

Bridge News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WWII Remembered!

by Mike Marcucci



Remember back in school? Certain subjects were fun, some were dreaded, some were a waste of time, others tolerable but not exactly fun. How was "History" regarded as opposed to math & science for you? Different for all of us, I'm sure. One surprising thing I've learned over the years is that some schools actually graduate folks without many of these subjects under their belts & expect them to be valuable resources in the working world. Hope and pray that your child attends schools that believe in a well rounded education rather than those that let the children "skate" through. Talking to the choir here, because I have also heard the labors that bridge parents go through to ensure a good education for their children. Many have grey hairs from that process!

Looking at things from a history standpoint, an alarming trend can be observed in the LA bridge scene. Isolationism. Just like in the years leading up to WWII when the country was polarized as to whether to get involved in this overseas war. After the carnage observed in WWI, the nation retreated into 2 decades of isolationist policy. None of our business. Let them take care of themselves. What do we care what happens over there? Let's take care of ourselves. Etc. Our leadership could not budge the nation to get involved until Pearl Harbor settled that issue. How different would the world be if the US had not participated? Closer to home, what if a majority of our Units in the District believed in isolationism?

Over the last few years, we have lost several SCBN "Reporters" from our Units. First it was Downey. Who knows what is happening in Downey these days? Then we lost Pasadena, followed by _____

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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!

As I mentioned last month, 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.

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.

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PRESIDENT continued from page 1

Glendale, and lastly the South Bay. All for different reasons, but the important point is that the Units have not selected new Reporters to spread the news and publicize their Unit activities with the other eight in our District. That is a real shame. The Unit column used to be the ONLY way to get the news out before the internet. There is now e-mail and, sometimes, web sites to use, which can complement the traditional written word. They are a real improvement because the news is up-to-date, but can still lay there unread by unaware readers or folks that shun those methods. As tools for broadcasting the dates and existence of special games, normal games, personal news, humor, latest member achievements, sectional and regional flyers, rule changes, notices of event changes, new convention explanations, book reviews, national results, MP race results, welcoming new members, rank advances, player congratulations, and countless other events in our lives, those means of communication are vital to keeping in touch with our neighbors and keeping your personal calendar correct. The Unit columns also used to have a strong personal touch before being simplified to mainly game results. Everything you wanted to know about your fellow Unit players were in those columns. I've talked before about a bridge "family" atmosphere rather than impersonal competition. There is so little time to socialize at a normal game, the column used to be the way we discovered that "Ann went to Italy last month & did the Amalfi trail by bicycle". Wow. That would probably never come up as you were preparing to play hand 14.

Those Units without Reporters are isolating themselves from their neighbors across LA. Isn't that exactly the opposite of what would promote bridge across the area? We want to be better friends & friends talk to each other and share news & experiences. That was and is the Unit Reporter's main function and a critical part of a Unit's objectives. Often underappreciated, I hope folks can realize that the Unit Reporter fulfills one of the most important functions on the whole Board. Their enthusiasm for the game and all the Unit members shows in their writings. They are the cheerleaders for their members, whether there are 80 or 1100.

Steve Mager, from South Bay, just "retired" a month or so ago. He probably had 20 years of Unit reporting under his belt & carried that load with humor and an obvious love for the game. I don't have an exact count, but he most likely gets the award for

longest running service. Roy Wilson, from Pasadena, is probably 2nd with 10 years of "reporter" service. These players and all our present Reporters are the ones creating bridge "families" in your area. Wouldn't newer players be more likely to enjoy joining a nearby "family" rather than a large organization based in Mississippi that only knows them by player number? That Unit column is the first step in creating a homey local spirit and also inviting other Units to participate with you. Guess what your chances are of increased participation from other Units when you do not have that column?

There used to be 21 Units in LA when bridge was first organized. They had 10-12 meetings a year to consolidate their ideas for promoting bridge. I admire those early organizers, like Cecil Cook, for documenting their agreements and trying to get everyone on the same page. One of their biggest problems was coordinating the dates of Unit Games and Sectionals to minimize conflicts for their players. Try to imagine those meetings! 19 Sectionals and 190 Unit Games as late as 1973 – just in LA! Trying to arrange all those games without arguments must have been nightmarish at times. The District paper and the Unit columns documented all those agreements, with the local columns amplifying what extra info a Unit member needed. It was like someone was talking to the reader personally. We should not lose that personal touch if we want to keep our family together, but those Units without Reporters have done just that.

The scheduling isn't as hard these days – the problem is participation. If we are to learn any lessons from TV (and there aren't many good ones), the name of the game is promotion, promotion, promotion. These days, it is hard to see any content on the tube in between all those commercials. But those are what pay the bills by influencing the viewer and making them think that's the way the world is. Hope you can resist those messages, my friends, but the lesson is to advertise your product in any way you can and as many times as you can! I implore all the Units to start up bridge promotion activities in your area if there are a lack of them now. Those new players are out there somewhere. Are you talking to them??

A Unit column will help keep your bridge family together and your promotion activities (did someone mention shopping mall to me) will bring in new members to that family. I ask all Unit Boards to ask themselves "Are we doing all we can?"

In the meantime, there's that pesky Riverside tournament out there at the Convention Center that is calling softly. Do you hear the music?

Stay healthy, my friends.

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

Congratulations to Anten and Gross

Ellen Anten and Steve Gross won the Super Senior Pairs in Hawaii. I have earned many a bad board playing against this pair through the years. I am especially pleased for Ellen Anten, who is currently serving the ACBL Ed Foundation and has, in the past, worked hard to improve and support D23's regionals. A picture of the smiling Anten/Gross is on page 20 of the January Bridge Bulletin.

