

**Evendale teen bridges gap**

September 9, 2013

<http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20130909/NEWS01/309090056/Evendale-teen-bridges-gap>



Evendale bridge champion John Altman with his first bridge mentor, Bill Higgins of Indian Hill. / Provided

A new king has been crowned!

His name is John Altman, and he is the 2013 King of Bridge.

The King (or Queen) of Bridge accolade recognizes a graduating high school senior's overall participation in the local bridge community, as well as prowess in the game. Selected annually by the American Contract Bridge League Educational Foundation from High School senior applicants, the King/Queen of Bridge crown is accompanied by a \$1,000 scholarship.



Evendale bridge champion John Altman listens as bridge teacher Nancy Sachs speaks. / Provided

Altman is a resident of Evendale and a former long-time resident of Mariemont, and a graduate of Walnut Hills High School. He began playing bridge when he was 12-years-old, but notes that he has been playing cards since before he could count.

"I learned my numbers from playing cards with my grandma," he said. "My grandma knew I had a knack for cards, so as a gift, she paid for me and my dad to take lessons at the Cincinnati Bridge Center on Cooper Road. After a few lessons, I was hooked."

His bridge teacher, Nancy Sachs, and his first mentor, (the Cincinnati Bridge Center has a nationally recognized Mentor/Mentee Program to help newer players progress in the game) Bill Higgins of Indian Hill, were also instrumental in growing his love for the game.

Altman is travelling in distinguished company in his passion for bridge. Both Warren Buffet and Bill Gates are devotees of the game. What sets Altman apart, however, is his wise-beyond-his-years focus on recruitment and teaching.

"Of all the things I have done in the bridge community, teaching has been one of my absolute favorites," Altman said. Altman created the Walnut Hills Bridge Club, an after-school club at his high school. The club meets weekly, and welcomes all with a desire to learn this noble game.

What is it about bridge that sets it apart from other card games? The answers are many, beginning with the mental stimulation and challenge it affords. Educators embrace the activity because it hones math skills along with requiring mental strategy and planning. A number of schools in the area have recognized this fact. There are also after-school clubs at Indian Hill middle school and high school, St. Xavier High School and Lakota High School.

For those in the senior citizen category it has been found that playing bridge can hedge one's bets against developing memory loss. Research in Alzheimer's disease has discovered that deliberately struggling to learn difficult material is good for one's brain, from birth to old age.

So, what are the next steps for this King of the Bridge World? What else but establishing a Bridge Club at The Ohio State University in Columbus, where he is a Chemical Engineering major.

To learn more about playing bridge in Cincinnati go to the Cincinnati Bridge Association website at [www.cincybridge.com](http://www.cincybridge.com) or send an email to [cincybridge124@gmail.com](mailto:cincybridge124@gmail.com). Any middle or high schools interested in forming a bridge club should contact Mike Purcell at [cincybridge124@gmail.com](mailto:cincybridge124@gmail.com).