

REMEMBRANCES OF RALPH

Chip Martel

It was always an honor and a pleasure to work and spend time with Ralph. In my time on the WBF Laws Committee and the ACBL Laws Commission, I was impressed by his knowledge, good sense, and a great ability to argue his points forcefully (and sensibly) but always with civility. He was great to work with, committed, and effective but also fun to spend time with (and he often had great stories). Ralph had an encyclopedic knowledge not only of the current laws, but of past versions. He could always give us a historical context, and often tell us when we were considering changing back to an old version. We will miss him greatly in many ways. With his and Edgar's death we have now lost the two people most responsible for our current laws, and I have lost a great friend.

Allan Falk

I had the privilege of playing as Ralph's partner only once, and of course as his opponent many times. Ralph was always a model of the ideal bridge player envisioned by the Proprieties, as well as constantly in good humor, whether things were going well or badly for him. He was a very tough competitor, who permitted himself no liberties in his conduct and who tolerated none from others he considered his peers, but he was avuncularly lenient towards weaker players, eager to help them learn to pursue the right path.

As a member of the Laws Commission, Ralph's knowledge of both the text of the Laws and their developmental history was encyclopedic, and as co-chair during my tenure Ralph demonstrated a remarkable ability to keep the meetings focused and the discussion rational, without even slightly restricting the free flow of ideas. Ralph was one of those rare individuals who developed an opinion on a subject only after profound deliberation, yet he remained open to be convinced that another solution might be superior.

Away from the table, Ralph was not only always at the center of a maelstrom of activity, but a constant source of sincere bonhomie and cheer, and no doubt the obvious benefit of being married to Joan put him so far ahead of the game it was substantially less difficult to be happy. Despite his serious health problems and undoubted knowledge his condition had become terminal, Ralph was so convincing when he reassured those of us who inquired with genuine concern "Really, I'm fine" that I was shocked to learn he had finally succumbed. If we all could emulate Ralph's gritty determination and refusal to complain as life deals its ups and downs, the world would be a far better place. He will be sorely missed.

Jim Kirkham

The bridge world has lost a real ambassador, administrator, and expert player. He was a great teammate and very dear friend. Ralph Cohen's contributions to bridge at all levels will never be forgotten. I wish to express my admiration for Ralph's accomplishments and my appreciation of serving on the Laws Commission with him.

Ron Gerard

I remember Richie Oshlag telling me of the first time he ever played with Ralph, at the local duplicate in Memphis. "I saw things I didn't even know were possible at bridge. I wasn't aware anyone could play that well with such seeming lack of effort." I think this captures what I remember about Ralph, the ease with which he navigated all of the different paths of his bridge career. At the table Ralph was a natural, almost always coming to the right conclusion with a combination of judgment and flair that is far too rare in today's game. On the Laws Drafting Commission, he gained the confidence of strong-minded personalities through his patient and practical approach to the difficult task of rewriting the Laws. In the ACBL Laws Commission, Ralph's wisdom and guidance had a comforting effect that steered us in the right direction without ever seeming to intrude. We will miss his reassuring presence, enthusiasm and friendship whether exercising our official duties or just competing on the field of battle.

Robb Gordon

At the Laws Commission meeting in Chicago you asked us to share our memories of Ralph. I first met Ralph by phone in the mid-70's when he was national coordinator for the GNT. Some influential people from my District were trying to change the qualification rules in mid-contest to benefit their friends. Of course, it took Ralph about 30 seconds to fix that! Later on we became friendly at tournaments, eventually becoming occasional partners. Ralph had a keen competitive drive that was belied by his easy-going manner. He taught me much about the game, the laws, and how to get the most out of people!

Dan Morse

I knew Ralph in many ways. As a good friend, a Captain of my team, as an expert on the ACBL laws, and as someone who never gave up, he was a fighter I thought he was a goner more than once over the last few years. He & Joan made many trips to Houston to see his cancer Doctors and he was always in a good humor never complaining and always up for a Bridge game.

He was so lucky to have such a wonderful family his wife, children, and brothers etc always showed him so much love.

Ralph will be missed but never forgotten by the Bridge community.

Jeff Polisner

Ralph was one of the most dedicated people I have ever known. His love and pride for his family was unparalleled. He was exceptionally capable in his chosen work (bridge) which was second in his life other than family. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Ray Raskin

When I first came on to the ACBL Laws Commission there had already been a significant amount of work done by the WBF on the updated laws. Ralph took the time to update me on where things stood so that my job was a lot easier. I will always respect how much he wanted everything concerning the laws to be as good as possible.

Roger Stern

It was my privilege to know Ralph for five decades. How well I recall his welcoming smile when we chanced to meet at a tournament, his ever-warm expressions of interest! First and foremost, Ralph was a gentle soul.

In the early nineties, Ralph joined the Laws Drafting Committee. Often, he would present a situation I had encountered, but not reflected upon. Sometimes, he would suggest a resolution, without ever disparaging an opposing point of view or seeking to impose his answer.

Although I regret Sandy and I did not get to spend more time socially, I cherish the moments we shared.

Adam Wildavsky

Before I joined the LC I knew Ralph for years as an opponent, partner, and teammate. When Bobby Wolff suggested that our trials team would benefit from having a captain Ralph sprang to mind immediately. He was kind enough to take the job though I knew he'd rather be playing himself.

Ralph and Joan were wonderful hosts in Memphis and Ralph had a number of sensible suggestions for helping the team to run smoothly. He led us to a win in the trials and fought a few medical battles of his own in order to join us in Monaco. Once there he guided us through the maze of WBF regulations and customs and helped our unheralded team to a third place finish. One crucial moment in the round robin was a deal where a ruling went against one of our teammates. None of us thought the ruling was correct, but Ralph convinced us not to appeal. In retrospect I'm confident that was the right decision, and sure enough we qualified.

The LC won't be the same without Ralph, and neither will any tournament.