

Lansing is a balanced hand in bridge world

From staff reports
Wednesday, December 17, 2008



Photo courtesy of Bob Gruber
From left, Bill Lansing, Julie Elliott and Gary Morgan
celebrate Lansing's 50 years as a bridge leader.

Longtime Ventura resident Bill Lansing celebrated two major milestones this year: 50 years of playing, directing and teaching bridge — and his 90th birthday.

He skipped the birthday celebration in October, but he did take a bow at an event to commemorate his great contributions to the game of bridge in his community.

To celebrate his half century with the Ventura Bridge Club, the esteemed Lansing — a certified bridge teacher, director and life master — was the guest of honor at a party hosted by his bridge buddies. It was a memorable day filled with music, a gentle roast by his friends and, of course, a little bridge.

Lansing comes to Ventura by way of Ohio. After graduating from Oberlin College there in 1941 with a bachelor's degree in secondary school teaching, he worked for an aircraft manufacturer on the East Coast for about two years before serving in the Navy for three years.

When he got out of the Navy in 1946, he and his wife, Dorothy, headed west and he took a job in accounting for Standard Oil, first in Long Beach and then, in the mid-1950s, in Ventura.

In his spare time, the father of two girls — both live in Ventura — was learning and playing duplicate bridge, and organizing and serving on the inaugural board of directors of the Ventura Bridge Club.

"In fact," said his friend Bob Gruber, "Bill could be called (one of) the founders of duplicate bridge in Ventura County."

Lansing studied the American Contract Bridge League's (ACBL's) rules of duplicate bridge and upon passing a difficult test earned his director's certificate. (A director organizes and officiates the game.)

After going on to earn life master rank, Lansing became a certified bridge teacher. His work included two summers teaching high school students, with the help of Ventura recreation officials.

Along the way, having earned a master's degree in social work from USC, he switched careers to working in social services for the county.

He retired in 1982 and, turning his bridge hobby into a third career, started a new duplicate game in Ventura; he soon was the regular director for games three days a week. (In recent years he cut back to directing one game a week.)

Bridge has been a constant for Lansing, through a life that includes the death of his wife in 2000 and the births of five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, with No. 10 on the way.

To honor Lansing's 50 years in bridge, the Ventura unit recently held a special game preceded by lunch, music and some gentle roasting of the honoree. And just to prove he's still on his game, Lansing and his partner took first place with a 70 percent score — a score that merits special kudos in bridge circles.

After all these years, Lansing has decided to retire as club manager and regular director "but is still willing to pinch hit directing once in a while as needed," Gruber said. "Look for him at the bridge table in Ventura."