s board, often supervises the daytime Newcomer games, and serves as Unit Recorder to ensure that cheating, the bane of the game, does not take root in the unit.

Her reward “is watching beginners grow and learn and become good players.” Her advice to beginners is “Play as much as you can. It’s the best way really learn what you’ve been taught.”

Sharon’s personal bridge journey began mid-2009 when, to combat an empty nest, her husband Steve Ramos, an expert bridge player, taught her the game. Steve brought her to the club, played with her 5-7 times a week, and encouraged her to find other partners. She did and the rest is history.

Sharon’s pursuit of Life Master

was filled with many adventures. She, Steve, Susan Bibby, Renee, and Kiyo Nagaishi travelled to regionals throughout California and Las Vegas to earn the needed masterpoints. Steve and Sharon also took a cruise through the Panama Canal with a whole group of people from Long Beach. Sharon attained Life Master in 2013.

Today she tries to play at least three times a week. Sharon explained her favorite convention, “I love to use Landy if the opponents open 1NT. The reason is that a 2C-bid means you have the majors. Everything else is natural; it’s so easy to remember!”

Prior to retiring, Sharon was an attorney specializing in banking litigation. She represented creditors in collections, handling the paperwork and appearing in court. This prepared her for her present responsibilities because she knows how to handle a variety of situations and paperwork. Also, she saw

the value in making both entities nonprofit to encourage people to donate their time and money.

In addition to her part-time work as an attorney, Sharon supported her daughter Sarah, chauffeuring her to acting auditions/jobs and being her most enthusiastic fan. She explained, “My job was to protect her from the worst of show business and to model the type of person I wanted her to be and become. I taught her to get in line, not to the front of it.”

Sharon also likes to crochet and is currently crocheting masks with fabric liners to be worn during this next phase of social distancing. Jo Melis showed her how to make the cute crocheted animals that are a big hit in the Silent Auction. Jim Nicola is her best customer, buying two or three every auction.

Sharon’s unselfish dedication to Bridge Brigade, its students, and the club promotes the game she loves. She has even learned to organize and direct a daily online BBO game during this time of social distancing. She ends every online game ends with the message, “Thank you for playing. We will be here daily at 12:05 p.m. Tell your friends.” Thank you, Sharon, for being here every day for us! You are the model volunteer, devoted to the continuation of the game of bridge you love!

by Lillian Slater



Melanie Smith, Jerry Smith and Sharon Biederman



GoFundMe launched our COVID-19 Small Business Relief initiative to help support our friends and neighbors locally during this difficult time of reduced business.

Donate today to help this business apply for a matching grant from the Small Business Relief Fund. Alternately you can log on to GoFund.com and search for Long Beach Bridge.

https://www.gofundme.com/f/long-beach-bridge-covid-19-relief-fund-smb?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=m_pd+share-sheet

You can also send checks directly to Sharon. Make check payable to Bridge Brigade (tax deductible) or Long Beach Bridge.

Mail checks to:
Sharon Biederman
1708 Bayou Way
Seal Beach, CA 90740

We have already received \$420 in donations directly to Sharon and \$1560 through Go Fund Me.



Who
is this
little
darling?

Go to our
Facebook
page - Long
Beach
Bridge for
the answer.



April Status Changes

New Member

Monica Daley

Diane McGarry

Barbara Svetlik

Timothy L. Treu

Junior Master

Yvonne Kroneberger

Sectional Master

Beth Bynre

Melanie Smothers

Bronze Life Master

Peter Connor



Contractor, Dana Kuhlman, and project coordinator, Chuck Laine, ensure they maintain their six-foot social distancing requirement while working on the bridge center remodel.

Long Beach Bridge Remodel Update

Finishing touches are being applied to the kitchenette and bathrooms. The bathroom facelift includes new floors, fresh paint on walls and stalls, and new handicap-height toilets in all stalls. The ladies' room also has a new vanity, countertop and sinks. Kitchenette upgrades include new cabinets, granite countertops, and stainless steel shelves. One of the new features will be coffee maker that is plumbed directly with water. No more yanking that dang hose from the wall.

