

KEY POSITIONS

Computer consultant, bridge competitor

By CARRIE SCHMITT
Feature Writer

Potter Orr, who has been playing bridge for over 40 years and is on the board of the Local Bridge Association, says bridge is a time commitment that requires a great deal of thinking and learning.

"That is the attraction — it is a complicated game that remains challenging and new even after many years of playing," he says.

Orr started playing in high school and continued playing throughout his tenure as an employer at his family's famous and beloved local shoe store, Potter Shoe Co., until it closed in 1988 after 122 years in business. "I was 40 years old and never had a job interview. I had to figure out what to do for a living so I began writing programs and doing computer consulting," he says.

Despite his career change, bridge has always been a constant in his life and a source of pleasure and social interaction. Orr and his wife, Sandy, started playing a more competitive and organized form of bridge, "Duplicate Bridge," over 10 years ago.

"In most card games, skill has a place, but you are also at the mercy of whether or not you are dealt good or bad cards," explains Orr. "Duplicate Bridge takes the luck of the deal out of the equation because you are playing against people who are dealt the same cards. The scoring is done by comparing how you and your partner did against teams with the same cards. How you played them is what matters."

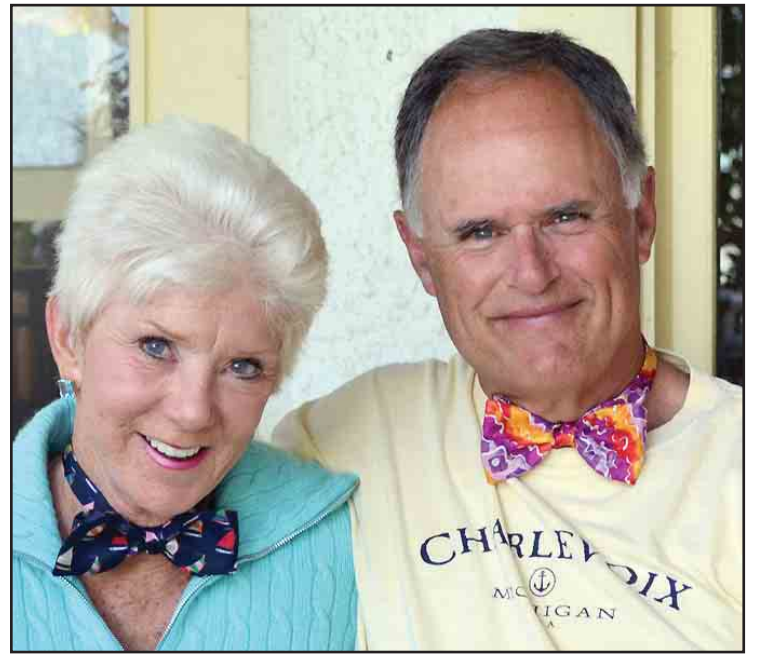
Orr and his wife, who play in local, regional and national tournaments, have achieved the title of "Lifemaster" in the

American Contract Bridge League. This title is earned by a point system based on wins in the league. Orr has around 600 points while Sandy has about 900. "She likes to tell me it is because she is a much better player than I am," he says. "But I tell her it is because she plays more than I do."

