

A Short History of Vermont's Bridge Trophies

by Frank Hacker

The Tiernan Trophy

In the 1950s, Agatha Tiernan and two daughters, Claire and Mary Elizabeth, moved to Brandon, Vermont, from Pittsburgh. Agatha had been a bridge teacher in Pittsburgh, and all three were already life masters among the first one thousand in ACBL history and stars on the national bridge scene. In 1951 they were on the team that finished second in the national women's board-a-match teams. Mary Elizabeth won the same event in 1956 competing on a team with the well-known star Jan Stone and finishing ahead of a team including Helen Sobel and Margaret Wagar (for whom the national women's KO team is now named), two of bridge's all-time greats.

In Vermont they owned The Frock Shop, a women's clothing store, and ran bridge games at the Cavendish Club at the Brandon Inn. They were well known for their bridge parties and for their aversion to modern conventions. In fact, Mary Elizabeth refused to play Stayman. They donated one of their regional victory trophies to be awarded on an annual basis to the leading master point winner at the four Vermont sectional tournaments. For many years this trophy was known as the Cavendish trophy, and some long-time Vermonters still call it by that name.

Both Agatha and Claire passed on in the 1970s, and the trophy was renamed the Tiernan Trophy in their memory. Mary Elizabeth died in the late 1980s. I remember that in the late 1980s Mary Elizabeth was Vermont's leading player with about 1,900 master points. Clearly times and the meaning of master points have changed.

Every year the trophy winner has his or her name engraved on the trophy and may take it home for a year. Very few winners have actually done that, and the trophy currently resides at the Burlington Bridge Club, bridge home of the past several winners.

The Aborn Trophy

The Aborn Trophy commemorates the life and spirit of Vermont player Peter "Scott" Aborn and is awarded annually to the player starting the year as a non-life master who goes on to win the most master points in Vermont's four Sectionals.

Scott ("Scotty") Aborn was born July 11, 1957 in Yonkers, New York. He graduated from Rutland High School in 1974, Middlebury College where he received a BA and MA in French

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in 1978 and 1980 respectively, and Washington and Lee University where he received a JD in 1982. He was a French teacher at Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, Vermont beginning in 1986.

Scotty was an avid duplicate player and earned the rank of Life Master, one of his most satisfying achievements. He also served as editor of *Table Talk*, our Unit's bridge bulletin. His hobbies included tennis, music (he played the oboe), golf and Holocaust studies. He was president of the Burr and Burton Academy Teacher's Association and was a member of the Vermont NEA. A former student of Scott's, Keith Williams, won the 2003 Jeopardy Collegiate Championship as a freshman at Middlebury College. Mr. Williams credited his prowess in part to Scott; whenever there was extra time at the end of French class Scott would play "Jeopardy" with his students.

Scott was extremely precocious as a child. In fact, he was reading books before the age of two. When his father, Robert Aborn, moved the family to Indiana to pursue his PhD, Scott loved coming to the University to hang out. According to Scott's sister Jennifer, "Everyone in the Indiana University Music Department knew him."

Scott learned about bridge from his parents, Bob and Natalie. He loved to kibitz his parents when they played with friends, and quickly absorbed enough about the game to sit in at the table when needed. He really honed his bridge game in college and law school, and became one of the strongest players in our area. I had the pleasure to play bridge with Scotty many times. He was thoughtful, intense and passionate about the game. After being diagnosed with brain cancer and undergoing radical surgery and radiation treatment, Scott could not wait to get back to the bridge table. I remember picking him up just a few days after he was released from the hospital and heading to the Sectional tournament in Stratton. He still had huge bandages wrapped around his head. As tired and sore as he was, he hung tough and played well.

When we lost Scott on April 10, 2002, we lost a lot. He was a great teacher, a great parent, and a great friend. He was survived by his parents, his sister, his wife Melissa and their three children, Madeleine, Mariette and Simon.