We are all excited to play bridge in person, pandemic parameters permitting, in our newly renovated facility!



Welcome to our social distancing Teacher Appreciation Month!

This issue of Table Talk is a tribute to Sharon and her volunteer brigade of teachers! We would all be missing so much without their dedication and efforts. Many of us are applying their gifts to BBO bridge, a welcome distraction in this time of social isolation. Thank you—our teachers, bridge role models, and our friends!

At the end of 2015, bridge in Long Beach faced a crisis. Beloved long-time teacher, Bob Mault, was injured. Sharon reluctantly stepped up and took over some of Bob's classes while he recovered, but she was only getting started. Recognizing that bridge was a dying game due to an aging membership and a failure to recruit new players, she decided to expand the education program using ACBL's Bridge in a Day program. Sharon then reached out to parks and recreation locations, senior centers, and local colleges to teach Bridge in a Day to recruit new players. She also enlisted Dalia Hernandez and Renee Hoffman to help her teach these classes.

Rather than being content with this outreach, Sharon next mobilized an army of volunteer teachers and named it Bridge

Brigade in November 2016. She had the foresight to eventually make it a nonprofit organization, creating a comfort level for both volunteers and contributors.

Her hard work really took off in 2017 when Bridge Brigade became associated with California State University at Long Beach's OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) program. OLLI provides the advertising and registration, which generates enrollment in Bridge Brigade classes. The number of students and variety of classes continue to grow. Bridge Brigade now offers eight different classes three days a week, plus an evening class as needed. Student enrollment has increased from 185 in Bridge Brigade's first year to 651 students in 2019.

Of course, bridge lessons don't make bridge players; students have to actually learn through "time at the table." Sharon initiated Newcomer games four times a week including one evening. She also recruited volunteers to run supervised play games on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings. Since all these games award masterpoints, students

become familiar with ACBL and are "hooked" into earning points to advance their ACBL rank. Long Beach added five new ACBL members in the year before Bridge Brigade, while Sharon enrolled 37 in 2018. The club now posts and celebrates players' progress from Junior Master to Diamond Life Master.

These varied opportunities for Newcomer play combine with the club's Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday NLM games to provide a safe and comfortable path for students to transition from Newcomer to NLM to the Open and then to tournaments. Seventy-two percent of 2018's new ACBL players continue to play in bridge games at the club in 2019, and many compete in tournaments.

Sharon also implemented a popular Pro-Am game three times a year and, twice a year, she recruits high-level players to donate the play of a game at the club for a Silent Auction. This fundraiser is very successful while providing winning bidders with an incredible experience.

After organizing and honing Bridge Brigade, Sharon later assumed club ownership and management, again transitioning it to a nonprofit organization.

Sharon and the cadre of volunteer teachers' unselfish dedication to Bridge Brigade and its students as well as to the club and its players serves as the inspiration to get others to volunteer, making Long Beach Bridge truly the friendliest bridge club in Southern California! See you at the table when it reopens or, in the mean time, virtually at its daily BBO Alliance games.

by Lillian Slater





Hank Dunbar

Roger Baylor who taught Hank the basics, “most of what I use now.” They started played duplicate party bridge once a month. It was one of these players who suggested they check out Long Beach Bridge.

Later that year, Fern and Hank attended their first ACBL National tournament in Long Beach and placed **FIRST** in a 0-5 Pairs competition. They still have their trophies today! Fern added, “Of course, then we placed dead last in our next event.” They continued to travel to tournaments everywhere together, having fun and earning points. Their tournament destinations included Hawaii, Arizona, Oregon, and the famous one in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Hank and Fern achieved Life Master on the same day in December 2008 at the Rancho Mirage tournament. They still occasionally play together while Hank now partners once a week with his cohort Rob Preece.