Final thoughts on the Hawaii board meeting

The board passed a motion (item 183-53) with a new regime for disciplining fellow board members. I voted against this motion. I have strongly opposed – and frankly don't understand – the large amount of time and energy the board spends judging the behavior of other board members. Rather, I have urged the board to focus on critical business issues confronting our organization. Furthermore, the motion will allow for a wide-range of board behaviors to trigger internal hearings which will return us to prior days of politics and popularity contests.

The board also voted to expand the GNT flights B and C qualifying pool (item 183-19). Traditionally, one team from each district qualifies for the national event. This motion, which I opposed, allows for more than one national qualifier if the district finals are sufficiently well-attended. I was not strongly opposed to this motion, but it does change the nature of the event, and I fear it will mean additional micro-managing of the GNT rules.

Lastly, the board raised NABC card fees starting at the summer 2019 nationals (item 183-42). I opposed this motion on the basis that it should first have gone through the finance committee, and it should have been shared with the board prior to our meeting. The board does its worst work when we rush through hastily prepared motions. On the substance of the motion, several board members have advocated card fees and other pricing decisions be driven by an overall plan. We favor the principle that each facet of

the business (clubs, tournaments...) should pay for itself.

<http://acblidistrict23.org/PDFs/DD/Board-Doc-Access.pdf>

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Southern California Bridge News
 Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.
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 Phone: 626-281-2179
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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"

Here's another rare "never" for you: **Never** bail out on the auction. If you decide to open ... or respond ... light, NEVER change your mind and pass when partner starts making strong, forcing bids. How often have you seen something like this: (partner) 1♥ – (you) 1♠; (partner) PASS!!! You are sitting there with the Queen Mary, but aren't sure of the best strain yet, so you temporized with 1♠ rather than jumping about, possibly into a non-existent suit. Arrrrrrgh! Partner opened a ragged 11 count with a decent heart suit, is 2=5=3=2, and doesn't like a 1NT rebid for fear of playing it with maybe 17 HCP between the two hands. Once you decide to open ... just dig in and make discouraging bids ... but don't hang partner out to dry. (Unless you are looking for a new partner, of course.)

85TH ANNUAL REGIONAL LOS ANGELES SUMMER

JULY 1-7, 2019

*D23 Youth Day on
Saturday, July 6!
Players 28 and under
PLAY FREE ALL DAY!*

TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

**DAYLIGHT SCHEDULE! 299ER GAMES EVERY DAY!
PILE UP YOUR GOLD POINTS IN OUR GOLD RUSH PAIRS!
STAR SPEAKERS EVERY DAY! SATURDAY SPECIAL SHOW!**

MONDAY JULY 1ST.

**** Free 2-hour Bridge Workshop
10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Followed by Lunch**

**Marjorie Michelin
Grand Life Master**

**** Pro Am Game at 1:00 pm
Card fee for Am's: \$14**

**** Please register before June 24.**

**Geri Carlson
gsoffa@aol.com
310-377-0316**

NEED A PARTNER?

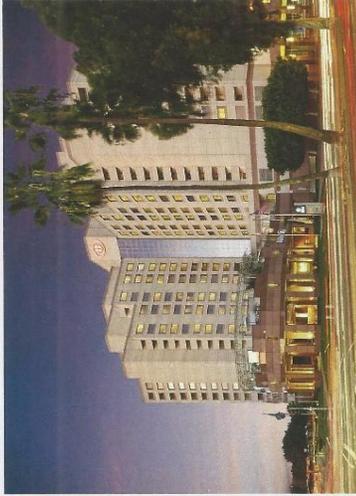
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District 23 Director: Kevin Lane
District 23 President: Mike Marcucci**



HILTON LONG BEACH 701 West Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA

**Room Rate: \$144 (Free Wifi) Please Refer to ALACBU
Reservation must be made by Monday, June 10.**

800-445-8667 or 562-983-3400

Card Fees: \$14 for ACBL Members

\$18 for expired ACBL Members.

**Notice: Non-members will be required to either
join ACBL on an annual basis or on a new
temporary one month membership for \$7.99.**

Self Parking: \$10

Lunch: \$5 for Sunday Lunch

Sanction Number: R1907033

Background Photo Credit: Long Beach Convention & Visitor's Bureau



Monday, July 1, 2019

299er Free Workshop/Lunch (Reserv. Rqd.).....
 Pro-Am Pairs (Reserv. Rqd.).....
 Aft Side Game Series (1 of 6).....
 Stratified Charity Pairs.....
 Starburst KO (1 of 4).....

Tuesday, July 2, 2019

AM Side Game Series (1 of 5).....
 299er Pairs (Single Session).....
 Betsy Ross KO (1 & 2 of 4).....
 Starburst KO (2 & 3 of 4).....
 Bernie Mateer Open ABC Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 GOLD RUSH Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Guest Lecture.....
 Aft Side Game Series (2 of 6).....
 Stratified Swiss Teams (1 Session).....
 Starburst KO (4 of 4).....
 PM Side Game Series (1 of 5).....

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

AM Side Game Series (2 of 5).....
 299er Pairs (Single Session).....
 Firecracker KO (1 & 2 of 4).....
 Betsy Ross KO (3 & 4 of 4).....
 Open ABC Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Mark Schreiber GOLD RUSH Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Guest Lecture.....
 Aft Side Game Series (3 of 6).....
 Stratified Swiss Teams (1 Session).....
 PM Side Game Series (2 of 5).....

Thursday, July 4, 2019

AM Side Game Series (3 of 5).....
 299er Pairs (Single Session).....
 Bracketed Flight A/B/C Swiss Teams (7x7).....
 Firecracker KO (3 & 4 of 4).....
 Open ABC Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Pat Banks GOLD RUSH Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Guest Lecture.....
 Aft Side Game Series (4 of 6).....
 PM Side Game Series (3 of 5).....

