

Southern California

Bridge News

Volume 55, #1

January 2019

Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What's Up for 19?

by Mike Marcucci



Happy New Year to all. Hard to believe 2018 is behind us as we contemplate what 2019 has in store for us. In another life, I seem to remember riding home from the car dealer in my family's new 1953 Mercury. What a splurge that was. \$2100 in those days was 6 months salary for working folks. I think we chose "pre-owned" for the next 50 years! I had no idea the game of bridge existed – just wondered what 5th grade had to offer. Fast forward a few years and we marvel at how the world has changed.

Bridge in D23 has evolved since those early years. For consistency, we are doing pretty well. Next year's summer tournament in Long Beach will be our 85th annual. I don't have stats on the rest of the country but I've got to believe that no area can top that string. Hawaii actually goes back 68 years to 1952. That's the only one I know about that comes close.

Most folks know that "Bridge Week" started off as a co-sponsored event because we split up the schedule with half the games in LA, then 1 day on the train, and the last 4 days in San Francisco which is District 21. We did that for 10 years and our portion was predominately held at the LA Elk's Club – a very fancy place to play bridge. Then in 1945, the northern CA portion started to move away from the Memorial Day weekend to the Labor Day weekend. Now both portions were 7-10 day separate tournaments and, somewhere along the line, they changed their name to "All Western". If D21 never missed a year, then we both have 85 years of consistency but I don't have their records. I'll ask them when I am in Monterey next week!

PRESIDENT continued on page 2

District Director Report

December 2018

by Kevin Lane

"Bridge is a game and should be fun."



District 23 elections next summer – consider helping the district!

District 23 officers will be elected in July of next year at the Long Beach regional. Please consider contributing to the district.

As District Director, I chair the search committee for candidates for D23 officers. Our current District President, Mike Marcucci, has energetically served his full two terms which provides a great opportunity to revitalize our district. I've spoken to several unit representatives to the district board.

The consensus is that our district needs to create a better environment to attract more volunteers. Regional volunteers are always needed. The district can build on work already underway to expand teaching efforts and build membership. In short, anyone wishing to help the district can usefully contribute.

Please contact me at klaned23@gmail.com if you are interested.

DIRECTOR continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

New Book	page 3
D23 Winners in Hawaii	page 3
Vietnam Bridge Cruise	page 5
Director's Chair	page 6
Rank Changes	page 7
Around the Units	page 8
Problem Solvers' Panel	page 14

PRESIDENT continued from page 1

Again, most players have heard our general history of moving to the Ambassador Hotel in 1956 and having 20 fabulous years in a Hollywood setting. Another 20 year run started in 1976 at the Pasadena Convention Center and 1000's of players have many PCC stories and memories until costs forced us out in 2000.

The other part of the story is that we started having a 2nd Regional in 1972 and a 3rd Regional in 1986. Between then and 2015, your District provided 3, and a few years even 4, Regional weeks for your enjoyment. We've never managed to find a nice location where bridge was 1st and profit was 2nd, however. We tried hard for locations that were geographically spread out because we know that LA traffic is a worry for all of us. Unfortunately, intentions do not result in profitable tournaments. Only attendance does that. We dropped off from 8K-10K tables in the 60's and 70's to barely over 1000 tables in the 2010-2015 period, then hit an all-time low of 600 tables in Glendale.

The overall result is that we can only offer 1 tournament a year for the foreseeable future. Long Beach is a fantastic location and all attendees have nothing but compliments for the hotel, their staff, the easy parking, the LB restaurants, and the unforgettable ocean views. Anyone who has not enjoyed Bridge Week in Long Beach is missing out on one of the year's definite highlights. The fireworks from Pete Benjamin's balcony were spectacular because all of LA was celebrating that night. We are lucky to have a friendly hotel in a great location and will be repeating our July week for many years. The big question is whether we will ever have anything else and are we doomed to traveling outside our own area to get Regional competition?

Here's the best that we can tell you. We will never give up searching for LA locations. We are talking to the Pasadena Westin, the Burbank Marriott, Industry Hills, and the Glendale Hilton, and continue to inquire on others. The latter was deeply disappointed when we could not repeat our Holiday tournament. We told them so were we! Your Tournament Committee has a responsibility to stay in the black these days, so are very careful not to sign contracts with commitments that we cannot deliver. That is different than 20 years, 10 years, and even 5 years ago, when there was a large bank balance on our books. We could try out new locations and see what

happened. Many folks ask what happened to our Woodland Hills and Torrance tournaments. They were fairly nice locations and were starting to build a following. All well and good until the hotels demanded monstrous cost increases to come back. We waved goodbye to them and have searched for alternatives ever since.

So if next July is all set up, what is the rest of the District Board up to for the next 6 months? A major effort is going to be education and promotion of bridge. You all may have noticed Mitch Dunitz's efforts in the college ranks. The college programs have fallen off in the last 20 years and Mitch, John Jones and others are working on a revival. They suggested a "Youth Day" in July as part of their plan. The basics are that any player 26 and under will play for free on Saturday at the Hilton. Look for more details in the near future.

Ellen Anten has gotten ideas from the ACBL Education Committee and has initiated contacts with all the Units to coordinate our efforts across LA. Several individuals are working with gusto on attracting new players, but Ellen doesn't believe they should be working alone. Sharing information and ideas can only benefit everyone involved. We hope all Units will provide an Education contact and generate, not only ideas on attracting more players, but actions to do so. If our committees of concerned, smart, knowledgeable volunteers cannot get actions going, who can? Working alone may benefit a local area, but you may be even more effective with assistance, both physically and mentally! Two or more heads are better than one! I ask all Units to cooperate with Ellen & pitch in those ideas and actions.

Aside from the stock market, I wish everyone's New Year starts off with some great resolutions, prayers for the less fortunate, and plans to enjoy all the family and friends that we are blessed with. Also, be nice to all partners and all opponents at the tables and get lots of practice for a great 4th of July at the Hilton in Long Beach.

Stay healthy, my friends.

DIRECTOR continued from page 1*Update on Hawaii*

The Hawaii NABC concluded, with table count about 15% below already-reduced expectations. We will lose substantial money on the tournament.

The result is not a particular surprise, but it does reinforce the consensus opinion that Hawaii is a poor NABC location. Furthermore, those of us who pushed for realistic budgets prior to voting on proposed NABC sites feel vindicated.

Other NABC sites

Last month I reported on board efforts to ensure that the surprise Hawaii contract problems aren't replicated in other future NABCs. Towards that end, I was among several board members to review the contracts of the next four NABCs. Furthermore, I was able to review summary contract information for most of the future NABCs.

Reviewing these contracts was very rewarding. Clearly the business side of running NABCs needs a fresh bottoms-up re-set. In fact, numerous board members met informally after the formal board meetings ended. We produced a concise plan to fix some clear problems.

