

Bridging the Decades

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Once you've been bitten by the Bridge Bug it permeates every aspect of your life, instilling a craving for competition, providing intellectual activity and social interaction. It's especially engaging when a couple gets infected together opening new vistas including travel to tournaments augmenting the local activities. These tournaments become regular stops on our annual itinerary as we travel with a familiar entourage, revisit restaurants and interesting sights. Many of us have developed close connections with special partners in those cities, friends we reconnect with each year. We always make sure to leave some free time for sightseeing at tournaments to discover new sights especially in unfamiliar cities.

Then there are new tournaments opening fresh vistas, novel memories, interesting sights and new friendships. The Louisville (Kentucky) North American Bridge Championships in March 2011 became such an event for us. I was thumbing through the Daily Bulletin late one night after a full day of bridge, sightseeing and sampling the local gastronomical delights. I don't know how your eye picks up something of interest hidden in a morass of text but subconsciously I sensed a special name in my peripheral vision. Sure enough, as I investigated more closely in a clut of fine print, a familiar name leaped out — "Oded Stitt, Honolulu, Hi."

Now a very long time ago, a man named Oded Stitt was dating my wife's best college friend, Muriel Mendelson. In fact Muriel was the Maid of Honor at our wedding. I was in the Air Force stationed in California, flew in to New York City in time to get a license then hopped a flight west right after the ceremony. Coast-to-coast travel was not as common back then and long distance phone calls were avoided like the plague. Our trips back to New York were infrequent, dominated by family obligations, and our phone calls held rather terse. Unfortunately we soon lost track of Muriel.

Could it be? I scanned across the line to find his partner's name. Oded Stitt was partnered in a Pairs Game with Muriel Stitt. It was not a great mental stretch to put two and two together especially after a few minutes searching on Google where some tantalizing facts gleaned from a Hawaiian Web Page distilled with some remembered minutiae convinced me. Muriel Stitt was in fact Muriel Stitt nee Mendelson, old friend, former Maid of Honor and now Bridge Player.

I was at the Tournament Registration Desk early the next morning explaining my quest. (As an aside, I encourage you to fill out the Registration Cards at tournaments. You can expect a bonus gift plus you may get an extra surprise.) They were very organized in Louisville sorting the cards into a phalanx of small brown paper sacks standing in formation behind the desk. I was soon rummaging through the "S" bag quickly finding buried treasure, the "Stitt" card complete with contact cell phone number.

I dialed the number getting a series of rings followed by the usual beep requesting a message. I responded, "Hi Muriel. This is a voice from your distant past."

My phone rang a few hours later with the Caller ID announcing "Honolulu, Hi." We were soon sitting with Muriel and Oded catching up. You never know where your next Bridge experience will take you but we've come to expect the unexpected.

Interesting little side note...neither Muriel nor Judy had played a hand of Bridge at the time of our wedding.