Friday, July 5, 2019

AM Side Game Series (4 of 5).....
 Wait Otto 299er Pairs (Single Session).....
 0-99er Pairs (1 Session).....
 Liberty Bell KO (1 & 2 of 4).....
 Cecil Cook Open ABC Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 GOLD RUSH Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Guest Lecture.....
 Aft Side Game Series (5 of 6).....
 Stratified Swiss Teams (1 Session).....
 PM Side Game Series (4 of 5).....

Saturday, July 6, 2019

AM Side Game Series (5 of 5).....
 299er Pairs (Single Session).....
 Queen Mary Compact KO (1 & 2 of 4).....
 Liberty Bell KO (3 & 4 of 4).....
 Open ABC Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 D23 Youth Day

Saturday, July 6, 2019

GOLD RUSH Pairs (2 Sessions).....
 Aft Side Game Series (6 of 6).....
 Queen Mary Compact KO (3 & 4 of 4).....
 Stratified Swiss Teams (Single Session).....
 Youth Reception.....
 PM Side Game Series (5 of 5).....

Sunday, July 7, 2019

Ft Henry Stratified Fast Pairs (2 sessions).....
 Flight A/X/Y Swiss Teams (7 x 7 Boards).....
 U562 Player of the Year - Nancy Heck
 Bracketed B Swiss Teams (7 x 7).....

Event Colors:

299ers: Orange Teams: Green Pairs: Blue
 299er Games Every AM Compact KO on Sat
 Side Games Every Day Swiss Teams Every PM
 Open Pairs Every Day (4 x 6 Boards)
 Gold Rush Pairs Sunday Swiss Teams
 Tu - Sa Done by 6 PM
 Stratified Pairs: 0 - 750 / 750 - 3000 / 3000+
 Open ABC Pairs: 0 - 2500 / 2500 - 5000 / 5000+
 GOLD RUSH Pairs: 0 - 100 / 100 - 300 / 300 - 750
 A/X/Y Swiss Teams: 0 - 3000 / 3000 - 5000 / 5000+
 Bracketed B Swiss Teams: 0 - 2500
 8 Teams/Bracket: Top 3/Bracket Win Gold

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

How to Ask About the Auction

If that sounds unfamiliar to you, you are entitled to an explanation either at your turn to bid, or after the auction is complete (if you are on lead) or after your partner has made her lead face down (if you are not on lead). There is exactly one proper way to do this and it does not involve focusing on or calling special attention to any particular bid in the auction. "Please explain the auction."

Maybe I'm just sensitive because I like to use cue bids in competitive auctions to show a wide range of hands and also when I want partner to bid more and never PASS. It seems this disturbs certain opponents who aggressively interrogate my partner with "What does that bid mean?" I have a couple of problems with this approach.

First, as I told a very nice lady at a Regional a few years ago, "It was a long and complicated auction in which every suit was bid at least once. You asked about one bid and one bid only, 4♣. You had PASSEd several times previously and continued to PASS until the auction was concluded. Your partner, on lead, led a Club. You held the AK of Clubs and no other honors. But I'm sure all of that was just coincidence and you didn't intend anything by your question.' And in fact, I am pretty sure that, other than the fact that she could not believe I was bidding a suit that she held so strongly, nothing was intended by her question.

The second problem I have with the question, "What does that bid mean?" is that it sounds aggressive and challenging. I have no obligation to tell you what my partner's bid means. I am obliged to tell you what our agreement is, including any information I have gleaned from prior or prior similar usage. But really, I have no way to know what he means today and I am not required nor even allowed to guess. I know that many times my partners will be confused by my cue bid. And I know that whatever else they do, they won't PASS. So it irks me a little to know that they are going to face an aggressive "What does that bid mean?" and be forced to admit with embarrassment that they don't really know. Very few bids carry the absolute certainty of being forcing in a competitive auction and perhaps I overuse the cue bid when I am not certain how partner will interpret my other choices.

So if you don't know what my bid means, do me a favor. Ask my partner, "Could you please explain the auction?" She will give a full and complete explanation of our agreements as she understands them. And if she gets them wrong, I will give a correction before the opening lead is faced.

Thank you.

District 23 Rank Changes December 2018

Junior Master

Irma L. Bernard
Tim Deegan
Bruce F. Steckel
Cheryl Vandergraff
Glenda Zelichov

Club Master

Dona A. Clark
Jill E. Smith
Chuofu Yu

Sectional Master

Bernice W. Leve
David L. Swartz

Regional Master

Anton Arbisser

NABC Master

Patricia A. Berg
William H. Miles Jr.

Advanced NABC Master

Stan Snyder

Life Master

Shirley F. Knopf

Bronze Life Master

Laura L. Gastelum
Jerome A. Smith

Silver Life Master

Angelika Hederer

Ruby Life Master

Cayce Blanchard

Gold Life Master

Sally Aminoff

Sapphire Life Master

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Around the Units in District 23



Long Beach by Jon Yinger

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

December 21 Unit-rated game honoring Sharon Biederman: Overall results: 1st in A: John and Jo Melis, 2nd Marcie Evans/ Judy Cook, 3rd John Petrie/Mitch Dunitz, 4th Dalia Hernandez/Ralph Beazley, 5th Vivian Kiley/Pat Peters, 6th Robert Bakovic/Peggy Waite, 7th Jackie Hess/Cory Hand. In the B flight overalls Gayle Grubb/Bob Lavery were 4th, Joyce Henderson/Alan Olschwang 5th, Christine Frumen/John Galligher 6th. In the C flight overalls Judy Lorber/Shirley Knopf were 2nd, Rosemary Ford/Ylia Ross 3rd, Karen and Mike Mckittrick 4th. In the NLM game Glynn and Priscilla Sisson were 1st, Julie Osborne/Donna Agnew 2nd, Jim and Tom Keese 3rd. Congratulations to all!