Transparency update

In last month's column, I discussed my motion to ensure board members can review corporate documents. Our ability to review corporate documents is an essential part of board oversight of the ACBL organization. The good news – in short – is that the board has agreed to a plan to balance board member and headquarters needs in this area. Additional details are available at:

<http://acbldistrict23.org/PDFs/DD/Board-Doc-Access.pdf>

Feel free to contact me at klaned23@gmail.com

Advance Book Notice to D23 Players

Get ready for an exciting new bridge book especially written for new players, rookies, and some seasoned players too.

Title: [Winning Bridge Tips for New Players & Rookies](#)

Author: Stephen Page, Unit 553 Life Master, and author of 8 other books about policies, procedures, methods and instructions for businesses.

We've all been taught to avoid taking advantage of "Unauthorized Information (UI)" at the bridge table. It is, in fact, illegal. But learn the

difference between UI and "Authorized Information" in this book.

Legally, utilize table talk, table mannerisms, and body language to your advantage. **Legally**, utilize cards "exposed" in your direction to instigate a better plan of play. Learn about important "Bridge Tells" and "Bridge Laws" (the ACBL "Rules & Regulations") that can benefit you and enhance your enjoyment of the game.

This exciting new book has been reviewed by Unit 559 Director, Marie Nimmrich and others, and Marie can't wait for it to be published.

Expect further information by the end of January, 2019. This book will be available via any Kindle App or in PDF format.

Hawaii Winners in District 23

by Mike Marcucci, D23 President

Each year in November, some players give up the family Thanksgiving holiday to travel to far-away places at an NABC. OK, these days, travel is easier, but think of the old days when folks had to use Prop planes to get to Hawaii. D23 used to charter flights to that Regional in the 60's and the party started in the air.

In last month's column, we mentioned our National Event winners. Lots of other D23 players also enjoyed the breezes of Waikiki as they played a little bridge at ACBL's Fall NABC in between the seafood dinners and pineapple drinks on the island. We'd like to share their successes with all their friends in LA. Eric G took home most of the points, but 1773 total MPs for LA is a good showing.

District 23 Players at Nov18 Hawaii NABC

Rank	Masterpoints	Player
1	421.31	Joe Grue, NYC
3	316.47	Eric Greco
171	86.25	Mitch Dunitz
172	86.25	Ifti Baqai
237	70.25	Ellen Anten
252	67.13	Steve Gross
319	56.60	Jeff Goldsmith
322	56.40	Bill Schrieber
344	51.97	Pam Wittes
345	51.79	Viktor Anikovich
379	48.61	Rama Linz
389	48.00	Mike Mikyska
502	46.44	John Herriot

Rank	Masterpoints	Player
466	39.90	John Jones
482	38.67	Yas Takeda
499	37.79	Billy Cohen
506	37.25	Paula Nataf
531	35.57	Subba Ravipudi
542	34.80	Joyce Nakasaki
543	34.80	Joe Thomas
596	32.26	Rebecca Clough
608	31.66	Roger Clough
618	30.51	Milk Kalikman
619	30.51	Clint Lew
670	27.72	Laura Gastelum
702	26.41	Roy Ladd
703	26.41	Bert Stock
741	24.67	Adrienne Greene
750	24.39	Richard Bakovic
778	23.62	Bill Hall
830	21.97	Steve Mager
878	20.34	Rita Levin
983	17.10	Claude Le Feuvre
1016	16.37	Steve Ramos
1022	16.32	Dawn Lee
1025	16.15	Bobbe Le Feuvre
1157	12.67	Kim Wang
1194	11.72	Carmen Meuter
1283	10.00	Alex Kolesnik
1289	9.91	Angelika Hederer
1307	9.52	Gerri Carlson
1336	8.96	Carol Frank
1470	7.10	Judy Hyde
1522	6.30	Stan Johnson
1524	6.30	Louise Seifert
1566	5.69	Tomoko Stock
1567	5.69	Jan Ladd
1629	5.00	Ray Mack
1680	4.46	Richard Schulman
1681	4.46	Marcia Schulman
1759	3.62	Gerry Gastelum
1789	3.38	Jo Anne Kelley
1790	3.38	Charles Kelley
1791	3.38	Marlene Felix
1792	3.38	Jennifer Wellman
1867	2.41	Patricia Bessone
1868	2.41	Leslie Dean
1934	1.89	Synne Miller
1938	1.87	Wanda Yao
1976	1.60	Natalie Engelkirk
1979	1.60	Charles Levin
1980	1.59	Sam Litovsky
1994	1.50	Sharon Biederman
2076	0.95	Melody Harper

Rank	Masterpoints	Player
2077	0.95	Esther Zacks
Total	1,773.18	

Tournament Statistics:

2,147 players
6,035 tables
63,370 Total Masterpoints

(Joe Grue at the top is only for reference. He lives in New York!) Next stop is Memphis next March. Hope to see you there.

Southern California Bridge News

Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.
410 Mill Creek Lane, San Gabriel, CA 91775
Phone: 626-281-2179

email bridgenews@acbldistrict23.org

Editor/Designer..... Tom Lill

Managing Editor. Mike Marcucci

Contributing Editor. John Jones

Copy deadlines: the 23rd of the preceding month. Opinions expressed in the Southern California Bridge News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ALACBU, Inc., The Bridge News or the Editor. The Bridge News reserves the right to reject material it considers to be in poor taste or deems otherwise unsuitable for publication.

Looking for a Club?

Check out

<http://web3.acbl.org/findalist/club>

All clubs in the Los Angeles area are listed.
You can look up all the game times,
locations, and contact info.

Never Say "Never"

Bridge is such a context-sensitive game, most of the "rules" we go by are mostly guidelines. There are a few cases where "never" does apply, however. From time to time (to fill up the white space!) we will look at some of these.

Especially at matchpoints, NEVER let them play undoubled when you've bid game voluntarily. They are obviously sacrificing. You must protect your plus score if possible. Sure, it may be a freak hand, and they may make it. You were getting a bottom anyway in that case, double or no double.

Bridge Cruise to Vietnam

March 2020 - From \$2,100 per person



Ha Long Bay, Vietnam



Host Jeff Grotenhuis is a Life Master. In 2011 he founded Agile Bridge Club in Hermosa Beach. At 21 tables, Agile's Friday open game is now the largest

Friday game in District 23. Jeff has also introduced more people to bridge in California this decade. He was a North American Pairs Finalist at the Philadelphia Nationals this year. When not teaching, directing or playing bridge, Jeff enjoys ballroom dancing and hiking.

