

**D21 President's Report**

Jim Coke, President, District 21 Board of Directors

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Contact Jim: jcoke@yahoo.com**Youth Bridge is Growing!**

I first started playing duplicate bridge almost 13 years ago. At the time, I was told that it was “an old people’s game.” In fact, in the first duplicate session that I ever played, I was the youngest person in the room and was in my late 50s. I retired a year later and a friend of mine who learned to play bridge from her family volunteered to play with me, and suddenly I was no longer the youngest person in the room because she was a fair bit younger than me. But still, we were all mature adults. And the young had zero interest in bridge because video games were all the rage.

Then I started seeing articles in the Bridge Bulletin about Silicon Valley Youth Bridge and the College Bridge Bowl, but somehow that didn’t seem all that real because it wasn’t personal. A year or two later, I started to see a very few younger players in our regional tournaments. A couple of years ago, I had a day open for our local sectional and a friend asked me if I would be willing to play with a young grad student that she knew. I agreed, and we played the first session, and it was not good. But still we played the second. We picked up a hand where I had 5 good diamonds, Ace doubleton in Hearts, 5 puppy clubs, and a stiff spade. We wound up playing 5 diamonds even though we had a massive 11-card club fit (my fault!) and made it on a 6-card fit! The crazy part is that we thought we couldn’t make more than 5 clubs either. But it got us rolling and laughing, so we wound up getting 2nd in the section. We’ve played a few more times, and it is a fun time. Sometimes, we even play really well!

Last year, I was getting ready to play in the summer NABC in Philadelphia with a partner from the East Bay. Since I live east of Sacramento, we needed a place to practice, so we settled on playing in Davis at the local senior center because it was about an equal distance for us. We were mildly surprised when two college students walked in and joined us. They were pleasant, and we got to know them a little. Then I met each of the two in Philadelphia playing in different events. But I also ran into a bunch of the other College Bowl players including players from Georgia Tech, Purdue, and Harvard, to name a few.

This summer, I’ve started playing with one of the college students that I met in Davis a year ago. It is an intense, fun, and wild experience. I’m having to rethink some of the things in bridge that I’ve taken for granted, but it is fun to take a fresh look at the game.

The good news for bridge is that the youth movement is growing.

Jim Coke
ACBL District 21 President