

## **Diamond in the Ruff: East Bay Unit 502, September 2020**

By Larry Bowerman (lmjtbow@pacbell.net)

**First and foremost, I hope that everyone is doing well, staying safe and enjoying online bridge at BBO.** After a brief “getting acquainted phase” I’ve found that bridge on BBO has been a good experience. It isn’t perfect, but under the current circumstances, it is much better than “good enough.” Obviously, we all miss the social aspects of playing at the EBCBC and Piedmont, but the BBO playing experience is straight forward and the “glitches” have been minimal. It’s also nice that BBO automatically eliminates bidding out of turn, leading out of turn and insufficient bids, thus avoiding the majority of director calls. So far, BBO hasn’t figured out how to eliminate mis-bids and mis-clicks! After a bit longer adjustment period, I also like self-alerting on BBO, but I must admit to sometimes forgetting to do it.

**We encourage everyone to keep playing in the EBCBC and Piedmont Virtual Club and Support Your Club games.** If you need a refresher on the schedules, please visit the Unit 502 and EBCBC websites. Keep on playing to help keep our Clubs alive and well during the pandemic so that they’ll be around when we can again play in-person bridge, whenever that might be.

Given the continuing nature of the pandemic, the **Unit 502 Board recently voted to cancel all remaining events in 2020**, including all Unit Games, The Tunnel Tournament, the November 2020 Sectional and the Holiday Party. We hope that these events will be able to resume sometime in 2021, but it’s too soon to tell. Stay tuned for further developments.

Since we won’t be playing in-person bridge for awhile, there is much less of the traditional news that comprised much of these columns in the past. So, the question becomes what should we write about? A couple of obvious possibilities are some Unit 502 history or some memorable bridge moments. So, here goes:

While there are many others who have played bridge in Unit 502 much longer than I have and are much more qualified to relate the Unit's history, I do have a couple of favorite memories from my 12 years or so as a member of Unit 502.

First, **Barbara Harmon is one of the icons of Unit 502.** For many years she worked tirelessly to promote bridge in the East Bay, giving lessons (my wife, Meg took lessons from her), running the Wednesday afternoon game at the Dimond Library and as a member of the Unit 502 Board. Her memory and playing skills are legendary. When she retired from bridge in March 2009, a party and game were held to honor her decades of service to bridge. Believe it or not, there were 28 tables at that game! Another stalwart of bridge in the East Bay, Susan Wiebe was Barbara's partner for the game. Naturally, they won with a 63.69% game and earned 5.38 masterpoints!

The following additional information about Barbara was provided by Tom Pajak (thanks Tom). [FYI - Tom Pajak and Sandi Davis shared the writing of these columns for about 10 years!]:

"Barbara Harmon migrated from northern Minnesota to Oakland in order to be a grade-school teacher in the Havenhurst district (near the Coliseum). She taught for about 20 years and was a well-respected educator who loved her job very much.

"She grew up in the depression when people had no extra money to pay for recreation activities, so her family taught her how to play bridge, since all you need for that are 4 people, a deck of cards, a pencil and a piece of paper....cheap entertainment! She was a quick learner and until the day she died her bridge game consisted mainly of standard American, Stayman, Blackwood, and transfers. She thought a convention card loaded with special meanings and alertable bids didn't get you any farther than simple, steady, smart play and careful card counting.

"As for bridge, Barbara was a bridge teacher, director, mentor--and she never used a computer to score the game either. It was always totally by hand and always 100% accurate, too. She served on the Unit 502 board for 40 years, mostly as the membership chairman who contacted

new members of ACBL to welcome them and answer their questions, as well as phoning lapsed members to convince them not to abandon the game. Even during the last week of her life, she managed to get to a Monday night game of bridge to play with Sidney Mar, her regular Monday partner.

“When the Unit honored her with a reception/party/foodfest/bridge game, it presented her with a Costco gift card so she could buy herself a new Television. The unit offered to get her a computer, but she said she'd lived all this time without one, and what she really wanted was a new TV.”



Barbara Harmon – March 2009 (from Tom Pajak)



Susan Wiebe – March 2009 (from Tom Pajak)

Second, **Richard and Joyce Hart** ran a weekly bridge game for many years at the Piedmont Community Center. Their game had a unique feature that I always admired and enjoyed, namely **a pot of money for any pair that bid and made a grand slam**. As I recall, the pot was always at least \$80 and it increased by \$20 per week until the next grand slam was bid and made. My partner, Ed Yunck and I were fortunate to bid and make a grand slam at the Hart's game once back in 2012 or thereabouts. Unfortunately (just kidding), Neal Mazaroff and his partner also bid and made the same grand slam that day, so the four of us shared the pot, which I believe totaled \$160 that day. Thank you to Richard and Joyce for maintaining this feature in their game for so many years!





Richard and Joyce Hart – October 2013 (from Tom Pajak)

In October stay tuned for “my worst bridge blunder,” “card mix-up at 3NT” and “Gold Rush Games.”

**Welcome to new Unit 502 members Bert and Lois Carelli, Dana Corvin, Peter Freeman, Juanita Papillon, Harrison Pollak, Ann Schuyler, Sajan Srivastava, Daphne Stoermer and Nancy Zhu. Also welcome to Tom Chan and Paul Lipkin who have recently been reinstated; and Rob Johnson and Jeanne Oelerich, who have recently transferred into Unit 502! When you “see them” on BBO, please introduce yourself and welcome them to our unit.**

**Congratulations to the following members on their recent rank advancements: Richard Jacobs and Bruce Pollock to Junior Master; Ruth Kleinman to Club Master; Helene Byrne, Marilyn Chilcote, Gretchen Griswold, John McManis, John Vallergera and Valerie Wood to Sectional Master; Allan McAllister and Gail Oraftik to Regional Master; Karen Cabrera to NABC Master; Joseph Held to Bronze Life Master; Catherine Molnar to Silver Life Master; Rob Johnson to Gold Life Master and Rajeev Gupta to Sapphire Life Master! Well done, congratulations and keep on playing! There is always another goal in front of you!**

**I'm writing the October column, so please contact me if you have noteworthy results or other items to report.**