

# Oak Ridge Sectional Bridge Tournament and Gene Roy's influence on Bridge in Oak Ridge

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on March 31, 2014)

Do you play Bridge? I do not. However, I know some people who enjoy it tremendously. Like many other activities that require specialized knowledge and practiced skill, those of us who don't participate likely are unable to fully appreciate the value of the play or the time spent doing so. It may well be like golf or anything else that a person gets attached (or addicted) to and become willing to devote extensive time and energy to do well.

I find photography to be that appealing to me. I keep a camera in my vehicle constantly and rare is the day that I don't think about or look at something considering whether I could make a good photograph and what angle would best show the features of the tree, building, flower, or other scene. Even the smallest things attract my attention because of light and shadow or line and shape.

Not everyone enjoys reading about my thoughts on photography, but most people appreciate the results of good photography. Other hobbies or avocations have rewards as well. Let's take a closer look at Bridge and see what can be learned.

The following information comes from Helen Corbett who took the time to write it and to Joyce Morris who asked me to include a brief history of Bridge in Oak Ridge in the *Historically Speaking* series. I am always pleased when someone brings a unique aspect of Oak Ridge's history to my attention and helps to document it.

First a bit of current history in the making, Helen shares with us, "The Oak Ridge Bridge Association is sponsoring the 66<sup>th</sup> annual Bridge Tournament on Thursday, April 3, 2014, through Saturday, April 5, 2014. The site for the tournament is the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge."

The Children's Museum of Oak Ridge is another icon of our history that reaches out to many in our community. Obviously intended primarily for children, here we see it being used by adults who enjoy playing Bridge. There are many other uses made of the museum space.

Helen continues, "There will be events for pairs and for team play on Thursday and Friday. The Saturday event will be a two-session team competition." The well-known and famous hospitality of the local Bridge association includes lunch between sessions on Friday and a meal between sessions on Saturday with lots of snacks and drinks throughout the tournament.

The "Helen Dunigan" trophy will be awarded to the player winning the most total master points in the novice pairs events. The tournament chairperson is Joyce Morris, who can be reached at 483-1225, cell phone 865-300-5453, or by e-mail: [nenejoyce@comast.net](mailto:nenejoyce@comast.net).

Helen tells us the history of the Oak Ridge Bridge Association as it relates to Gene Roy, "This year's tournament is being dedicated to the memory of Gene Roy who died in 2012. Gene was one of the best known and important bridge personalities in our area.

"He was well known as a player, a director at the local level beginning in 1956, and later at the regional and national tournaments. Gene was one of the founding fathers of bridge in Oak Ridge which began as a social game in the early 1940s.

"The clubs were officially sanctioned by the American Contract Bridge League in 1947. The first master points were issued to winners that year. Gene was one of the first three players in the city to acquire the requisite 500 master points to achieve the rating of Life Master. Because of his strong campaigning, the first tournament in our Unit was played in Oak Ridge in 1950.

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"After his retirement from Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 2001, he became a familiar face once again at the bridge table. He also advised directors and players alike, instructed prospective directors in structured and informal settings.

"He participated in mentoring programs, and served as president of the Knoxville Association of Bridge Clubs. He was a member of the Goodwill Committee of the American Contract Bridge League representing our local unit.

"Bridge in Oak Ridge, as we know it today, all began when Gene and a handful of the scientists, engineers, and various workers who came to Oak Ridge in the early days socialized and relaxed by playing bridge. It became popular very quickly and soon advanced to the competitive bridge games that we have today.

"Oak Ridge soon developed a very strong bridge community with some of the best bridge players in the country residing here. At that time the Oak Ridge tournament was a huge event in the community, both as a social and competitive event to earn master points.

"Many of the tournament players became well known and ranked in the top echelon of bridge players in the country. Charles Goren, a well-known national bridge expert and author, was a frequent visitor and participant.

"Throughout the three-day weekend of these tournaments, many parties, suppers, and luncheons were hosted in private homes." This is what I would expect of early Oak Ridgers.

Helen concludes with, "The Oak Ridge Bridge Association offers four open pairs games each week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 10:30 a.m., Thursday at 12:30 p.m., and a pairs event for beginning players on Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m.

Thank you Helen for that history lesson on Bridge in Oak Ridge. The Bridge Center is located in Grove Center, 120 Randolph Road. Grove Center is yet another of the icons of Oak Ridge's history. A bit of trivia, do you know where the name "Grove Center" got its name? No, not from General Groves! There was a large grove of hardwood trees located there at the time of the construction in late 1942 and early 1943.

For further information about Bridge in Oak Ridge, contact Carol Bond, Club Manager, at 865-494-0090, cell phone 828-691-6706, or by e-mail: [cbbond@aol.com](mailto:cbbond@aol.com).



Martha Lewis, Helen Corbett, and Mary Cathcart

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Bill Goldman, Joe McGrory, Sally Bowers and Thelma McGrory