

Bridge Yesterday **Ruth Chase Goldberg-Gilbert**

In 1948 I was a senior at Carnegie-Mellon University (then known as Carnegie Tech) and had been playing bridge for about a year and a half. I think I had four master points. In January during the break between semesters I went to Philadelphia with a bridge-playing friend who lived there. We stayed at his house and played in duplicate games twice a day, possible because then Philadelphia was the hub of the bridge universe and had a couple of games every day. Our first game was a six-table Howell on the Saturday afternoon after we arrived; we came in second and earned 12 rating points (0.12 master points). Being a physics major, I was able to calculate that if I just played twice a week for the next year with similar success I would earn 12 more master points to add to my present four! Move over Charlie Goren (a Philadelphia resident, incidentally). I was on my way to the big time!

Well it turned out that those were about the only rating points we won all week, so we were both bitterly disappointed. However one incident took place which is forever etched in my memory. It was a snowy afternoon; my partner and I were at a bridge club waiting for play to begin when I walked a very attractive, elegantly dressed woman who appeared to be in her early forties. The people waiting to play began applauding because, someone informed me, she had just made Life Master the previous week-end. In those days becoming a Life Master was a real accomplishment, and I was duly impressed. This lady was Ruth Chase Goldberg who later became Ruth Chase Gilbert, either through marriage or legal name-change, I never found out.

But what I did find out was what a fine player she was. I had the opportunity to kibitz her during the mixed pairs at an Asbury Park, NJ, sectional tournament later that year. She was very gracious to me, and when there was enough time between rounds she happily answered my questions, like "How in the world did you know to drop that singleton king?"

AQ8742
 63
 A2
 KQJ7

10953
 KJ109872
 6
 9

K
 5
 8753
 1086542

J6
 AQ4
 KQJ1094
 A3

The bidding with neither side vulnerable:

N	E	S	W
x	x	x	3H
3S	P	4NT	P
5H	P	5NT	P
6D	P	7NT	All pass

The bidding was somewhat optimistic, but remember, this was a mixed-pair event. At any rate, here she was in 7NT. West led the nine of clubs which Ruth won this with the ace in hand. Without a moment's thought she led a spade to the ace, dropping the singleton king! She now had thirteen top tricks, and tabled the hand.

"How did you know the king was singleton?" I asked after the hand had been scored. She looked at me and smiled. "If West had the king of Spades," she explained patiently, "there's a simple squeeze even after I play the spade ace. My play just catered to the slight extra chance that East might have a singleton king."

This was my first insight into the mind of a true expert player, and I was thrilled. After 58 years I still think about that hand, and how it defines the meaning of "bridge expert."

And Ruth was indeed an expert. Among her major wins were the 1949 Summer National Master's Pairs (the Von Zedwitz Gold Cup) with Leo Roet; the 1943 National Open Pairs (with Edith Seligman, now Freilich); and the 1947 National Mixed Teams with Harry Fishbein, Edith Seligman and Ludwig Kabakjian (her partner, incidentally on the above hand). She also had several seconds in national events, although I was not able to discover any after 1949. Note that Ruth only became a life master in 1948 although she had already won two national championships!

Incredibly, there is no entry under either Ruth Gilbert or Ruth Goldberg in the ACBL's *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge* (although her tournament successes, listed above, are duly noted). I complained about this to Brent Manley at the ACBL and he agreed to include her name in the next edition if he is the editor, as he expects he might be. However, he needs "more information" such as date and place of death, any occupation, where she lived, etc. I tried to garner some of these data by contacting people I thought might know: Al Roth, Edith Freilich, Alan Truscott; but to no avail. I ask anyone who can provide the requisite information about Ruth to send it to me (zweifel@alumni.duke.edu) and I will forward it on to Brent. Of course we do know that she lived at Philadelphia in 1948, but there our knowledge ends.