



If you think she's a brat, you're correct. An Air Force brat, that is. [VICKI HAMENDE](#) lived in Japan as a toddler (Her first memory of life is a lime green couch in Tokyo...) and England as a teen (She still loves fish and chips and malt vinegar...). She was born in the Chicago area and lived in several Midwest states before moving to Washington the first time. "I lived here 25 years in my initial stretch, spent another 19 years in Wyoming and Colorado, and came back to the Evergreen state three years ago." Her "stable" son, who is 42, lives in Olympia with his wife, Vicki's 5-year-old granddaughter, and her 2 1/2-year-old grandtwins, a boy and girl. Her other son, who is 41 and "still trying to figure out what to do when he grows up," lives in the unpopulated wilds of Wyoming with his wife and their four kids, who range in age from 9 to 17. "Who knew I'd be lucky enough to have seven grandchildren!"

Vicki earned an undergraduate degree plus two master's degrees, all in communications, news writing, editing, and education, from the University of Illinois. She wrote for and edited newspapers and magazines in different places and won several state and national awards. "Writing was my thing!" she reports. She particularly enjoyed traveling to interview people and write descriptions of their lives and how they manage the "highs and lows." She also taught English and creative writing at the high school and college levels, including stints at Capital High School and Colorado State University. "I experienced the perfect career for me, and I loved it!"

An unwelcome, early retirement came when Vicki was diagnosed 15 years ago with a rare and genetic form of muscular dystrophy that is steadily weakening her legs and arms, causing her eyelids to droop, and making it difficult for her to swallow. It's called Oculopharyngeal Muscular Dystrophy, or OPMD. (Her mother, grandmother, and an uncle also suffered from it.) She's getting fitted soon for a motorized wheelchair. ("Watch out, Steve!") The disease nixed her love of hiking, biking, tap dancing, and especially singing. Vicki had entertained her family and friends from the time she was a young girl and later sang in college, at weddings, and at many special events. Still a sports nut, though, the Seahawks, Huskies, and Mariners keep her entertained.

Her parents taught Vicki and her sister to play bridge when the girls were 10 and 12. ("One would think I'd be a better player after all these years!" she laments.) When their parents were occupied, the sisters played with their imaginary partners "Midge" and "Mabel." They also enjoyed "Honeymoon Bridge," a game for two. Her mom, she says, was an excellent player and "deadly" serious about the game. "Daddy, on the other hand, played by the seat of his pants but always seemed to knock out the opponents!" Vicki made contact with Brad even before she moved back to Olympia in 2016. She is now a member of the unit board and currently serves as the secretary. She loves writing "Player Profiles," maintaining the unit website, sending emails to inform players of upcoming events, organizing the minutes of the board meetings, and taking pictures at the games. Vicki is "devoted" to bridge and known for constantly "bugging" fellow players to make sure they're not going to miss a club game or unit event. "No one has thrown a bidding box at me yet, so I guess I can keep at it!"

*(-Vicki Hamende, December 2019)*