Intermediate lectures and afternoon duplicate games will be held every day at sea. Our group dines together and then plays bridge virtually every evening. This will be our fifth bridge cruise. Jeff's wife, Jennifer, grew up in Vietnam. Our ship, the Celebrity Millennium, undergoes a major refurbishment the first quarter of 2019. Contact Jeff: (310) 600-4275 with questions regarding the bridge program.

To learn more about cruise contact:

Susan Dushane at Altour

(818) 464-9241

susan.dushane@altour.com

www.cuebidcruises.com



Cities Visited

From the Director's Chair: *by Jim Perkins*

In case you haven't heard, there was quite the controversy in the Blue Ribbon Pairs at the recently concluded Honolulu NABCs. East and West, an expert pair, bid to 7NT off the whole cashing Diamond Suit. South dealt and PASSED. The whole auction was:

South	West	North	East
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	P	4♣
pass	4♦	x	pass
pass	4NT	pass	5♠
pass	7♠	pass	7NT
all PASS			

Because this was a NABC+ event, the players were divided by screens. That is, South and West were on one side of a barrier erected between the players and East and North were on the other side. There was a noticeable break in tempo before the tray came back from the South and West side with the final 2 PASSES. During the time that South and West had the tray, East said to North "Maybe I shouldn't have done that [bid 7NT] since he [West] can have a void." North selected a Diamond lead.

Perhaps you need some of the calls explained. 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♠ are all fairly standard bids showing a heart suit of some sort and an invitational spade raise (10-12-ish points). 4♣ is a cue bid presumably (at this level) showing 1st or 2nd round control of clubs. 4♦, similarly. Importantly PASS over the x of 4D shows no diamond control. 4NT is now RKC but the expert West may, and here, does have an unexpected void because he knows that East has nothing in diamonds so the only Key Cards that will be shown will be Key Cards that matter -- that is, not in Diamonds. 5♠ showed 2 Key Cards (Aces and the King of Spades) plus the Q of Spades. West now knows that 7♠ is essentially cold and because it is a tough field bids it.

At this point East figures that his partner would not bid a Key Card asking sequence with a void and therefore converts 7♠ to 7NT since he can count to 13 and beyond also.

While the auction itself, and East's comment in explanation of the auction suggest a diamond lead,

South's break in tempo suggests that South had some problem making a call over 7NT and it is hard to see what that problem might be other than holding an A. That is, the pause itself suggests

possession of an A. However, among the expert community, it is widely agreed that the failure to x, more or less denies possession of an A.

North is now faced with an ethical dilemma and he chose to make the lead that he believed he would have made in the absence of South's break in tempo. The directors were called and applying Law 16 on Unauthorized Information had to determine if South's action suggested a diamond lead and if there was any logical alternative to a diamond lead for North. The director ruled that the pause did not suggest a diamond lead and furthermore that North had no logical alternative. An appeal was filed and in the end, the appeal was upheld and the hand was scored as if North had led something other than a diamond.

This hand has sparked an enormous amount of discussion and debate which cannot possibly be even generally summarized here. However, we can say first of all that if you find it necessary to pause a think to solve a bridge problem and at some point you inevitably will, you put your partner in an extremely awkward position for her next action. This is especially true if, after the pause, your call is PASS. Try to take a bit of extra time even when you don't need it so that when you do, your calls are "in tempo."

The second point that arises from this ruling for me, is the conclusion that the term used in the laws, "Logical Alternative" means more alternative than logical. When polled many expert players responded that on this auction they would lead a safe spade as something of a reflex lead against a grand slam. Many other players have argued that if you think about it, a passive lead can never be logical against this auction.

But that is the point. The pause was an "alarm clock" going off, causing North to stop and think. And if you stop and think, of course you lead a Diamond. But if you play on auto-pilot, as even World Champion players are prone to do sometimes, you simply apply a general and generally correct plan of leading passively against a grand slam.

So the takeaway for us mere mortals is that if you have a problem in the auction and find it necessary to break tempo, at least have a bias toward making the call that is not PASS. If you are pausing, it must be close. And if it is close just go ahead and bid (or, in this case, x).

Otherwise your partner may be held to a standard of no thinking about this one.

District 23 Rank Changes November 2018

Junior Master

David L. Brady
Marie-Laure Leglise
Paul E. Martinet
Rollin Ranson
Jerry Simonoff
William C. Stark
John F. Tholen
Arthur D. Vatz
Jeof H. Wyrick
Michael M. Zelichov

Club Master

Pauline Annakin
Anita R. Brenner
Kerry Goldstone
Janet Sobell

Sectional Master

Anne Bank
J. Ross Bengel
Karen Comegys
Judith Cook
Park Cowgill
Tracee G. Dezzutti
Jenny Ernest

Sectional Master

Vivian Freedman
Gregory Gallagher
Carol R. Herzlinger
Kay Maeda
Steve A. Mancini
Dale G. Quasny
Jill Sattinger
Carol Simonoff
Kay Wardell
Nili Weingart
Jaclyn H. Hatfield

Regional Master

Joseph Duke
Bobbi Endler
Sofi Kasubhai
Lillian Slater

NABC Master

Tony Mirchandani
Richard Schulman

Advanced NABC Master

Jerold A. Rose

Life Master

Robert Johann
Carol Levin

Bronze Life Master

Barbara L. Astrin
Susan Bibby
Carol Boyd
Alan P. Olschwang

Ruby Life Master

Joyce L. Henderson
Helen T. Malzer
Karen Schwartz
Ruth R. Shayne
R. M. Turner

Gold Life Master

Joseph G. Thomas

SapphireLife Master

Sankar M. Reddy

Grand Life Master

Iftikhar A. Baqai

Carolyn Taff & Marion Napier REALTORS

Your Real Estate Partners for Life



RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Relocation, Seniors, Luxury Properties and First Time Buyer Specialists Representing Buyers and Sellers in Probate & Trust Transactions; Estate, Condo and Investment Properties; Complex Real Estate Matters; Referrals; and Executive Transfers

Carolyn 310-871-5051

Marion 310-721-7782

2444 Wilshire Blvd.

Santa Monica, CA 90403

Around the Units in District 23



Long Beach by Jon Yinger

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

December 16 Unit Game: Overall results: 1st in A: George Welsh/Cayce Blanchard, 2nd John Melis/Jackie Hess, 3rd Robert Daniels/Kevin Lane, 4th Marcie Evans/Mary Kiechle, 5th Kay Tseng/Wayne Rapp, 6th Dalia Hernandez/Sharon Biederman. In the B flight overalls Fern Dunbar/Mark Singer were 3rd, Rae Yan/Kiyo Nagaishi 4th, Sue Boswell/Lynn Danielson 5th, Janet Logan/Thomas Mengarelli 6th. In the C flight overalls Virginia Brewer/Marlene Felix were 2nd, Mary and John Williams 3rd, Rosalie Storck/Pam Cronn 4th. In the 199ers overalls Ted Dowe/Jenny Ernest were 1st, Allene Buchanan/Charlotte Roush 2nd. Congratulations to all!