Hank teaches the three introductory classes: Bridge 1 about the 2/1 system and bidding, Bridge 2 focusing on competitive bidding, and Bridge 3 for beginning Play of the Hand. What Hank enjoys most about teaching is “seeing a student do something right that may have come from me.” Bridge Brigade’s introductory classes initially used ACBL’s 2/1 spiral book but, over time, Hank found that the examples did not convey what he wanted. So, he’s rewritten this curriculum infusing “his own personality into it.” Countless new players refer to his lessons as they navigate their own bridge journeys.

Hank’s advice to new players is “Have fun! Enjoy the challenge!” Hank believes that “conventions can be really useful but there are occasionally bumps along the road with them.” He continued by telling a story about playing in a Las Vegas regional tournament, “My favorite partner opened one spade. My hand was perfect for a conventional ‘splinter’ bid of four hearts. This double jump promises at least four spades (partner’s suit) as well as an opening hand and shortness (zero or one) in the bid suit, hearts. The opener should alert this bid, and I knew I was in trouble when partner passed. The opponents were smart enough to pass and left me in a world-class misfit at four hearts. I had **ZERO** hearts, partner had three, and I played to a **NINE-ONE** split in trump. I did not make the contract.”

Hank is an avid fisherman and golfer. He ties his own flies for trout fishing, does bass catch-and-release at Canyon Lake in the Inland Empire, and goes on three ocean trips a year from San Diego for blue fin tuna. He is also the past president and life member of the Lakewood Men’s Golf Club.

Hank and Fern’s grandson Tristan is a world class tennis player and will attend Stanford University in September on a tennis scholarship. He’ll be cheered on by two of his biggest fans, his grandparents. Hank and Fern spend down time at their condo overlooking the lake and create memories with family and friends.

by Lillian Slater

Students can tell Hank Dunbar was a teacher even before taking on three of Bridge Brigade’s OLLI classes. His patience, clarity, and enthusiasm for his subject are the hallmarks of a great teacher, and Hank has them in spades—in more ways than one!

Hank was a high school math teacher in Alhambra for 25 years, and his wife Fern was a speech therapist in Long Beach. They traveled during their summer breaks—RV camping throughout the United States and vacations abroad with bridge friends. Hank recounts that he always wanted to travel to a destination far from the equator during the summer, while the others seemed to choose spots close to the equator. Visiting their home is like a tour of a museum, as it is filled with memorabilia and art from all these travels. Every Christmas season they invite Long Beach Bridge students and friends to an Open House at their home and to enjoy a neighbor’s marionette show.

When Hank and Fern retired in 2003, they took free bridge lessons at the Lakewood Senior Center from



Dalia Hernandez



Dalia Hernandez is the Queen of Conventions. From Jacoby 2NT to Inverted Minors, she knows and can teach them all!

Dalia and her family emigrated from Cuba to the United States with Dalia arriving in 1961. She entered fifth grade in Raleigh, North Carolina, not speaking a word of English. From this challenging beginning, Dalia became a software engineer/project manager at TRW/Northrop Grumman working on satellite and radar software until she retired in 2012.

Dalia has a twin sister, one of the two sets in her family! Dalia and her four siblings hit the genetic lottery. Both of her parents were college professors, her mother teaching physics and her father mathematics. Dalia's father was also a good chess player who tried interesting his kids in that game but only Dalia's brother liked it. So, her father then taught them the basics of bridge, and Dalia liked it! Although she didn't take up the game right away, she always knew she would when she had the time. And retirement gave her that time!

Dalia came to Long Beach Bridge at the end of 2012 and started lessons with Mark Teaford, the teacher she reveres. Even today,

when she plays bridge, she hears his voice in her head saying "Be a disciplined bidder. Carding and leading are not the same thing!" She repeats these mantras to her students adding her own that "every card means something." Dalia became a Life Master in 2016 and most recently attained the rank of Silver Life Master. She loves playing in tournaments because the competition is challenging, playing against experts and world class players. She always learns a lot. Dalia really enjoys bridge because it requires many elements for success—thinking, logic, and working with another person to achieve a good result.