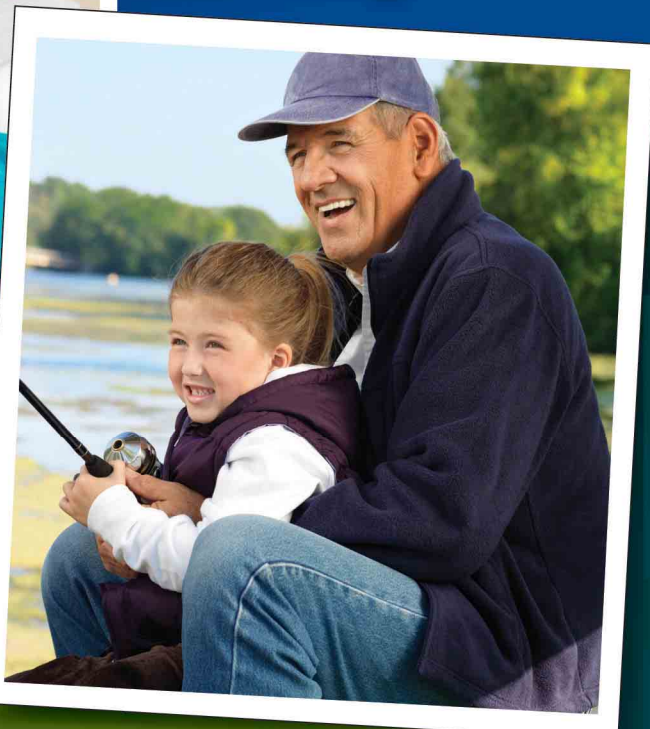
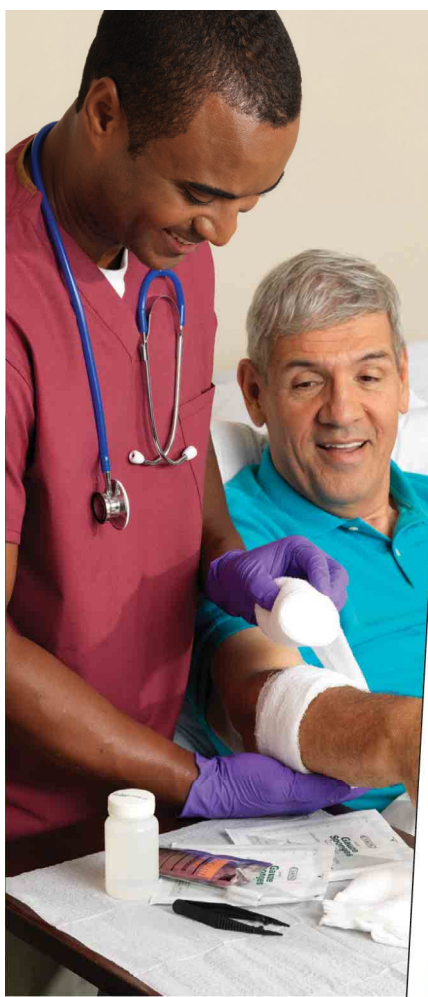
Orr is currently vice president and webmaster of the local chapter of the ACBL, after serving as president for two years. Each year, they sponsor a weeklong tournament at the Sharonville Convention Center with over 1,000 participants.

"At certain times, we will have 100 tables playing at once, which is 400 people. There aren't many sports events that happen in Cincinnati with over 400 participants at once," says Orr.

The group also has a Bridge Center that hosts games several days each week. There is no



BUSY GUY — Potter Orr and his wife, Sandy, are both "Lifemasters" in the American Contract Bridge League. In addition, he is vice president and webmaster of the local ACBL chapter, having served as president for two years. A former shoe salesman, Orr is now a computer consultant.



real experiences

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age limit, but Orr says, "Most people who play Duplicate Bridge are over 60 because the competitive version requires practice, time, lessons and studying the game."

There is a father/son team who plays at the Bridge Center. "The son is in high school and took a training course to become a director, who makes ruling and decisions during games," Orr laughs. "Now he makes rulings during games for people old enough to be his grandfather."

Orr enjoys the many benefits of the game. "It is common to have a game of 15 tables, which is 60 people that you are interacting with," says Orr. "You have to get along with a bunch of different personalities. Some can be a royal pain, but you get used to that," he jokes.

"In addition, there is bluffing involved with each hand. It is a fabulous complicated puzzle where every once in a while you see a way to force your opponent to do something they don't want to do," he explains. "There is great satisfaction in bending them to your will."

Despite their many successes with the game, Orr and his wife still take classes. "In Bridge, there is always more to learn and study," he says. Orr has recently become a certified Bridge teacher as well and teaches beginner classes. He recommends anyone who is interested in learning bridge to take a class. "I promise by the end the classes, you will know whether or not you want to continue playing Bridge."

Orr encourages everyone to give it a try — "It is good for older people because it keeps you mentally sharp and offers social opportunities."

For more information about the Cincinnati Bridge Association or to learn more about classes, visit www.cincybridge.com or email Potter Orr at potter@orrcomputer.com

To visit the ACBL website, visit www.acbl.org.

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