

Bridge with the Boys – a Grandparents’ Story, Feb, 2018

This column is dedicated to Jake and Luke Williams and Larry and Barbara Hauser, (members of the La Jolla Unit, D22) their grandparents. Essentially, it is a primer for grandparents, aunts and uncles and godparents alike to share their love of contract bridge with the younger generation. As Larry Hauser so eloquently states “As I hope you can see, their love and enthusiasm for the game of bridge continues to grow! It has been an exciting voyage for all of us in the family!” Here is their story as shared by Larry.

Our grandsons, Jake and Luke Williams, are the siblings of our daughter Holly Hauser and son-in-law Steve Williams. Holly, who had been a physician with Scripps Clinic, developed some health issues. In late 2010, she and Steve went back to Chicago for an experimental medical procedure. At the time, Jake was 12 and Luke was 9 years old. Barb and I moved in for several weeks to help care for the boys.

The boys requested we teach them how to play bridge. They were fascinated with the game and kept asking questions and practicing. In May 2012, they entered a “Bridge for Youth” tournament at Adventures in Bridge, their first experience at formal competition. When they won, the die was cast!

By 2013, they had played in numerous duplicate bridge games at local clubs and had competed in the NABC youth tournament held in Atlanta. Since then, Barb and I have accompanied them to four annual YNABC national tournaments: Las Vegas 2014; Chicago 2015; Washington D.C. 2016 and Toronto 2017. I should add that we are very grateful that our ACBL District 22, and our local Unit 539, has supported the boys in each of these endeavors by contributing to their travel expenses. The years have passed all too quickly. Toronto was in fact the final YNABC youth competition at which Jake and Luke could be a pair. Jake will turn 20 in January and will no longer be able to compete in that event.

In each of those tournaments Barb and I have been thrilled to be able to also play many matches of Swiss teams and Knockouts with them as our partners. We also have competed with Jake and Luke in the Palm Springs Regional tournament on the weekends, beginning in 2012. I must confess it is extraordinarily special for Barb and me when all of us can spend this precious time to hang out together and compete as a team of four!

Jake entered Harvey Mudd College in August 2016, and quickly helped revive the HMC bridge program. He personally conducted regular teaching sessions for interested students, including raw beginners, from all of the Claremont Colleges. In 2017, the Harvey Mudd College team competed throughout the year against other colleges in official ACBL matches, and was one of the eight college teams to qualify for the ACBL's Collegiate Bridge Bowl. This event was played in Toronto during the NABC Toronto tournament. The five HMC team members were given transportation and lodging to Toronto for the Collegiate Bridge Bowl by the ACBL.

While at the Toronto NABC youth tournament, Jake and Luke learned about another ACBL-affiliated organization, the United States Bridge Federation (USBF). The charter of USBF is to select, train, and support Open, Women, Senior and Junior teams to represent the United States in international competition. Jake and Luke learned that this organization has a category for players under 21 years of age (U21), and a formal program to train them for international play. The training is online, and so they joined USBF, and put together a team with two other U21 players. They all then played online a few hours each Sunday for many months. Their team of four qualified for the year-end tournament, called the Michael Seamon Junior United States Bridge Championship – U21, held in December, 2017 in Atlanta. USBF provided transportation to Atlanta, and lodging for the event players. Six U21 teams competed, beginning with two full days of qualifying in Swiss-style round robins. Jake and Luke's team won this two day round-robin event. The next day, the top four teams played head-to-head, Knockout-style matches to determine the finalists. Jake and Luke's team was knocked out in the semifinals.

Barb and I urge all of you to consider replicating our experience with the children in your lives. It will keep you young at heart and will perpetuate the game that provides us so much.