Dalia was also an avid tennis player competing in USTA tennis events. Unfortunately, she had to hang up her racket in 2107 when a previous knee injury from skiing became so painful she had to quit playing tennis. Dalia is also a dog lover and the owner of a rescue named Glory, a Puli Hungarian dog, and a Havanese, the national dog of Cuba, named Jose Marti after a Cuban national hero in the liberation of his country as well as an important figure in Latin American literature.

In addition to teaching her weekly OLLI class, Dalia mentors students in small group tutoring sessions three times a week. She donates the \$5 a person fee per session to Bridge Brigade, thereby generating over \$300 a month! When asked why she took on these responsibilities in retirement, she quickly responded,

"Sharon needed help. She was carrying the heavy load and I wanted to help."

Dalia's favorite convention is 2-Way New Minor Forcing because it allows the bidder to describe a hand perfectly. Dalia's rewards in teaching are "seeing students bid and play hands well when they play against me. I am so proud of their success." As to any frustrations in teaching, she said, "I don't really have any although it is often tough to break folks of bad habits. But I do appreciate students who want to learn and improve."

Thank you, Dalia, for all you do for Bridge Brigade, your students, your mentees, and the game of bridge. I know this "reporter" and

by Lillian Slater



Table Talk

Table Talk is distributed monthly. It is emailed to members of Long Beach Bridge with paper copies available at the club.

Editor Ardie Laine

Contributors Lillian Slater

Nancy Toussaint

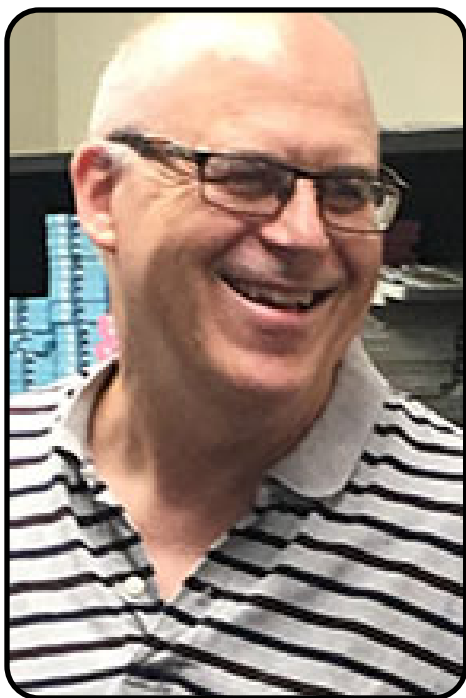
Photographers Roger Ernst

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Article Submissions

We welcome articles, ideas, and photos pertaining to our club. We reserve the right to revise submissions. Contact Ardie at ardeaux1@gmail.com



Rob Preece



girl who “agreed to date me became my bridge partner for the night.” Rob added, “Until later I never realized bridge could be played without beer.” In the 80’s, Rob played bridge every day at lunch while working at FCC.

Rob relocated to Dallas in 1993 where he worked with a high tech company and later taught Adult Ed classes at the Dallas Community College.

It was in Dallas that Rob started playing duplicate bridge. He dragged his wife Karen to a bridge club. As newcomers, they fumbled with their bidding boxes and talked during the hands. At one table, the opponent husband started yelling at his wife, calling her incompetent. Karen turned to Rob and asked, “Can we go now?” They politely stayed to finish the game but Karen never returned.

During this same period, Donna Compton, a national champion bridge player, started her own bridge club. She asked Rob to be one of her directors and, while there, he started teaching some of the Bridge Academy of North Dallas beginning classes, earning his ACBL teacher accreditation (TAPS.)

In 2008 Rob moved to Southern California, called Long Beach Bridge, and asked them to find him a partner. Frank Varga was his first.

