

Maggy Simony: Bridge Crusader

Sociable and serious bridge – can they grow together?

BY AL LEVY

Maggy Simony is an author and blogger who is on a one-woman campaign to re-popularize “sociable” bridge.

After almost two years of email correspondence, exchanging ideas on promoting bridge, sociable and serious bridge finally met. I had the pleasure of visiting Maggy at her Cape Canaveral FL home in early March. In recognition of Maggy’s good works in promoting bridge, I presented her with ACBL’s Golden Age Master certificate.

The commendation, says Maggy, “made my day ... my year, if I think about it. What a neat thing for a bridge player who has yet to adopt the weak two-bid and is rules resistant, preferring to wing it when playing bridge. It is all the motivation I need to blog for another year.”

The 94-year-old adds, “At this age – good as I basically feel – feedback from others is important to maintain an upbeat attitude day after day.”

In 2009, Maggy wrote and published a wonderful book, “Bridge Table or What’s Trump Anyway? An Affectionate Look Back at Sociable Bridge & Ladies Lunch.” She sees “sociable” bridge as a kinder, gentler form of the game. “Because social bridge is a standard bridge term and can sometimes be quite serious, I have adopted the term sociable for ladies-only bridge, with lunch or other food.”

The well-researched book chronicles the evolution of bridge in popular culture beginning in the 1920s, when contract bridge replaced whist and auction bridge. The game was in its heyday, and with the right marketing strategies, Maggy thinks we can get there again.

The book received rave reviews from bridge players all over the world. On Feb. 29, 2012, a Wall Street Journal article by Lucette Lagnado featured the

passionate crusader’s efforts to make bridge more popular to the masses.

Lagnado’s article quotes David Scott, a professor of leisure studies at Texas A&M who did his doctorate thesis on bridge. Scott calls Maggy “a lay anthropologist who has unearthed relics of an era when leisure meant seeing friends, not watching TV or surfing the Internet. It wasn’t about competition, it was about community.”

British and international bridge champion Andrew Robson (appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire last year by Queen Elizabeth II) applauds Maggy’s suggestions for marketing the game to the masses and celebrating all aspects of bridge. “You’ve hit the nail on the head,” Robson said after reading Maggy’s book. “Breaking down barriers [between serious and sociable bridge] is key.”

Last year, Maggy completed a 52-part blog series discussing bridge from four perspectives: marketing, historical, cultural and culinary (complete with menus and recipes). Inspired in part by ACBL’s recognition, she plans to continue blogging, and she has launched a revamped website: The Bridge Table, “around which friendships are formed and a classic card game played.”

Maggy says her quest to promote bridge has given her added energy and kept her mind sharp. She is participat-



District 24 Board Member Al Levy presents ACBL’s Golden Age Master certificate to Maggy Simony in recognition of her good works in promoting bridge.

ing in a University of California, Irvine research study to better understand why some seniors don’t develop Alzheimer’s.

According to Maggy, “Science is telling us these days that for a dementia-free old age, it’s better to have played bridge badly than never to have played at all. That’s because learning to play bridge – badly or expertly – is one of the best life skills you can acquire to reach 90, dementia-free, enjoying life.”

Online resources

- Maggy’s blog: www.bridgetable.net.
- The Wall Street Journal article about Maggy – as well as another that features Maggy – “Do Bridge Players Know the Secret of Longevity?” – is on my website: www.ny-bridge.com/allevy/worldofbridge.html. Look under Bridge and Players in the News.
- Maggy’s book, “Bridge Table or What’s Trump Anyway?” is available at www.booklocker.com.