70+% GAMES Dec 16 through Jan 15: In open games: Dec 17 Jo Melis/George Welsh had 70.83%, Dec 21 Kay Tseng/Wayne Rapp had 70%, Dec 23 Nel Kleiner/David Peim had 70.38%, Dec 28 James Nicola/Phil Feldman had 71.06%. Congratulations to all four pairs!

BIG MASTER POINT AWARDS Dec 17 through Jan 15: Dec 17 Jo Melis/George Welsh won 4.31mp for 1st, John Petrie/Phil Schuster 3.23mp for 2nd. Dec 21 Jo and John Melis won 5.81mp for 1st, Marcie Evans/Judy Cook 4.36mp for 2nd, John Petrie/Mitch Dunitz 3.27mp for 3rd. Congratulations to all five pairs!

NEW CLUB MEMBERS: Eric Tai, Tom Felice. Welcome to the club!

STATUS CHANGES: New Sectional Master: Lillian Slater. New Bronze Life Masters:

Susan Bibby, Alan Olschwang. New Ruby Life Master: Joyce Henderson. Congratulations to you all!

GET WELL: Jane Reid

UP-COMING EVENTS AT THE CLUB:

Feb 2 ACBL-wide International Fund Game: Extra points, \$12 card fee

Feb 5 Chinese New Year: Extra points, regular card fees

Feb 17 12:30 Team Game

Feb 20 ACBL-wide charity game: Extra points, \$12 card fee

Feb 24 Unit Game 12:30 Dessert served

NEWS FROM LEISURE WORLD BRIDGE CLUBS Judy Carter-Johnson

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP--Clubhouse #3
December 20. Russell Gray/Fred Reker 1 in A, 1 in B. Joyce Henderson/Howard Smith 2 in A. Betty Jackson/ Diane Sachs 3 in A. Judy Cook/Frances Gross 4 in A, 2 in B, 1 in C. Judy Carter-Johnson/Gene Yaffee 5 in A, 3 in B. Richard Norris/Ron Yaffee 6 in A, 4 in B, 2 in C. Emma Trepinski/Bill Linskey 5 in B. Sharon Beran/Shirley Spink 3 in C. Donna and Jim Shaffer 4 in C.

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP--Clubhouse #3
January 14. Linda and Dick Stein 1 in A. Marilyn McClintock/Diane Schmitz 2 in A. Fern Dunbar/Lavone McQuilkin 3 in A. Ann Croul/Jeanette Estill 4 in A, 1 in B, 1 in C. Judith Jones/Al Appel 5 in A. Eileen Kotecki/Sibyl Smith 6 in A. Frances Gross/Larry Topper 2 in B. Gene and Ron Yaffee 3 in B, 2 in C. Chie Wickham/Alan Olchwang 4 in B, 3 in C. Bobbie Vann/Paul Chen 5 in B.

WELCOME BACK: Joan Tschirki

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— Sharon Beran (562) 308-7838 or email hbsharonb@gmail.com. Saturday—Judith Jones (714) 840-2300—(between 9am and 9pm only!) or her email: mikrojonas@aol.com. Any news for next month's column, please e-mail me at jcj90740@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 January Individual was Clint Lew, with a 60.41% effort. Gino Barbieri, Margie Hall, Susie Emminger, Richard Patterson, and All Lax rounded out the leader board.

The January Unit game was won by Bill Papa – Vic Sartor, with a 58.9% game. A close race! Right behind them we find Amr Elghamry - Joe Viola, Linda Tessier - Clint Lew, Tim and Eileen Finlay, and Karen Olin - Karen McCarthy .

Attendance picked up in January, now that the end-of-year festivities are over and things are back to (what passes for) normal. Three pairs reached the magic 65% mark this month. Bill Papa – Vic Sartor had a monstrous 75.67% game. The others were Don Logsdon – Roger Boyar with 66.5%, and Clint Lew – Lina Tessier just sneaking in with 65% on the nose.

Other winners were, Penny Barbieri, Claudia Cochran, Richard Patterson, David Ochroch, Amr Elgahmy, and Yours Truly.

The Riverside Regional is still in progress as we go to press, but there have already been some notable performances. David Ochroch's team has reached the semifinal match of a KO; Linda Tessier (partnered by Guess Who) took a section top and a 9th place finish in a Gold Rush; and Sofi Kasubhai,

Wendy Wanderman, and Bridget O'Sullivan all finished in the money in a Gold Rush. More next month!

36 players won club-level masterpoints in December. Easily outdistancing the rest was Clint Lew, with 7.59. Next were Linda Tessier, 5.28; Roger Boyar, with 3.93; and Bill Papa and Vic Sartor, both with 3.49.

No official promotions to report this month. However, Linda Tessier's effort in Riverside will push her up to NABC Master status. Nice going, Linda.

For our Hand-of-the-Month, we revisit the "Why Me?" school. The Distribution Demons have been out in force this session; with one round still to go after this one, you've already seen two 7-4-1-1 hands, and a 6-4-3-0 hand (not one of which you declared, since your long suits are always minors). Facing one of the strongest pairs in the room, you find yourself staring at this stellar collection:

♠7 ♥109652 ♦1098742 ♣4.

Partner, the dealer, starts the festivities by opening 1♠. Oh, joy! RHO calls 2♥, which relieves your depression somewhat. Pass, pass, and partner bids ... 3♣, what else? *Now* what do you do? Speaking of rocks and hard places ...

You might take a preference to 3♠ (well, partner *could* be 6-5, and you hope so). You could pass 3♣ and hope she's 6-6. Or you could bid 3♦, and hope partner gets the message that you hate both her suits.