Rob teaches Defense and Play of the Hand classes for Bridge Brigade students, using the ACBL books for both. Additionally, Rob developed and teaches his Advancing Player workshops. He finds interesting hands from a variety of sources,

has students bid/play them, and then reviews both Play and Defense techniques. A favorite Rob-adage from this class is “The card gods gave you a five-card suit in dummy so try to use it!”

Rob said the best thing about teaching “is the thrill for me to watch people ‘get it!’” He honestly added that it is also “ego gratifying to be in front of students who think I’m smart.”

He believes that having a convention to interfere against NT openings is important. He also likes to apply the Law of Total Tricks in his game, especially how the total number of trump provides an indicator of how high the partnership can bid.

Rob’s current business is www.booksforabuck.com. His books can be found at Amazon and multiple e-Book venues. He writes science fiction and fantasy under his own name as well as mysteries and romances under the pen names Amy Eastlake and Robyn Anders. He also helps others format their books for self publishing, although he is no longer accepting new authors for that service.

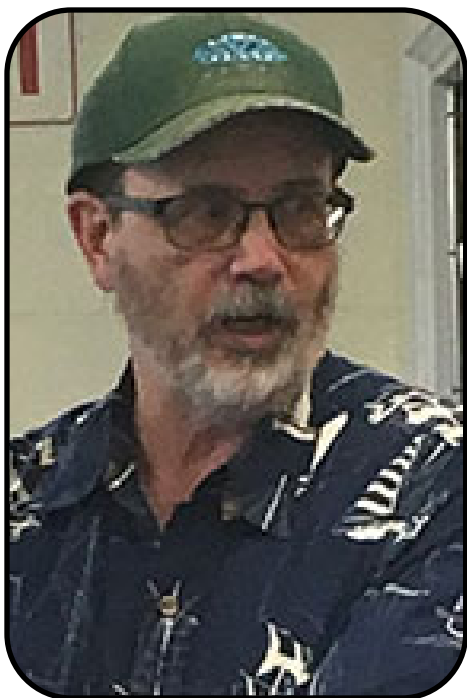
Rob visits his 91-year-old mother in San Diego at least once a month and still periodically plays bridge with her. As Rob’s mother says, “Bridge is the one thing you can do no matter how old. And people are happy to see you because then they have a table and can play bridge.” Bridge Brigade students are certainly always happy to see Rob!

by Lillian Slater

Rob Preece mesmerizes his students with his mother’s wise bridge sayings, his deprecating sense of humor, and the occasional use of his duck call whistle to get their attention! From the “eight ever, nine never” rule for pulling trump to “bid where you live,” Rob teaches Play of Hand and Defense classes for Bridge Brigade.

Rob’s bridge journey started when he watched his parents play party bridge with friends. One time they won a set of four metal duplicate boards, which only added to his fascination! When he was in middle school, he talked his parents into teaching him the basics of the game. His older sister hated bridge but, as she was often in trouble, her punishment was being Rob’s partner. Along the way, he bought a used copy of *Goren Bridge Complete*, read it cover-to-cover, and, since it was “complete,” he thought there wasn’t anything he didn’t know about bridge.

From these auspicious beginnings, Rob went on to graduate school at the University of Maryland at College Park earning a PhD in economics. During that time any



Steve Ramos

about the game and loved it.”

Steve was introduced to duplicate after he left the Naval Academy in the late 1970's. He went to Tory's in the Old Town Mall to find a chess game where John Jones (JJ) recruited him to play duplicate at what was then King's Bridge Center in Torrance (now South Bay Bridge Club). Before their game, JJ went over a card that was very detailed for a first-time duplicate player. While JJ reviewed, Steve nodded and managed to remember that opening 2-bids were weak (but missed the exception that 2 Clubs was strong). During the game, Steve opened 2 Clubs with a weak hand. Despite this, JJ continued to play bridge with him. Steve, JJ, and the famous Victor Touriel would often play bridge together at Steve's mom's house in North Long Beach.

