

Star Power

Honorary Member of the Year — Larry Cohen

Larry Cohen has been a bridge star for more than 30 years, starting with second in a national Open Pairs in 1979, followed two years later by a win in the Spingold Knockout Teams. His record in major pairs games, in particular with David Berkowitz as his partner, is stellar.

Beyond his expertise at the table, Cohen has been a tireless promoter of bridge. His selection as Honorary Member of the Year adds luster to a career nowhere near its end.

Cohen took time out from his busy schedule to answer a few questions related to his latest honor.

What was your reaction when you learned that you are joining a long list of Honorary Members that includes Bob Hamman, Edgar Kaplan, Bobby Wolff and Charles Goren?

I was overwhelmed, honored and surprised — all at once. That's quite a list of names to be mentioned with. I only wish my grandparents, who taught me the game, were alive to enjoy this honor.

Although you are "retired" from tournament play, you remain involved with bridge. How are you staying connected to the game?

Aside from reading (I love to read all the bridge publications and new bridge books), I am heavily involved in writing and teaching. I spend many hours a day writing instructional articles and new lesson plans. I'm teaching more than ever — with nearly 150 seminar/cruise days this year! Honestly, I am much more involved with bridge now. I absolutely love the level I am focusing on: Intermediate. I remember how much I loved the game when I first saw the beauty of an endplay or started to understand negative doubles. Playing top-level bridge (studying pages of system notes) got me away from the basic beauty of our great game.

Do you have any new books or bridge software in the works?

Always. Mostly, I am writing free articles/instruction for my web site, www.larryco.com. I am working on a project now against my best judgment. I am often asked: "Larry, why is there no CD on bridge to listen to when I drive

my car?" My answer has always been that it is dangerous and distracting to drive and listen to bridge. But I have succumbed and am trying to make the audio very easy to digest. I don't want to cause an accident.

Are you enjoying your new relationship with bridge?

This may be hard to believe, but I enjoy hearing, "I loved the lesson," from students more than hearing, "Congrats on winning the Spingold," from my peers. It's more satisfying for me these days to be spreading the joy of the game than to actually win major events.

Can your Bridge Bulletin fans continue to count on you for the Real Deal?

Absolutely. I love the concept of writing about deals where the reader doesn't "know what to look for." Unfortunately, I hardly play bridge now, so it is harder and harder to come up with new material.

What is your outlook about the future of duplicate?

A few years ago, I was pessimistic, but that has changed. I can't put my finger on one reason, but bridge seems to be booming — especially where I teach. In South Florida, bridge clubs are overflowing — and bridge seems to be the "in" thing to do in retirement. I'd love to see more progress in reaching younger players (especially bridge in schools), but it is surely still a big plus for our game if all new retirees take it up. We all know how good it is for the brain — and people not only appreciate that, but also the social aspect.

In an interview announcing your retirement, you mentioned Brett Favre, who has come back to play pro football several times after saying goodbye — and you were seen at the Fall NABC in Orlando. What should your fans make of this?

The phone keeps ringing, and sometimes it is hard to say no. The worst part of showing up to play is having to endure all the razzing (they all call me "Brett") and hear: "I thought you were retired!" I've been "retired" for two years now, but have played in a couple of tournaments — and might play in one in 2011. I was surprised to find that my game didn't really suffer from the inactivity. I guess it's like riding a bike — you don't forget. □