At the table, Your Correspondent tried 3♠, which seemed to excite partner, as she raised herself to 4. Oh-oh. Double (it would have been a stand-up double at rubber bridge), and you go for sticks-and-wheels. (That's 1100, if imagination has failed you briefly.)

If you guessed to bid 3♦ – and partner passed – you might have gotten lucky. Partner was 5=1=2=5, holding ♦Kx. (Diamonds break 3-2.) No one else appears to have done that, though. Two pairs managed to play 3♣ – undoubled! – only going for -200. One opposing pair actually went +140, probably making 3♥ in their 5-2 fit. No one else made anything.

And which board was this? Board 13 ... what else?

Quote for the month: "Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn" (Benjamin Franklin)



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

Unit 556 held its annual meeting on January 15th and elected a new board for 2018. Paula Olivares will continue as president and the board members will be Ruth Baker, Gay Gipson, May Ho, Roy Ladd, Jan Ladd, Beth Morrin and Rand Pinsky. The Unit plans to continue our focus on sponsoring events for our beginning and intermediate players, subsidizing STaC games, and holding our sectional in September.

Unit 556 held the **Holiday Magic Mountain Sectional** on December 29th and December 30th at the Santa Clarita Senior Center at 22900 Market Street in Newhall. We raised \$2574 for the new Senior Center that is currently under construction in Santa Clarita. Thanks to all the players who came out to support this event.

Holiday Sectional Results:

Saturday Morning Open Swiss Pairs:

- 1st Place Ellen Anten – Steve Gross
2nd Place Lucy Zhang – Sophia Chang
3rd Place Mitch Dunitz – John Ramos

Saturday Morning 999er Swiss Pairs

- 1st Place Adam Barron – Kathy Cresto
2nd Place Aimee Deiter – A. Fradkin
3rd Place Arthur Vatz – Sherry Newman

Saturday Afternoon Open Swiss Pairs:

- 1st Place Frank Shih – Joseph Viola
2nd Place Saul Teukolsky – Roselyn Teukolsky
3rd Place Carolyn Cohen – Thomas Lolli

Saturday Afternoon 999er Swiss Pairs

- 1st Place Gay Gipson – Paul Boyd
2nd Place Adam Barron – Kathy Cresto
3rd Place Gail Leroy – Stephen Dorse

Sunday Swiss Teams

- 1st Place Peter Knee, John Jones, William Hall,
Andrew Vinock
2nd Place Gilbert Stinebaugh, Joan Rubin, Susan
Somogyi, Basant Shah
3rd Place Saul Teukolsky, Roselyn Teukolsky,
Rae Murdoch, Jerry Murdoch
4th Place Robert McBroom, Kathy Flynn,
Elaine Moore, Tom Shudic

The results are in for the ACBL-wide Senior Pairs II game held on October 5th 2018. The winners for District 23 were Charles Morrin and David White with 66.25%. Second place was won by Ron Oest and Mira Rowe with 64.44% and coming in fourth was Judy Smith and Tim Sturdavant with 60% game.

Unit Game Results:

Tuesday January 15th in Santa Clarita

	North/South	
1 st	Betty Pavey – Rand Pinsky	64.17%
2 nd	Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd	61.25%
3 rd	Lamonte Johnson – Ted Maki	59.17%

East/West

1 st	Charles Morrin – Beth Morrin	66.67%
2 nd	Elaine Moore – Tom Shudic	57.08%
3 rd	Bert Stock – Margie Pinkers	52.50%

Upcoming STaC Games:

Monday, Mar. 4th at 12:30 in Santa Clarita
Tuesday, Mar. 5th at 6:45 in Santa Clarita
Thursday, Mar. 7th at 10:00 AM in Castaic
Friday, Mar. 8th at 12:30 in Palmdale
Sunday, Mar. 10th at 12:30 in Palmdale

ACBL-wide Senior Pairs game will be held Monday, March 11th at 12:30 PM at the Friendly Bridge Club (Senior Center) in Santa Clarita.

2019 Unit Game and Awards Ceremony will be held Sunday, March 31st at Joshua Tree Bridge Club in Palmdale.

Next Board meeting: Sunday, March 31st in Palmdale



San Fernando Valley by Linda Silvey

February 16: Unit 561 Valentine's Luncheon/Game

Unit 561 will host a Valentine's Luncheon and Game on Saturday, February 16, at the 750 Club, 5700 Rudnick Ave, Woodland Hills. A luncheon (sandwiches, salads, fruit, and desserts) will be served buffet style at 12noon, followed by an Open, Stratified game at 1:00 p.m. The fee is \$12 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.

Unit 561 Holiday Bridge/Dinner Party Report

A highly successful Unit 561 Holiday Bridge and Dinner Party was held on Saturday, December 22, at The 750 Club in Woodland Hills. A bridge game of 25 tables was held in the afternoon and ably directed by Tom Ciacio. This was followed by dinner catered by the Stonefire Grill. Special thanks are due to the Party Committee consisting of Marcia Broderick, Frona DeCovnick, Ilene Feinstein, Nancy Klemens, Rochelle Lotto, Terry Morton, Susan Raphael, Jojo Sarkar, Pat Seal, Jerry Shapiro, Karyn Shatzkin, and Linda Silvey.

Winners in the Open bridge game were: NS – Frank Nordyke – Deedy Nordyke 61.32%, Phyllis Hall – Maria Glasgow 59.06%, Gilbert Stinebaugh – Lisa Royer 56.97%, Terry Morton – William Morton 55.80%, and Carol Bell – Richard Wiggins 55.34%; EW – Ravnesh Amar – Helle Wengrow 60.51%, Janet Wickersham – Joel Schiff 60.05%, Mark Peters – Sin Orensztein 59.69%, Marel Bates – Deborah Levinson 59.33%, and Om Chokriwala – Alyssa Kennedy 58.97%.