Steve became a Life Master in September 2010 when his team won Flight B in the Orange County Regional's ending Swiss team competition, earning 20 gold points! His present rank is Gold Life Master, and he still enjoys competing in tournaments, “They're fun! You're playing with people who have devoted their lives to playing bridge and have developed it as an art.”

Today Steve plays bridge twice on Monday and every Tuesday night at South Bay. Considering his nonstop play at tournaments, he figures he averages playing five times a week. He added, “Bridge is a great pastime. Even if you're not victorious, it is never pointless.” During this period of social distancing, Steve is studying to improve his bridge game as well

as playing other games he enjoys such as Civilization, “an addictive and immersive game.”

His initial advice to newer players was “don't take drugs, and buy low, sell high.” Then, more seriously, he added, “Learn to be a good card player. The better you are at that, the better your bidding will be.” Steve likes any convention that makes his opponents lose focus and concentration.

Steve worked as a software developer and is still a whiz with computers. JJ recently ran his car over his laptop, and Steve was able to resurrect all its files!

One thing people may not know about Steve is that he loves dogs. He and Sharon currently have only one, Vladimir, a pug named by his children. This is the family's third pug with Teddy Bear and Gemini having crossed over the Rainbow Bridge. They will probably get another pug some time soon. Steve specifically waited until the kids were older to get their first dog so they would have a good experience that would last through life.

Steve knows and teaches counting out the hand, strip-end plays, squeeze plays, discarding, and signaling. Steve has modified Eddie Kantar's lessons to match his style and fit in the eight-week OLLI schedule. The three Card Play programs are rotated through the year, session by session. Be prepared to be challenged but emerge a better card player—whether a declarer or

by Lillian Slater

Wearing a beanie when it's cold or one of his baseball caps when it's warmer, Steve Ramos sets up to teach his Wednesday Play of the Hand class. His screen and computer slides at the ready, Steve munches on his favorite breakfast, Burger King Tater Tots and chicken tenders, while he waits for the class to settle in.

Steve confessed that he has always loved Tater Tots for breakfast. At the insistence of his doctor, he had to add protein to his breakfast, ergo the chicken tenders. Steve makes two stops on his way to teach—first to get his breakfast and then to pick up donuts for the Bridge Brigade students to enjoy. He loves donuts too but, again on doctor's orders, he only can appreciate their aroma.

Steve's bridge career started when he was nine years old. On a cruise from Hawaii to California when his family was relocating due a change in his father's Navy assignment, Steve got sick. To keep him entertained, his mom taught him Honeymooner's Bridge. Steve added, “My mom was not a great bridge player but she was passionate

Long Beach Bridge's Coaches

Bridge Brigade's OLLI teachers are supported by its team of coaches! Warren Buffet once said, "Bridge is such a sensational game that I wouldn't mind being in jail if I had three cellmates who were decent players and who were willing to keep the game going 24 hours a day." Any of Bridge Brigade's teaching coaches would make a fantastic cellmate—or bridge partner. Additionally, they are always willing and available to answer questions or review boards with you. Their accomplishments and contributions are varied and unique, but here they're listed in alphabetical order by last name.



Fern Dunbar

Fern Dunbar assists when Hank teaches his classes and often fills in tables for other classes while she's at the club. Fern's favorite, however, is Supervised Play. She enjoys answering the players' questions about bidding while letting them work out the play of the hand. Her advice to players is "as soon as the lead is made, make your plan. Don't be lazy and don't rush into it. Playing too fast leads to mistakes." Fern shared her bridge journey with Hank so details of their story can be found in his interview. Her favorite convention is Puppet Stayman (1NT-P-3C) because it allows a player to open No Trump with a 5-card major and still find that fit. When the club reopens, join Fern at a Supervised Play session any Tuesday or Mondays and Wednesdays during OLLI intersession.