70+% GAMES Nov 16 through Dec 16: In open games Nov 17 Dominique and Arthur Moore had 76%, Dec 6 John Jones/Tom Reynolds had 74.36%, and Dec 14 Steve Ramos/Ted Gibbs had 71.07%. And in the Monday morning pairs game Dec 10 with 16 pairs Rita and Jan Van Lierop had 81.25%. Congratulations to all four pairs!

BIG MASTER POINT AWARDS Nov 16 through Dec 16: In the team game Nov 18 the team of Kay Tseng/Cayce Blanchard/John Petrie/Jon Yinger was first, each winning 2.10mp. And in the unit game Dec 16 George Welsh/Cayce Blanchard won 4.81mp for 1st, Jackie Hess/John Melis won 3.61mp for 2nd. Congratulations to all six pairs!

NEW CLUB MEMBERS: Katherine Jervik, Eric Kaplan, Lyn Kraatz, Lori Westcott, Cherly Vendergraft. Welcome to the club!

STATUS CHANGES: New Junior Masters: Estelle Byrnes, John Kilmer, John Markovich, Terry Royce. New Club Master: Ted Dowe. New Gold Life Master: Gary Paugh. Congratulations to you all!

UP-COMING EVENTS AT THE CLUB:

Dec 21 Sharon Biederman birthday potluck: Lunch at 11:45, game at 12:00.

Also: Volunteer Appreciation Day. Volunteers with invitation play for free

Dec 23 no team game. Regular open game at 12:30.

Dec 25 Club closed Christmas day

Dec 31, Jan 1 Club will be open New Year's Eve and New Year's Day

Jan 7 9:30am new classes begin

Jan 20 12:30 Team Game

Jan 21 Birthday Monday \$5 discount on your January birthday

Jan 22 ACBL-wide Jr-Fund game: Extra points, \$11 card fee

Jan 27 Unit Game 12:30 Dessert served

NEWS FROM LEISURE WORLD BRIDGE CLUBS

Judy Carter-Johnson December 15

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP - Clubhouse #1 December 14. Jeanette Estill/Eileen Kotecki 1 in A, 1 in B. Gary Paugh/Fred Reker 2 in A. Sue Fardette/Marilyn McClintock 3 in A. Verna Burns/Larry Slutsky 4 in A. Joan and Ted Wieber 5 in A, 2 in B, 1 in C. Betty Jackson/Diane Sachs 6 in A. Dorothy Favre/George Koehm 3 in B. Mariann Klinger/Howard Smith 4 in B. Ellen Kice/Russell Gray 5 in B, 2 in C. Sylvia Kaprelyan/George Alemshah 3 in C. Judy Carter-Johnson/Mark Singer tied with Monica and Paul Honey for 4/5 in C.

GET WELL: Joan Tschirki

CONGRATULATIONS to Louise Seifert and Stan Johnson - They traveled to Hawaii for the Fall Nationals and came in 1st place in the Karen Lanke 299er pairs with a score of 68.33%. They were

awarded a small trophy for this great game!!! They each earned a total of 6 master points.

REMINDER: ACBL classifies Leisure World bridge games as “invitational” meaning non-resident guests must secure an advance reservation. Games are held on Monday/Thursday at clubhouse #3 at 12:15. For reservations please call: Monday—Midge Dunagan(562) 594-9698. Thursday—Sharon Beran (562)308-7838or email: hbsharonb@gmail.com. Phone number for clubhouse #3---Late arrivals, last minute reservations, last minute cancellations, need a partner--After 12:00 noon:(562) 481-7368. Games are also held on Friday/Saturday at clubhouse #1 at 12:15. For reservations please call: Friday— Currently there is no reservation person for Friday—please come early and perhaps volunteer!! Saturday—Judith Jones (714) 840-2300—(between 9am and 9pm only!) or mikrojonas@aol.com. Any news for next month's column, please e-mail me at atcj90740@gmail.com Results of all Leisure World games are posted on www.acblunit557.org



Pomona –
Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

Unit Game: Saturday January 19, 11:00 a.m.,
Glendora

Individual: Saturday, January 5, 9:30 a.m., San Dimas

The top finisher in the December Individual was Roger Boyar, at 64.21%. Richard Patterson and Penny Barbieri tied for second; Yours Truly was fourth.

The December Unit game was won by Claudia Cochran – Hanan Mogharbel, with a 63.56% game. Hot on their heels, tying for second we find Margie Hall – Linda Ananea and Gino Barbieri – Penny Barbieri only ½ matchpoint behind. Stephen Dorse – Gail Leroy rounded out the leader board.

Attendance was light in December, what with the holidays approaching. Only one pair – and two Individual efforts – reached the magic 65% mark this month. In the pairs game, Roger Boyar and Linda

Stuart were tops with a 66.0% game. Hanan Mogharbel had the best Individual score, 69.05%. Clint Lew hit 66.07%.

Other winners were, Linda Tessier, Kurt Trieselmann, Ken Bloomfield, Penny Barbieri, Vic Sartor, Bill Papa, Richard Patterson, David Ochroch, and Yours Truly.

We had one player go to the NABC in Hawaii and do rather well. Clint Lew racked up 30.51 points, with his best effort garnering 10.96 in a stratified pairs game.

Our Unit did rather well in the recent Palm Springs Regional. 13 players brought home 84.96 points, with Amr Elghamry topping the list with 17.62, with a first place finish in a bracketed Swiss. This placed him 404th out of 2086 players. Hanan Mogharbel brought home 14.59, including a second place finish in a bracketed KO. David Ochroch picked up 13.51, including TWO 1st place finishes in bracket Swiss. One team included Yours Truly. (Don't ask which bracket we were in.) Margie Hall picked up 12.61, mainly from the 2nd place KO in conjunction with Hanan. Other point gatherers: Kai Liu, Tim and Eileen Finlay, Don Nakasaki, Bridget O'Sullivan, Darleen and Tom Sessions, and Gail Leroy.

29 players won club-level masterpoints in December. Topping the list was Clint Lew, with 6.47. Next were Roger Boyar, 5.02; Penny Barbieri, 4.09; Linda Tessier, 3.90; and Hanan Mogharbel rounded out the top five with 3.81.

Three promotions to report: Steve Mancini and Dale Quasny are now Sectional Masters; and Sofi Kasubhai is a Regional Master. Congratulations, all, and keep up the good play.

