

Most people have heard of the "Six Degrees of Separation from Kevin Bacon" game. If Alan was in a movie with Kevin Bacon, Alan has a Bacon Number of 1. If Bob was in a movie with Alan, then Bob has a Bacon Number of 2 and so on. For any given actor, the Six Degrees of Separation game is to determine the lowest Bacon Number.

In chess, the equivalent is chess games played against Paul Morphy (1837–1884). In Go, the equivalent is through Honinbo Shusaku (1829–1862). In mathematics, the equivalent is co-authoring a published article with Paul Erdős (1913–1996), the prolific Hungarian mathematics author. Until now, there has been no bridge equivalent.

Who should be the bridge equivalent of Bacon, Morphy, Erdős and Shusaku?

There are several possibilities — Culbertson, Goren, Belladonna, Soloway, Hamman, Meckstroth, to name



## What is your Vanderbilt number?

Nicolas Hammond

a few. There is, however, really only one true candidate — Harold Stirling Vanderbilt (1884–1970), inventor of contract bridge in 1925.

You can get a Vanderbilt Number only by playing with a someone with a lower Vanderbilt Number. Having that person on your team does not count. You must play with him or her. Vanderbilt has a Vanderbilt Number of 0. Anyone who played with Vanderbilt has a Vanderbilt Number of 1 and so on.

Vanderbilt stopped playing duplicate bridge in the early Forties, so there is probably no one alive with a Vanderbilt Number of 1. The late Oswald Jacoby (1902–1984) played

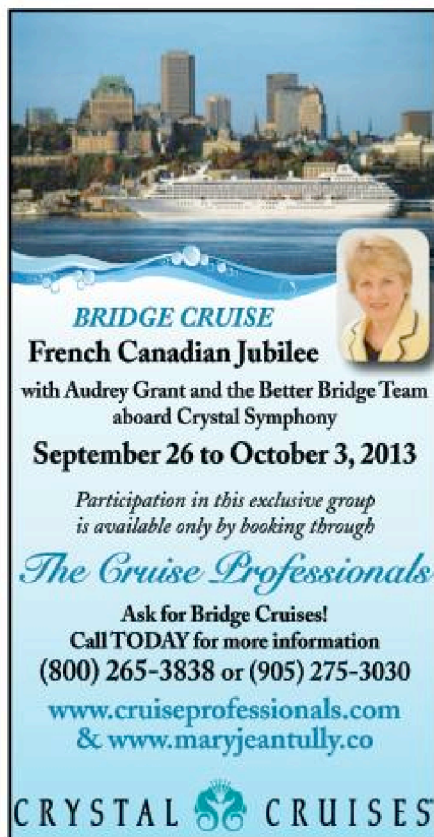
with Vanderbilt and has a Vanderbilt Number of 1. Several well-known players, including Bob Hamman and Peg Kaplan, played with Oswald Jacoby, giving them a Vanderbilt Number of 2.

There are websites where you can find your Bacon Number or Erdős Number. No web sites yet for finding your Vanderbilt Number.

Some players have an Erdős Number and a Vanderbilt Number. Microsoft's Bill Gates is an example.

So, what is your Vanderbilt Number?

Players with Vanderbilt Numbers are encouraged to send them (with details) via email to [editor@acbl.org](mailto:editor@acbl.org).



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**CRYSTAL CRUISES**

### Dr. Ruth Beall Harris 1947–2013

By Leslie G. Smith of Manasquan NJ

The bridge world will not sparkle as brightly with the passing of Ruth Harris, who died on Jan. 27. Director, teacher, mentor and good friend, Ruth organized and ran duplicate games around the Jersey Shore area for many years. A lifelong bridge enthusiast, Ruth encouraged players at all levels to join her games, which were known for their welcoming, friendly atmosphere.

A native of Ohio, Ruth earned her baccalaureate in nursing from Baldwin Wallace College, a master's from the University of Colorado, and a Ph.D. from NYU. She worked widely in various nursing roles, authored many articles on health care, and received numerous awards for her work, including the Sigma Theta Tau Award for Research in Excellence. After her retirement, Ruth, a Silver Life Master, became a bridge instructor, director and club manager.

Ruth embraced life with a "can-do" attitude and had a special gift for connecting with everyone she met. She will be remembered especially for her deep love for family and community. She was a devout member of Holy Lutheran Church in Manasquan NJ, where she enjoyed singing in the choir and volunteering.

Ruth was predeceased by her loving husband, Philip Harris. She is survived by her children, Philip, Robert, Mark and Lauren and their families, as well as by many in-laws, nieces and nephews. She is also survived by her sister, Debbie Linville of Ohio, with whom she often competed at regional and national tournaments.