by Lillian Slater

Colleen Gardner and John Melis coach the Supervised Play class on Thursday evenings and are regular Thursday/Saturday partners in the Open. When she was five years old, Colleen watched her parents and aunt and uncle play bridge for hours. She continued, "I guess I decided it looked like fun. Little did I know how much fun, until my whole party bridge group took lessons; now we are all hooked on duplicate and the party bridge group has dissolved." Colleen first took group lessons, and then attended a small class taught by Bob Mault every Monday. She added, "He was so wonderful. His voice still comes in my head telling me things such as 'don't overcall a rag.'" Colleen's advice to new players is to put their lead face down and ask if there are any questions before exposing the card. She has a long story to explain why this is good advice, but you'll have to ask her to tell it. Another time Colleen clearly remembers is "one nice afternoon at the bridge club" when she and her partner moved from the "baby room, as it was called then, to play real bridge. We somehow ended up in a contract of 2 Clubs with only 4 between us. One of the opponents asked if there wasn't a game in the back." Fortunately for us, Colleen stayed in the Open and became a Life Master about four years ago at the Long Beach tournament. She added, "My partners were more excited than I was. One asked if I felt any different."

by Lillian Slater



Colleen Gardner

Long Beach Bridge's Coaches



John Jones

John Jones directs the Tuesday/Friday NLM games and the Monday/Wednesday Newcomer ones. John learned to play bridge while a student at USC in 1974. He was waiting to play speed chess and got talked into learning bridge while he waited. Already a good Hearts player having played since he was eight, he got hooked on bridge quickly. He bought a bridge book a few hours after this first introduction and started playing duplicate in about a week. With all his experience he has lots of advice for newer players, "Find at least one partner with whom you are compatible to grow with. Good partners stay calm when things go wrong, are available to play when you are, and have an interest in learning comparable to yours. It's also good to enjoy their company away from the table." He also suggests that players "read, read, READ! Bulletins, articles, newspaper columns, bridgewinners.com, his column, books, books, and more books!" Teaching is rewarding to him "seeing my students improve and improving the general quality of play in the area." His favorite conventions include Transfers over Takeout Doubles (which he invented so "I'd better like it!"). He also likes Transfers over 1C openings, which he predicts will become more popular in the future, and Fitted Jumps. A Platinum Life Master, John was the World Invitational Champion in 2009 and won the Garozzo Award for the best played hand in the 2002 Montreal Olympics. He currently coaches the Caltech bridge team and has coached it and UCLA's to national titles. Two things many don't know about John are that he met his first wife while whitewater river rafting in Siberia, and bridge isn't his best game. He's better at skill gimmick car rallies, sports handicapping, and maybe backgammon. Check out John's Problem Solver column at the end of every District 23 newsletter. <https://www.bridgewebs.com/acbl23/CurrentNews.pdf>

by Lillian Slater

Jo Melis prepares and delivers the mini-lessons each Wednesday at 6 p.m. prior to the Newcomers and Open games, and often before the Monday-night Mentor game. Jo revealed, "What I like best about teaching is what I learn from the students. I learn things when I study to prepare lessons, and I learn a lot from the questions my students ask." Jo started playing bridge in the early 1970's at Long Beach State College (not a university back then). She was in the Student Union, and someone asked her if she knew how to hold cards. She added, "I haven't put them down since (which is a tad awkward when I am showering)." Jo's favorite convention is Znarknesor aka Reverse Rosenkranz. Not only is it fun to say, it lets her know whether or not it is safe to lead their suit. Jo is a Gold Life Master who "loves both the social aspect of the game and trying to bid/play/defend a hand the best possible way. I love the whole idea of duplicate where a lot of the element of luck is removed because the cards

you get are not as important as how you play the cards you get." Jo is an accomplished seamstress who made all the tablecloths for the club, and creates beautiful quilts, one of which is usually part of Bridge Brigade's Silent Auction. She's always crocheting something between rounds in the Open. Known for her message T-shirts, Jo's sense of humor permeated her interview and she ended by saying, "Many people are not aware that I am a famous brain surgeon. Also, a doctor, a lawyer, a movie star, an astronaut, and I own this bar." It turns out she co-opted this from a famous song. Read her T-shirt and then ask her about that!