In other news: David Ochroch, an ACBL TAP Certified bridge instructor will be teaching a series of Bridge Fundamentals classes (beginning / intermediate / advanced, aka Intro to Bridge I, II, III) at the Joslyn Senior Center in Claremont and at the Gibson Senior Center in Upland, starting January 8, 2019. He also holds drop-in play practice sessions for those reviewing basic conventions (Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, Neg Doubles, etc.) on Tuesdays at 1pm at Joslyn thru Feb 26. For more information, please see CLAREMONT: www.claremontrec.com or call (909)399-5490, and UPLAND: apm.activecommunities.com/upland/Home or call (909)931-4280. If you are a member of The Claremont Club, he is also holding a learn to play

bridge class over two Saturdays: Jan 19 and Jan 26th, 2019.

For our Hand-of-the-Month, we submit a problem that probably has no “right” answer. First in hand, at matchpoints, you find yourself looking at this impressive collection:

♠A10 ♥A8 ♦AKJ9863 ♣A5

“Only” 20 HCP ... but a 4-loser hand (at most!) and 10 playing tricks in either notrump or diamonds, assuming the diamonds behave. Otherwise, “only” nine tricks. So: these seem to be your choices: 1♦, 2♣, or an offbeat 2NT. Let’s speculate on what can happen, before we examine what DID happen (in one case).

If you open 1♦, it might be passed out. If not, you risk a lot of interference in your short majors. And supposed it goes 1♦ – 1♥/1♠, or maybe 1NT. Now what? Too strong for 3♦; 5♦ is a yuck bid (in our opinion, at least!), and 3NT ... well, unless you have a diamond slam, you were going there anyway.

Opening 2NT risks a major-suit transfer, which unless it is a Texas, probably winds you up in 3NT again.

2♣? Not exactly classic. If it goes 2♥ (bust), now what? 3NT and damn the torpedoes? 3♦ (leaving partner with the dirty diapers)? And if it goes 2♦ (whether waiting or promising a control), now you bid 3♦, and again partner has an unpleasant decision to make.

OK, we’ve rejected *everything*. Here’s what happened at the table of Your Correspondent. Fasten your seat belt, you won’t believe it. It started off 2♣ – 3♥! We play that 2♥ promises no Ace or King, and 2NT shows a trick-and-a-half and a good heart suit. So what in %&*! is 3♥? Turns out pard has

♠K93 ♥KQ9763 ♦102 ♣96.

You have some idea that this is the situation – it has happened before, the time you picked up 10 solid spades and a heart void – so you have visions of sugar plums, and call 4NT. Is this Blackwood, or a value bid (28-29 HCP)? Who cares? If partner responds 5♣ (one key card), you’ll ask for the ♥Q and bid 7NT if you find it. If partner takes it as a value bid, she will either bid 6NT or do something else. No?

No. Partner, on an off day, passed, and 13 tricks rolled home. (The ♦Q is stiff, the hearts are 3-2, and the opening lead is from ♠QJxx, so there you are.)

Well, believe it or not, +520 was a tie for top! Amazingly enough, no one even got to the frigid small slam. Go figure!

Quote for the month: “The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not “Eureka!” (I’ve found it!), but ‘That’s funny...’” (Isaac Asimov)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

Results of the Western Conference Holiday STaC Games:

Monday Afternoon in Santa Clarita, December 3rd:

1 st	Ted Maki – Lamonte Johnson	63.69%
2 nd	Ron Oest – Mira Rowe	59.82%
3 rd	Aggi Oschin – Sharon Hoelscher	57.74%
4 th	Sharry Vida – Beth Morrin	55.95%

Tuesday Evening in Santa Clarita, December 4th:

1 st	Robert McBroom – David White	64.63%
2 nd	Charles Morrin – Beth Morrin	64.25%
3 rd	Ron Oest – Mira Rowe	61.42%
4 th	Elaine Moore – Tom Shudic	54.90%

Thursday Morning in Castaic, December 6th:

1 st	Paula Olivares – Roy Ladd	60.19%
2 nd	Barbara Jones – Tom Jones	54.63%
3 rd	Lamonte Johnson – Richard Stark	53.70%

Friday Afternoon Aux. Pairs in Palmdale, December 7th:

1 st	Henry Roediger – Judy Smith	63.89%
2 nd	Russ Buker – Linda Young	62.50%
3 rd	Les Spitz – Charles Morrin	59.03%

Friday Afternoon Aux. Pairs in Palmdale, December 9th:

1 st	George MacDonald – Carol Provost	60.12%
2 nd	Rand Pinsky – Robert McBroom	58.93%
3 rd /4 th	Hal Underwood – Carol Underwood	52.38%
	Sharry Vida – Beth Morrin	52.38%

Results of the ACBL-wide International Fund Game

Friendly Bridge Club in Santa Clarita

December 17, 2018

1 st	Bob Brothers – Sam Khayat	66.45%
2 nd	Sharry Vida – Beth Morrin	61.52%
3 rd	Russ Buker – Linda Young	59.64%
4 th	Harkirat Randhawa – Alan Nueman	59.52%
5 th	Roy Ladd – Bert Stock	58.64%
6 th	Rand Pinsky – Robert McBroom	57.21%

Election of Board of Directors for Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley:

The Unit 556 Board election will be held Tuesday, January 15th at the annual “After the Holidays Party” at the Senior Center in Santa Clarita. The potluck dinner will begin at 5:30 PM and the board election will be at 6:30 PM. A Unit game will follow at 6:45 PM.

Next Board meeting: Conference Call on Thursday, January 17th.



San Fernando Valley
by Linda Silvey

February 16: Unit 561 Luncheon/Game

Unit 561 will host a Luncheon and Game on Saturday, February 16, at the 750 Club, 5700 Rudnick Ave, Woodland Hills. A catered luncheon will be served buffet style at 12noon, followed by an Open, Stratified game at 1:00 p.m. The fee is \$13 and reservations are requested. A sign-up sheet will be available at The 750 Club or email Marcia Broderick at marciabroderick@gmail.com for reservations / partnerships.

Special Congratulations

Recent Life Master Accomplishments by Unit 561 players were: Dick Berg, Norma Friedman, and Beverly McLeod (Life Master); Dick Berg, Michael Newman, Sherry Newman, and Saul Prier (Bronze); Martin Hurwitz (Silver – 1,000); Mike Fierman (Ruby – 1,500); and Janice Richter (Gold – 2,500).

November Top Ten (regular) Masterpoints at The 750 Club were: Ray Primus 9.85, Susan Raphael

9.23, Ron Malkin 8.82, Mike Klemens 7.29, Mike Wiener 6.61, Dwight Hunt 6.42, Gloria Malkin 6.36, Helen Malzer 5.90, and Gary Baxley 5.85. The following achieved 70% games: Sin Orensztin-Claude Le Feuvre 77.08%, Mike Newman-Sherry Newman 72.32%, Vera Mandel-Susan Raphael 71.14%, and Leila Greenfield-Mike Klemens.

