

## How I Became a Very Good Card Player

*by Kenita Gibbins*

My father had good instincts when he taught me black jack at probably age six. We played on the floor in the living room. We took turns being dealer. It didn't take me long to catch on that I had to add up the numbers on the cards, and figure out if I should take another card. Daddy liked for me to add in my head and not on my fingers. We each liked to win. I especially liked adding to my penny jar. He banked my jar. Knowing the first basics of arithmetic became very valuable.

From black jack I went onto poker. I learned which cards had the most value. I had new challenges to memorize. We invited two neighborhood boys to play with us on Sunday afternoons. Because I could use arithmetic and remember what cards had been played my penny jar grew. I had an allowance to budget.

I went into high school playing bridge. We usually had two tables and Daddy wasn't on the scene. My parents played bridge with their friends unless I was hosting. They were always in the wings when I had company. The boys and girls in my clique all loved to play bridge. I could remember what had been played. I could keep score.

My bridge playing followed me into college. On the side for entertainment I was playing chess that I also learned at an early age. I think my math skills were still helping with planning strategy.

After George and I were married we had pot luck dinners. Later in the evening we played a popular gambling game called Tripoly with friends at different homes. The monthly gatherings were fun on a budget. We also played games with our three children who had penny jars.

Fast forward - three friends and I started taking bridge lessons because the rules changed. We decided this was a good way to keep our minds sharp. The lessons weren't as easy as when we were young.

Our foursome has stuck together for at least 15 years. Somewhere along the way I quit keeping score. I accidentally came to realize that my arithmetic wasn't very good. I was horrified. I had been using a calculator over the years. I'm going to start keeping score at bridge games. I'm going to add and subtract my bank account each month. I'll tend to multiplying and dividing. We must never say good-bye to our math skills.