by Lillian Slater



Jo Melis

Long Beach Bridge's Coaches



John Melis

John Melis and Colleen Gardner coach the Supervised Play class on Thursday evenings and are regular Thursday/Saturday partners in the Open. John is a Diamond Life Master who “likes the challenge of the game with a partner, opponents, and playing cards.” He’s surviving social distancing by playing in the daily club game on BBO but says, “Live play is much better than BBO, but any port in a storm.” In the fall of 1967, John saw a poster at Long Beach State College about an on-campus bridge club. He joined and was “hooked on bridge immediately.” He really likes it when a student sees the right play without help. His advice to newer players is “Don’t focus on learning lots of conventions. Learn the basics and especially defense.” His favorite conventions are Stayman and transfers. People may not know that he has poor color vision so, “when my clothes don’t match, I can’t see why.”

by Lillian Slater

Melanie Smith supervises the Wednesday night Newcomers game where she provides sage coaching to and yummy treats for participants. Melanie’s parents played bridge, and they had so much fun—playing with neighbors once a week and taking bridge trips with friends. When Melanie retired in 2007, she and her husband Jerry needed an activity to do together, so they signed up for beginning bridge with Bob Mault and George Welsh. And here they are 13 years later still having fun! Melanie’s advice to new players is “Remember that this is a partnership game. It’s not about your hand, but your partner’s hand too. You need to listen to what your partner is bidding and work together.” Melanie’s favorite convention is Flannery because it is fun, and it is the only way to get to a 2-Spade partial contract with an 11-15 HCP and 5 hearts and 4 spades since you can’t reverse to show spades. Opening a Flannery two-diamond bid, a partner can bid 2S with a weak hand and 4S to play. Melanie became a Life Master on a bridge cruise in 2014. Jerry became one about a year later. They can be found playing together every Friday at the club!

by Lillian Slater



Melanie Smith

Thank You Monday Night Mentors

by Nancy Toussaint

As life gives us an unexpected pause, there is ample time to reflect on gratitude. I think of all the people in my life that I am grateful for.....and that I miss seeing right now during this time of social isolation.

I miss the Monday Night Mentoring Game and all those who volunteer their time to mentor newer bridge players. These are the unrecognized teachers who gently encourage and coax their eager partners. They do this because of the love of the game and the desire for their students to “catch the bug” and to enjoy bridge as much as they do. Most mentors come not even knowing who their partner will be! They are prepared to play with anyone in a shortened game with unpredictable results. It’s always a fun adventure! Our volunteer mentors are priceless!

Please applaud: Lynn Danielson, Rosemary Ford, John Hagman, Joyce Henderson, Dalia Hernandez, Renee Hoffman, David Jones, Sylvia Kaprelyan, Nancy Karl, Janet Logan, Jo Melis, John Melis, Sherry Troeger,

Betty Witteried, and anyone I may have unintentionally forgotten. We appreciate each and every one of you.

A huge personal THANK YOU from me as well. When we reopen, keep coming back! Keep sharing your knowledge. Keep sharing your enthusiasm and zest for this great game. We need to keep building the bridge community and level of competition. The mentor program/game does not exist without you. I look forward to seeing all your smiling faces in the near future.

Nancy Toussaint

P.S. We can always use more mentors. Let me know if you can spare a Monday night now and then. Or you can just show up around 6:15pm to play! BTW, Alan Flower, founder of the Monday Night Mentor game - we miss you.



Lynn Danielson



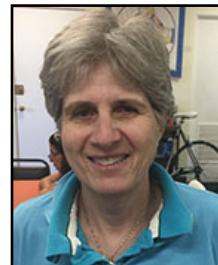
Rosemary Ford



John Hagman



Joyce
Henderson



Dalia
Hernandez



Renee Hoffman



Sylvia
Kaprelyan



Janet Logan



Jo Melis



John Melis



Sherry Troeger



Betty Witteried

Not pictured: David Jones, Nancy Karl