The Top Ten November StaC Masterpoints at The 750 Club were Sin Orensztin 6.79, Susan Raphael 6.50, Dick Berg 5.79, Mark Peters 5.46, Lou Simmons 4.93, Lynn Edelson 4.89, Ilene Berg 4.50, Jody Lombardo 4.46 Sherry Newman 4.33, Mike Newman 4.33, and Jane Winston 4.20.

January 15: Braemar Dinner/Bridge Night

The next Braemar Dinner/Bridge Night will be held Tuesday, January 15. Dinner is \$20 per person and starts at 6 p.m. and the bridge is \$5 per person and begins at 7 p.m. This is an ACBL sanctioned game and the first place NS and EW winners will receive coupons for Braemar’s Wednesday night “Taste of Tuscany” dinner. For reservations and/or partnerships contact Nancy Klemens at nrklemens@aol.com or (818) 609-1071.

January Special Events at The 750 Club

“Fifty-Two Shades of Play” will be celebrated during the week of January 7 – 11. This is in recognition of the Club’s listing in ACBL’s “2018 Top Fifty Clubs in North America” (based on the total number of tables played for fifty-two weeks with fifty-two cards in each deck!). A big “thank you” to all the players, helpers, and directors who made this possible for a December ranking (not final) of number 34 out of 50 with 6,119.5 tables of bridge played through November 30.

Special treats provided during the “Fifty-Two Shades of Play” celebration will be as follows: Monday, Jan 7 – Pizza (morning), Ice Cream and Cake (evening); Tuesday, Jan 8 – Coffee Cakes and Cookies (morning); Wednesday, Jan 9 – Submarine Sandwiches (morning); Thursday, Jan 10 – Pizza (morning), Pies (evening); and Friday, Jan 11 – Bagels (morning).

Calendar

Tuesday, January 1, The 750 Club will be closed for the Holiday.

Monday, January 7 – Friday January 11, “Fifty-Two Shades of Play” celebration at The 750 Club. See details above.

Tuesday, January 15, Braemar Dinner/Bridge Night starting at 6 p.m. See details above.

Wednesday, January 16, Unit 561 Board Meeting at The 750 Club at 2:45 p.m.

Saturday, February 16, "February Fun" Unit Luncheon/Game, 12noon, The 750 Club. See details above



West LA by Robert Shore

Ha-Wowee Performances

Decisions, decisions. It's long been the policy of this column that anyone who wins an NABC+ event gets to lead that month's column. But what to do when two different Unit members accomplish the feat? In this case, we'll break the tie by adding the announcement of the ACBL's Player of the Year.

Eric Greco capped off a strong 2018 by winning the Mitchell Board-a-Match Teams event, for his 18th NABC+ win. This win, combined with his strong performances throughout the year, made Eric the 2018 Player of the Year, which is awarded to the player who wins the most platinum points in a calendar year.

Pam Wittes also added to her title collection by winning the Marsha May Sternberg Board-a-Match Teams event. This win was Pam's 7th win in an NABC+ event, which goes well with her World Mixed Pairs title.

Eric and Pam were the headliners, but we had other strong performances in Hawaii as well. Bill Schreiber won the 1st Sunday Daylight Swiss Teams event. Tony Greenberg won his bracket in the 1st Sunday Flight B Bracketed Swiss Teams event. Paula Nataf won her bracket in the Tuesday-Wednesday Knockout Teams event.

Closer to Home

Shortly after the Honolulu tournament concluded, we started Palm Springs. Rochelle and Mitchell Blumenfeld won the Wednesday Gold Rush Pairs. Lots of Unit members won brackets of the Wednesday Bracketed Swiss Teams event. Colin and Nelly Gordon teamed with Merle Liebesman and

Adrienne Green to top one bracket. Susan Morse-Lebow teamed with John Ramos to win another. Susan Shane Schwab teamed with Barbara Wellisch to win still another bracket of that event. Moving to the weekend, your Humble Scribe won a bracket of the Saturday Bracketed Swiss Teams event, and Robert Carroll also won a bracket of that event. Ifiti Baqai finished a strong tournament for our Unit by winning the Sunday A/X/Y Swiss Teams.

Counting Really Helps

After a weak 2♦ opening by RHO as dealer, all red at matchpoints, I found myself playing 4♥ with the following hands:

Dummy: ♠ AJ93 ♥ AKJ7 ♦ 3 ♣ AKJ5
Declarer: ♠ K87 ♥ Q1083 ♦ J86 ♣ 1093

The defense started with a diamond to the K and a heart, which I won in my hand. I ran the club 10 and when it held, I drew three rounds of trump, ending in my hand. I then repeated the club finesse and RHO, who had thrown a diamond on the third round of trump, threw another diamond on the third club.

At this point, the distribution is clear. RHO presumably started with 6 diamonds and she's known to have begun with two hearts and two clubs, so she has 3 spades. It doesn't matter who has the spade Q. The right play is to pitch a spade on the fourth round of clubs, play two rounds of spades and trump the third spade in hand, bringing home the suit. A diamond ruff puts you back on the board to enjoy dummy's good spade. Unfortunately, I somehow counted that LHO had only 2 diamonds, and therefore 4 spades, so I took the spade finesse and suffered the fate I deserved when RHO won her Queen. Counting helps, but only if you get it right.

Welcome Mat

Two full tables of new Unit members to welcome this month. Our Unit's newest members of the ACBL are Michele Dominick, Charles Drum, Beverly Graber, CC Pulitzer-Lemann, and Deborah Scherer. Joining us from other units are Ivan Faggen, David Soukup, and Carling Sugarman. Please give them a warm West Los Angeles welcome when you see them at the table.

Around the Clubs

Club champions last month at Barrington were Bill Schreiber and Michael Nash. Reaching 70% were Roger and Becky Clough along with Pete Benjamin and Rob Perlsweig.

By the time you read this, John Ramos will have succeeded Om Chokriwala as club manager at the Beverly Hills Bridge Club. We wish John much success in his new role and extend our thanks to Om for his years of service to the Club. Reaching 70% last month at Beverly Hills were Pete Benjamin and Peter Knee, Sam Namer and Rahim Israel, and Mark and Larisa Rappaport. Last month's club champions were Pete Benjamin and Rob Perlsweig, Peter Knee and Harvey Katz, Rhoda and Lew Himmell, and Lee Hausner and Eddi Samandar.

Climbing the Ladder

Emily Blum has reached Club Master status. Carla Spinner is now a Sectional Master and Leah Levin is an NABC Master. Jacklyn Hatfield has become an Advanced NABC Master.

Norma Friedman is a freshly minted new Life Master. Clancy Martel and Elizabeth Ryan have become Bronze Life Masters. Congratulations to all on your accomplishments.