Jack Weingarten's 100th Birthday Celebration

On Tuesday, January 8, a celebration for Jack Weingarten's 100th birthday was held at The 750 Club. While Jack's actual 100th birthday was December 25, 2018, the celebration did not occur until this later date. On the evening of January 7, Susan Raphael (who graciously transports the Weingartens to and from bridge) received a call from Carla Weingarten (Jack's wife of 77 years) saying that they were coming to bridge on January 8. Carla also said that they were bringing two special cakes to celebrate Jack's birthday. Marcia Broderick, Unit 561 President, brought in balloons and also presented Jack with a certificate of congratulations which was signed by Bill and Terry Morton on behalf of The 750 Club and Marcia Broderick for Unit 561.

The Weingartens, who were both born in Vienna, Austria, play once or twice a week at The 750 Club and are strong competitors as well as inspirations to everyone who makes their acquaintance. While Club members had hoped to surprise Jack with his 100th birthday party, the Weingartens actually turned the tables and "surprised" the members of The 750 Club with the celebration and the very delicious, gourmet birthday cakes!

Special Congratulations

Special congratulations to Ellen Anten and Steve Gross who achieved NABC championships by winning the "Super Senior Pairs" competition at the recent Fall NABC in Honolulu, HI.

December Top Ten Masterpoints (regular) at The 750 Club were Michael Wiener 9.26, Michael Klemens 8.62, Ray Primus 7.12, Ron Stewart 7.07, Jerry Rose 6.92, Helen Malzer 6.89, Jojo Sarkar 6.39, Mike Louis 6.04, Ronald Malkin 5.85, and Donald Rosen 5.68. The following pairs earned 70% games: Susan Raphael – Shoshana Blumenfeld 71.73%, Mike Klemens - Marty Hurwitz 71.43%, and Mike Wiener – Ron Stewart 71.22%.

February Special Events at The 750 Club

Celebration of Valentine's Day will be held on Thursday, February 14, with drawings for free plays at both the day and night games . . . Drawings for free plays will also take place on Monday, February 18, at both the day and night games in celebration of Presidents' Day . . . Club Championship Week will be held Monday – Friday, February 11-15. Extra black points will be awarded for no additional fees.

Calendar

Monday-Friday, February 11-15, Club Championship Week at The 750 Club.

Thursday, February 14, Valentine's Day - Drawings for free plays at both day and night games at The 750 Club.

Saturday, February 16, Unit 561 Valentine's Luncheon/Game, 12noon, will be at The 750 Club. See details above.

Monday, February 18, Presidents' Day – Drawings for free plays at both day and night games at The 750 Club.

Tuesday, March 19, Braemar Dinner/Bridge Night starting at 6 p.m. For reservations/partnerships, contact nrklemens@aol.com or (818) 609-1071.

Saturday, April 6, Unit 561 Awards Luncheon/Game, 12noon, The 750 Club.



West LA by Robert Shore

It's Just Grand

Grand Life Master is the ACBL's highest rank. In addition to collecting 10,000 points, to attain the rank the player also must win an NABC+ event, a national event with no master point limits (and one whose entries aren't too restricted). At this writing, it's a rank that has been achieved by fewer than 500 members in the history of the ACBL. And one of our Unit's members has just joined those ranks.

Ifti Baqai is now a Grand Life Master. Ifti learned bridge during his college days in Pakistan, but did not get his first duplicate experience until he began graduate school at UCLA. He soon became a familiar face at the Wild Whist and in the 1980s formed his highly successful partnership with Mitch Dunitz, which resulted in a national title when they won the 2001 Grand National Teams Championship Flight. Ifti has partnered with Zia and represented Pakistan in the Bermuda Bowl. He also has partnered with Carol Pincus and Jim Robison. Ifti's time at the table has increased sharply since his retirement about three years ago. Ifti's partners rave about his gentlemanly behavior at the table.

Memories

I'm very glad we were able to present Barbara Nusbaum with a lifetime achievement award at the recent Holiday Party in recognition of her volunteer efforts. Barbara passed away last month, not long after we were able to honor her. I had the privilege of serving alongside Barbara for several years on the Unit Board, from my initial appointment to the Board until her recent retirement. Barbara was always gracious in her expression of her views, and was always willing to share the wisdom she had gained through decades of experience.

Barbara's modesty also enabled me to check an item off my bucket list by delivering a

line I'd always wanted to say. When we invited Barbara to the Holiday Party as our guest in order to receive her award, she was willing to accept the gift of her own attendance gratis. However, in Barbara's last months she needed the help of an attendant to get around, and even though her attendant's presence was necessary for Barbara to attend the ceremony, she still wanted to pay for his ticket. After consulting with the Board, it was my very great pleasure to turn down Barbara's offer, telling her, "I'm sorry, Barbara. Your money's no good here today."

We also lost another long-time veteran of our local tables last month when Shirley Kotler passed away. Shirley was a regular opponent of mine at the Club. Whether her results were good or bad, she was always a delight to face at the table and she will be missed at the Club. Our condolences go out to Barbara's and Shirley's families.

Power Shift

The Unit Board held its January meeting and selected its officers for 2019. Jordan Chodorow is reprising his prior role as President, and your Humble Scribe will serve as Vice President. Lee Hausner will continue as Secretary and Roger Clough will continue to hold the checkbook as our Treasurer. We also welcomed Chris Dowson as the Board's newest member. Brana Hall has stepped down from the Board after many years of devoted service, so there are still two vacancies. If you're interested in contributing to our community, please let a Board member know so we can draft you as soon as possible.

