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Meet the grande dame of bridge

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By Mary Therese Biebel mbiebel@civitasmedia.com

Take it from Beth Rosenthal, director of The Bridgelaydy Duplicate Bridge Club.

"It's really hard to pull something over on Peggy," she said.

But after surreptitiously passing around some fliers among the membership and then luring Peggy Watters of Kingston to Newberry Estate in Dallas "to check out a new venue for the club," Rosenthal succeeded in pulling off a surprise party about a week in advance of Watters' 95th birthday.

"It was fantastic. I still haven't come down," Watters said a few days after the event. "I was so stunned."

Watters, whose official birthday was July 6, has enjoyed playing bridge for decades and credits the complex [card game](#) with enhancing her zest for life.

Friends and fellow bridge players agree there must be a connection.

"She's as sharp as can be, probably one of the better players here," [Mary Ann Davies](#) of Shavertown said.

"She's a brilliant player," Lynn Gonchar of Kingston said. "I didn't know her when she was younger, but if she was better then, I would have been terrified."

"She always gives a competitive game," Walter Mitchell of Bear Creek Village said, adding her demeanor has always represented "the best of the positive aspects of the game" as far as politeness and encouraging less experienced players.

As bridge-club members clustered around during the party, Rosenthal described Watters' enthusiasm for learning.

Years ago, the director said, she needed a substitute to help run the games. Watters passed the American Contract Bridge League's difficult director test and stepped in.

When scoring became [electronic](#), Watters embraced the computer and learned how to make attachments to emails.



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PLAYING BRIDGE

If you want to play bridge you can find games just about any day of the week, Beth Rosenthal said. There are some at the Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley in Wilkes-Barre, the Irem Country Club in Dallas and Wesley Village in Jenkins Township. For information, visit www.bridgelaydy.net

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And when one of her grandsons recently gave Watters an iPad, Rosenthal noticed the next message Watters sent her came from that device.

"She's not afraid of technology. She wants to learn. She wants to be the one doing it," Rosenthal said, adding that Watters has played bridge so well at various competitive tournaments that she earned the rank of Silver Life Master.

Fellow bridge player Mitchell, who is mayor of Bear Creek Village, presented Watters with a proclamation in honor of her birthday, calling her a "grande dame" of bridge and praising her for years of volunteer work at the Red Cross and the former Bishop O'Reilly High School in Kingston. She taught others to play bridge at the Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre, Mitchell said, and many of her students "are still trying to beat her."

Watters worked until she was in her early 70s, retiring from the office at Valley Electrical after 30 years there.

But her most important accomplishment, she said later, was "bringing up three wonderful sons (Charles, William and Hugh) who married three wonderful women (Gretchen, Lynn and Barbara.)" She also has six grandchildren.

More people should learn to play bridge, Watters said, pointing out that she no longer goes bowling but she still looks forward to card games.

"Do it for yourself," she said.



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