Got news? Send it to me at
Bob78164@yahoo.com.

Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

Panelists are Gerry Bare, Mark Bartusek, Leo Bell, Eddie Kantar, Rick Roeder, David Sacks, and Michael Shuster.

1

IMPs
None Vul

South	West	North	East
1♣	pass	1♥	1♠
???			

You, South, hold: ♠J ♥AJ82 ♦863 ♣AK975

What call do you make?

[We'll start with a simple hand evaluation problem. Let's hear from the conservatives first].

Bell - 2♥. Would anyone really consider anything else? Even in today's aggressive bidding world, this is a minimum opening hand.

Bartusek - 2♥. Too many losers for 3♥ (Losing Trick Count is 7). Change my Heart Jack to the Queen and my hand would barely qualify for a 3♥ bid.

[I like 3♥, and my two most regular partners both like 2♥. Isn't partnership bridge an easy game?]

Roeder 2♥. More of a problem in the era before Rodwell invented the Bra Convention (aka, "Support Doubles"). As most cosmetic surgeons will tell you, "It is OK to have a little extra." *[If you'd study your hand instead of the female anatomy, you might find a more aggressive bid. ☺]*

Bare - 3♥, gives partner best chance to make final decision.

Sacks - 3♥ Clean hand values, and partner knows to discount any spade values. This bid is usually based on shape, as a 2♠ bid would cover all of the power 3♥ bids.

Shuster. 3♥. This is right on trick-taking potential, especially given that I have the right singleton. In competitive auctions it is more important to make the single best description you can at your earliest turn.

Kantar - 3♥. Right off the bat, you put it to me, but I can't bring myself to bid only 2♥ with this hand.

[This hand is from the 1988 Vanderbilt KO Teams, an event won by Eddie Kantar playing with Alan Sontag, teaming with John Mohan and Roger Bates. This hand came from the semi-finals. The boards were not duplicated for this event, so Eddie's team didn't have this problem. David Berkowitz held this hand and rebid 3♥. His partner Zia bid 4♥ on ♠653 ♥T753 ♦AQT ♣QT8. 4♥ is tough to make, but Zia would probably have made it. We'll never know, though, because the 1♠ overcaller, Ron Anderson, holding ♠AKQ982 ♥K ♦K952 ♣63, self-sacrificed in 4♠. Zia doubled for down 300. Paul Soloway was in Berkowitz' seat at the other table. Soloway was playing a light opening bid forcing club system and opened 1♦. Soloway only rebid 2♥. This surprised me. I thought 3♥ was automatic, especially for Soloway, given that he might have opened light. But Frank Stewart, writing for the ACBL Contract Bridge Bulletin, called the jump to 3♥ "super-aggressive"]

<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 48pt; font-weight: bold;">2</div> <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 12pt;">Matchpoints Both vul</div>	South	West	North	East
	1♥	pass	1♠	pass
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠7 ♥KJ10973 ♦AK93 ♣Q4			
	What call do you make			

[We'll continue with another problem that has only two rational choices: 2♦ and 2♥].

Kantar - 2♥. In view of the spade response, I don't consider this hand strong enough to rebid 2♦ and then bid hearts. I will go the weaker route and rebid hearts and then diamonds. Had my partner responded 2♣, I would rebid 2♦ and then rebid the hearts.

Bell - 2♥. My hand isn't good enough to take another call if partner rebids 2♠, so I will emphasize my good heart suit. I can rebid 3♦ over 2NT or 3♣.

Bare – 2♥. The heart spots make it pretty clear. If you bid 2♦ and later want to bid hearts again, in most auctions, you will be showing a stronger hand.

Bartusek – 2♥. A misfit, downgraded club queen. Not good enough for either 2♦ or 3♥. Additionally, my hearts are too good to risk partner's passing 2♦ at matchpoints (and partner might raise 2♥ to 3♥).

Sacks - 2♥. Did this rule change? Rebid in your lower ranking side suit when you are preparing to bid your six card suit again only if you have extra values. An auction of 1♥ pass 1♠ pass 2♦ pass 2NT pass 3♥ would be forcing. *[Don't you want to force to game if partner rebids 2NT?]* Conversely, bidding 2♥ followed by 3♦ would be non-forcing.

Roeder – 2♥. Seduced by the 9 of hearts with due apologies to Eric Kokish.

Shuster – 2♥. The heart suit can play opposite a void, and I don't have extra values. There is no reason to complicate things by introducing diamonds, unless partner forces.

[This hand is from a recent Contract Bridge Bulletin Bidder's Box. Both of the bidding players bid 2♥, and the moderator also advocated 2♥. I used this hand because I like 2♦. I believe it is frequently right to bid the second suit in these situations, even with a relative minimum. This hand has 13 HCP with a shape that would contain 10 HCP (most of us would open without the ♦K, and everyone would open without the ♣Q), and excellent heart spots. Bidding the second suit helps partner with uncovering a possible ♦ fit and with learning where my high cards are. If partner rebids 2NT, I am strong enough to force to game with a 3♥ bid.]

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">3</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Matchpoints None vul</div>	South	West	North	East
	pass	pass	1♦	1♥
	1♠	pass	2♣	pass
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠K10763 ♥KJ1052 ♦106 ♣Q What call do you make?			

Bell - 2♦. There is some merit to treating a 4th suit 2♥ rebid as not game-forcing, but absent that agreement, I go low and am well placed if partner bids again.

Bare - 2♦, not nearly strong enough for anything else. You wish partner had bid 1NT so 2♥ would be not forcing.

Bartusek - 2♦ - I need to keep the auction going in case partner can find another bid. Not good enough for 2NT, and 2♥ is an extreme overbid.

Sacks - 2♦. Misfits belong to opponents. If partner bids again we will be well placed.

Shuster: - 2♦. I'm glad my partners NEVER open 1♦ with longer clubs. *[I like the idea, but NEVER? They wouldn't consider opening 1♦ holding ♠void ♥Kxxx ♦AKQJ ♣xxxxx or ♠x ♥K ♦AKQJx ♣xxxxxx?]*

Roeder - 2NT. Seduced by Halle Berry and her sisters (aka, the beautiful10's). *[Normally I'd rant and rave over such a big overbid on a misfit, but all other bids are unattractive, too.]*

Kantar - 3♥. Invitational, the way I play. *[3♥ is a splinter bid in most partnerships, but maybe this is better]*. However, I play that a direct response of 2♥ to a minor suit opening bid shows 5-5 or 5-4 (always five spades) with 7-10 HCP. It eliminates problems like this. That would be my bid at the table.

[This nightmare hand was sent to me by my friend Lucy Tredenick].

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">4</div> <div style="text-align: center;">IMPs N-S vul</div>	South	West	North	East
		2♥	Dbl	4♥
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠KQ532 ♥7 ♦A ♣AQJ863 What call do you make?			