Table Talk

Ifti Baqai showed off the skills this month that led to his ascension to Grand Life Master status. Ifti started the year at the Monterey Regional where he won the Wednesday-Thursday morning Swiss and, with Mike Mikyska, the Thursday Daylight Pairs. Alex Kolesnik also went to Monterey and won the Saturday Bracketed Teams. Closer to home, Pete Knee's victory in the Sunday Swiss at the Santa Clarita Sectional helped him tie as the tournament's top master-point winner.

Around the Clubs

Last month's club champions at Beverly Hills were Rob Perlsweig and Aram Bedros, Phyllis Kantar and Herb Ehrmann, Lou Papp and Chuck Fonarow, Michael Abeles and Karen Schwartz, and Emma and Alex Kolesnik. Hitting 70% last month were John Ramos and Susan Morse-Lebow as well as Brian Rose and Herb Ehrmann.

Moving across the freeway, Barrington's club champions were Pete Benjamin and Pete Knee and Pete Benjamin and Rob Perlsweig. Sheri Rivera and Aram Bedros hit the 70% mark, as did Pete Benjamin and Pete Knee. Congratulations to all on your accomplishments.

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

Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

Panelists are Ifti Baui, Gerry Bare, Mark Bartusek, Ed Davis, Mitch Dunitz, Eddie Kantar, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealy-mouth, Jill Meyers, Rick Roeder, David Sacks.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">1</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs Both Vul</p>	<p>South</p> <p>1♦</p> <p>???</p> <p>You, South, hold: ♠A ♥J7 ♦KQJ82 ♣KQJ97</p>	<p>West</p> <p>2♠</p>	<p>North</p> <p>3♥</p>	<p>East</p> <p>pass</p> <p>pass</p>
<p>What call do you make?</p>				

I'll start with a confession. I've dealt with some problems recently. Most of the columns from the last few months were repeated columns from past years. This is a new column, with new problems.

I'll start with a bid that I don't think is best.

Sacks: 3♠. I don't like it, but this rates to have best chance of getting where we would want to be. I am curious to see what others have to say.

Kantar: 4♥.

Now for those who like 4♣.

Goldsmith: 4♣. *It's too early to commit to hearts; partner doesn't have to have more than five hearts, though with a ratty five-bagger he might have chosen to start with a negative double. Wouldn't you bid 3♥ with ♠Jxx ♥AKxxx ♦x ♣Axxx?*

Roeder: 4♣. With too many possible contracts, best to start bidding out pattern.

Bartusek: 4♣. Seems clear. We could belong in 4♥/5♥/6♥/7♥, 5♣/6♣/7♣, or 5♦/6♦/7♦. How else can we determine the best contract unless I describe my hand? A 4♣ bid strongly suggests a 5-card suit since I could have punted with a 3♠ bid.

Baqai: 4♣. I have an excellent club suit and extra strength so no reason to not bid 4♣. There is plenty of time to see what partner does next.

Bare: 4♣. You have a great hand but first you must find a fit.

Davis: 4♣. If partner bids 4♥ I will pass thinking it likely we have two losers if playing in hearts. Over 4♦ by partner I will bid 4♠ and then 6♣ if partner does not signoff in 5♦. Over 5♣ I will bid 5♠ on the way to probably 6♣ but maybe 7♣. If partner bids 4NT, I will take it as keycard for hearts. The alternative approach of bidding 3♠ over 3♥ will not accomplish anything positive as partner will likely treat 3♠ as asking if he can bid 3NT.

Mealy-mouth: 4♣. Settle on a trump suit first, try for slam later.

Meyers: 4♣. If partner bids 4♦ I will bid 4♥, that should get the picture across.

Dunitz: 4♣. No second choice.

Korbel: 4♣. This hand is just too good for 3NT, and besides - who says our spade stopper will be good enough?

This hand came from a recent District 4 Spot column (similar to this column, with only one problem per month, but many more panelists). The problem was given as:

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

I was a panelist, and was surprised by the 3♠ call. I stated my objection to it in my response. The panel agrees with me that 4♣ is a better bid than 3♠.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">2</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs Both Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
		1♠	dbl	pass
	2♦	pass	2♠	pass
	???			
<p>You, South, hold: ♠J7643 ♥6 ♦KQ1063 ♣J5</p> <p>What call do you make</p>				

Partner makes a takeout double and follows with a cuebid. We have a pretty good hand for having made a minimum advance. How do we show some values? A key to this problem is knowing whether we are playing the Herbert convention or not. The Herbert convention is making the cheapest suit bid (which sometimes means rebidding the same suit advanced the first time. Making the negative Herbert bid shows a maximum of about 3 or 4 HCP. Any other bid shows more. Regardless of whether the partnership uses Herbert or not, bidding NT, jumping, and bypassing your original suit show values and are forcing.

We'll start with a panelist who is rarely without a strong opinion. Here he makes the good point that he didn't advance 1NT the first time and bidding NT now is different.

Mealy-mouth: 3NT. Extras, with a source of tricks and a stopper. As I didn't bid a natural constructive 1NT in reply to his takeout double initially, partner should envision this kind of hand, not a balanced 7-10 HCP.

Several panelists like 2NT.

Baqai: 2NT. I have to make a bid that shows values and as I am at the very high end of my previous 2♦ bid, the most reasonable choice is 2NT. My spade stopper is slow so 3NT would overstate the values while 3♦ wouldn't show much.

Bartusek: 2NT. I need to show some signs of life here instead of a weak-sounding 3♦ call (which partner might pass). 2NT also allows partner the maximum room to describe his hand.

Meyers: 2NT. At least it shows values and is probably forcing. Let's see where partner is going.

Dunitz: 2NT. I'm too good to bid 3♦, so I'll sniff at the 9 trick game.

Korbel: 2NT. If partner is coming in diamonds, we probably have a slam, but otherwise, I'd like to reassure him about my spade stopper. I assume this is forcing - or at least, I've never seen anyone pass 2NT in an auction like this.

