

## Walter Miller II



***"You are the nicest, friendliest bridge players in the United States."***

If you have heard this statement from your club director, you were probably playing in a game run by Walter Miller II. Walter has taught new players and directed games for the Palo Alto Bridge Club as far back as anyone can remember. Recently, his health has caused him to give up teaching and directing. This article is an opportunity to share some of the many important bridge and life lessons Walter taught with us.

Those who can remember that far back will recall that Walter was an excellent player in his own right. He amassed thousands of points during his playing career. He is profiled in the Encyclopedia of Bridge.

Jim O'Neil – certainly no bridge slouch himself – tells an amusing story about Walter, which illustrates both his skill and his character. In around 1971, Jim wanted to learn about duplicate bridge. He had never played duplicate, but entered the Bridge Club run by Herb and Helen Goudzward in Menlo Park and said he would like to watch. Herb called Walter over, introduced Jim as “a Life Master new to the area” and without a partner. The game was about to start and Walter agreed to play with Jim with only a handshake and no discussion. He was unaware that Jim was a novice and the only conventions he knew were Stayman, Blackwood, and Gerber. According to Jim “the night was replete with my crazy actions *that worked* (passing forcing bids, giving a Blackwood response to an unusual NT bid, on and on). We won with something like a 65% game and then went out for a drink. After a few exchanges, Walter turned to me and said ‘You don’t know what is going on at the bridge table, do you?’ It was SO funny!!”

While Walter taught the mechanics and logic of bridge to hundreds of beginning players in Palo Alto, he also focused on the etiquette and conduct of the game. Another of his famous quotes:

***"Be kind to your partner, he is your friend."*** Walter certainly followed his own advice. I've been told that Walter is the model partner, always pleasant at the table and accepting all misfortunes with a smile. After the game he gives his sage advice on what should have happened on those boards with unhappy results and lauds his partners on good plays they make. We should all emulate his behavior at the table.

He also has a corollary to that saying: ***"Be tolerant of your opponents. Some day they may be your partner."***

Then, of course, there is the phrase he taught all north-south pairs to say to each east-west team as they arrive to play: ***"Welcome to our table."*** I have played in tournaments all over the area. When I have expressed that sentiment to people I didn't even know, they would often say: "You must play in that Walter-guy's game. That's really nice."

A few more facts I have heard as I asked people about Walter:

- Walter is a Harvard graduate and, perhaps, was a member of the swim team there.
- He earned his degree in architecture, although he never practiced.
- He was in the army and worked at NASA Ames Research Center.
- At the 2007 FALL NABC In San Francisco a series of games were named in honor of Walter Miller II: 299er, 199er, 99er, 49er, 0-20 & 0-5 Pairs

Gabriella Bowling has stepped in to direct Walter's games at Unity Church on Tuesdays at 12:00 (stratified open) and Wednesday at 1:00 (199er.) Gabby is a long-time friend and former student of Walter's and is dedicated to upholding his standards of behavior and play.

*Do you have a favorite story about Walter? Please send it to: [judigentry.bridge@gmail.com](mailto:judigentry.bridge@gmail.com). As an interactive newsletter, The On-Line Kibitzer is designed for exchange of ideas and information. We want you to be an active reader/participant. Thanks!*