[We now come to a seriously preempted auction where we have an excellent hand. There are several questions, though. What is 4NT? How do we best show our two suits? Can we show both suits without the ♥A? Should we show the second suit or just clubs?]

Bell - 5♥. It would seem the alternatives are 5NT (probably 2 places to play) or leaping to slam in clubs or spades. All partner needs for a grand is almost any combination that includes the major suit aces and the ♣K, so I at least need to make a try for it. Admittedly, if partner bids 5♠, I'll be faced with the same dilemma.

Kantar - 5♥ and over 5♠, 6♠. Partner knows that I am strong enough to bid 6♠ directly, as partner might have responded 6♦ originally. By bidding this way, I think I deny the ♥A, as I could have bid 6♥ over 5♠ (had partner bid that) with the ♥A, a grand slam try. Notice that I was clever enough not to include problems like this in my Keycard book.

Shuster - 5NT. Pick a slam without the heart ace (5♥ would be that.) Not that we'll be bidding seven, but bridge is an imperfect science.

Bare - 4NT. The problem will be, can you bid 7♠ over 7♥. So I bid 4NT, old fashioned Blackwood. *[Gerry plays that 4NT here is Blackwood, but I think*

that most experts would play that 4NT is two places to play]. I hope we have discussed responses over interference. I play that if the opponents' bid is high enough that if one bid one would be at the 6 level, double shows an even number of controls. In this case they are aces.

Bartusek - 4NT. Takeout showing at least 2 suits. I plan on bidding 6♣ over 5♦ (thus showing spades and clubs) which would allow partner to cuebid 6♥ as a grand slam try on the way to 6♠.

Sacks - 6♣. I do not think that 4NT is Blackwood.

Roeder 6♣. Anything less would evoke 1939 France. You may not be done. If the opponents take a 6♥ dive, you can now bid 6♠. Their save attempt might even give you a chance to get to 7 if partner has the right cards.

[This hand was sent to me by a reader, Alyssa Kennedy. She didn't actually face this auction because the East hand passed, and she was able to bid Blackwood and steer the hand into a cold 7NT. But Alyssa's teammate did bounce the auction to 4♥, which is much tougher. She sent me the problem and asked about the meaning of 4NT. Moral of the story is that "Preempts work" and jump raising preempts works too.]

5

Matchpoints
none vul.

South	West	North	East
	1♦	2♣	pass
2♥	pass	3♦	pass
3NT	double	pass	pass
???			

You, South, hold: ♠932 ♥KQ1084 ♦10642 ♣A

What call do you make?

If you would have bid differently on either of your previous calls, feel free to discuss the bid you would have made. But you were called to pinch hit in the middle of the auction, so what card do you pick out of your bidbox?

[I've saved the worst problem for last. Questions abound. Was 2♥ forcing? Is 10xxx a stopper? Does partner have a diamond stopper since he was missing the ♣A and may think that we need two stoppers to make 3NT? Is LHO sane? Is partner sane? What would partner's redouble mean? Maybe most frustratingly, what possible hands could partner and LHO have to generate this auction? As you read the expert's frustrated answers remember that this is the same panel who exuded such confidence with their answers to the previous problems].

[We'll start with the one panelist who undaunted, likes the problem.]

Roeder - Redouble. Since the extra points in a successful repop are inconsequential in matchpoints, this is a conventional call to express doubt. Boy, do I have doubt! A fascinating problem! A good opponent will not double on solid diamonds and out. Pard's 3♦ bid was based on a good hand lacking four spades. Since you are staring at the club ace, his most likely distribution is 3217. 3NT might make if either pard or RHO has a stiff jack and possibly even if RHO has doubleton jack! You were end-played into both of your previous bids so, I have no problem with your actions.

Bare - Depends on partnership agreements. The pass of 3NT doubled requires partnership discussion. *[The experts who taught me told me that a redouble of 3NT doubled was confirmation that the contract was making and that the opponents had goofed. The more modern treatment is play redouble as showing doubt from both sides (as Roeder used it). Gerry wants to*

know what their partnership agreement about redouble is.]

Bell - 4♣. If the opening leader thinks s/he can beat 3NT, s/he probably can since I likely don't have enough tricks even if I happen to catch some diamond honor from partner. 4♣ provides the most flexibility, as partner can retreat to 4♥ if the 3♦ cuebid was based on support.

Bartusek - Pass. I don't see anything better. It's only one board at matchpoints. 2NT seems right on the second round since my diamonds rate to be a stopper since RHO did not double 3♦. Obviously I'm worried about solid diamonds with LHO, but he might have KQJ with the heart ace (where partner's diamond ace gives me a second stopper!).

[Now watch the confusion and frustration mount.]

Shuster - Pass. Where can I go? LHO isn't likely to be doubling with solid diamonds, probably more likely KQJxxx of diamonds, the heart ace, and a club stopper. He might be disappointed to find that we have two diamond stoppers and are about to wrap this up on a diamond lead opposite partner's AQx Jx Ax Kxxxxx. *[Would you bid 3♦, not 3♣ with that hand?].*

[My sentiments about this problem are well expressed by the next panelist]

Sacks - Pass. I pull the flightbag out. Then I pull the green card out. After all it is only matchpoints. Would not have bid 3NT on prior round. I prefer 3♥. What could partner have for his 3♦ bid? It's hard to figure out what hands the opponents or partner could have.

Kantar - Pass. What is 3♦? A strong heart raise? Asking for a diamond stopper? Natural? I must have thought it was asking for a diamond stopper, but that is unlikely since partner doesn't have the ♣A. Yet if partner has hearts, why didn't he bid 4♥? Why are you doing this to me, John? I don't have clue as to what to

do. I know passing is wrong, but I have to get on with my life.

[Sometimes bridge hands remind me of songs. This hand reminds me of the Stealers Wheel song "Stuck in the Middle"]

*Trying to make some sense of it all,
But I can see that it makes no sense at all,
Is it cool to go to sleep on the floor,
'Cause I don't think that I can take anymore?
Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right,
Here I am, stuck in the middle with you.]*

[Eddie laughed when I sent him this song expressing my own frustration with the problem. This problem was sent to me by a reader, Ed Barad. 3♦ might be a stopper ask or a strong heart raise, but I couldn't figure out any layout that leaves everyone bidding sanely. Ed told me that the actual 3♦ bidder had ♠AKx ♥Ax ♦xxx ♣QJxxx. That's not my idea of a 3♦ bid, but nothing else is easy with that hand either. I'd bid 3♥; maybe I'll give the panel that sometime. Some of the problems used in this problem set came from readers. If you want an opinion on your problem, send it to me at johndjones44 at yahoo. Happy New Year!]