Bare: 3♠. Good hand, but no good bid to show it.

Kantar: 3♦.

Goldsmith: 3♦. This is why we play Herbert negatives here. 3♣ is 0-4 or so; that allows all other bids to be game forcing. This will likely allow me to bid a delayed 3NT, emphasizing diamonds and showing doubt about strain. Without this convention, we have no way to search for strain intelligently.

Last word goes to the panelist who gave me the problem.

Davis: 3♦. I think this is clear if playing the Herbert convention. The Herbert convention a bid of the cheapest suit over partner's bid as an artificial negative bid showing (in this case) fewer than 5 HCP and letting partner know you may pass his next bid. Any bid other than the cheapest suit bid is natural and forcing to game (although we can stop at four of our minor if we have no stopper and no singleton in their suit). If not playing Herbert, I think 4♦ would be best with 3♠ as a second choice.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs None Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	???			1♥
	You, South, hold: ♠KQ108 ♥A108 ♦K1097 ♣K4			
	What call do you make?			

Our initial action could be any of: pass, double, 1♠ or 1NT. What do the panelists like?

Sacks: No answer due to technical difficulties. (My email made the auction look different).

Bare: Dbl. Seems obvious, can show club stopper if partner is interested.

Mealy-mouth: 1♠. A one-level overcall in a good four-card suit will do nicely. In the usual methods, this would be a “book” 1NT overcall, and I’d have made one in the 20th century, before about 50% to 60% of duplicate bridge players (and Bridge World Standard) switched to “front of card.” However, in real life I would never make a natural 1NT overcall, as I refuse to heed the mannerisms that every partner with whom I’ve played in the 21st century has tipped off by tempo and other mannerisms whether he intends his advances as largely natural (i.e. 2♥ Stayman and two of any other suit natural and discouraging) or as “front of card,” invariably contrary to our prior partnership agreement (no matter which) and invariably disregarded by me disastrously. My old partner Marshall was noted for saying he’d rather make the right call than the winning call; I’d rather make the honorable call than the winning call.

Davis: 1NT. I’d double without the ten of hearts so double is a close second choice.

Baqai: 1NT. This is a classic hand where 4 cards in the unbid major would suggest a double while a balanced hand with intermediate spots favor a 1NT overcall. With these types of hands, I lean towards 1NT but replace one of my heart cards with a club and it becomes a clearer double.

Kantar: 1NT.

Bartusek: 1NT. A reasonable description of the hand (partner will come down with the heart jack, right?). I dislike a double due to the doubleton club (since partners often over-compete when you least desire it). Being non-vul minimizes the risk of a large penalty. I might be able to back into a spade fit later in the auction.

Dunitz: 1NT. I’d like to have a second heart stopper, but if I double and partner bids 2♣, I will not be thrilled. 1♠ will work out if it is a part score hand, but if partner cues, I won’t know what to do.

Goldsmith: 1NT. We can recover spades after starting with 1NT, but if I start with a takeout double, bidding notrump later will overstate the strength of my hand.

Korbel: 1NT. Is this a trick?

There’s no trick, but you’ll need seven tricks to make 1NT. Partner has a poor hand on the actual hand and you won’t get close to seven tricks! This was on online hand reported to me by my friends Tom Reynolds and Lance Kerr. They lost an online match to a team of Polish experts when their teammate Dave Pelka elected to try 1NT on this deal. He got doubled and went for a number.

We have two panelists who found lovely, beautiful seductive tens to influence their decision. Which Ten is most seductive? (No, it’s not Bo Derek, that was just a movie).

Meyers: 1NT. I have the lovely ten of hearts and not a great other bid available.

Roeder: 1♠. Seduced by the 10 of spades. We likely need a 2nd heart stopper for No Trump to be best.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">4</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs None Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	???	1♥	3♠	pass
	You, South, hold: ♠AK5 ♥K6 ♦94 ♣KQJ1074			
	What call do you make?			

This problem comes from a knockout match in the recent Monterey regional. My frequent partner Claudia Valerie Gamio held the hand for our team. Val did well on this hand, but the opponents, lead by 2018 Mckinney Award winner Joe Grue won the match. Congratulations to Joe, who is not only a great player, but a real gentleman at the table.

I think pass is best.

Bartusek: Pass. 3♠ rates to be the limit opposite a typical hand like ♠QJ9xxxx ♥x ♦Q10xx ♣x (or ♠QJ9xxxx ♥xx ♦J10xx ♣void). Despite holding 10 trumps combined, one needs to downgrade the hand due to the likely wasted heart king. Besides, it's only a non-vul game. I believe our abundance of HCPs has a good chance of stopping LHO from balancing. There are no mandatory reopening doubles with shortness of a high level 3♠ call.

Mealymouth: Pass. Should go down only one after a heart lead when partner has ♠QJ10xxxx ♥10xx ♦Qx ♣x. West may have to pass holding ♠xx ♥AQxxxx ♦Kxx ♣Ax, so I won't bother bidding 4♠ as an advance sacrifice.

Baqai: Pass. There are three potential choices: Pass, 3NT or 4♠. There are likely to be 4 quick losers in 4♠ while 3NT offers possibilities and risk of diamonds being wide open. Given the vulnerability, I vote for a pass but change the vulnerability and I'll change my vote to 4♠.

Bare: 4♠. This looks like a good hand but lacks aces.

Davis: 4♠. I probably won't make 4♠ but I expect that the opponents can make a lot of diamonds or hearts

and I am hoping bidding 4♠ buys the contract. A 4♣ bid would let opener rebid four of a red suit and reduce our chances of being allowed to play 4♠.

Kantar: 4♠.

Meyers: 4♠. I don't love it but I have only ♥Kx and I can't count nine tricks in NT

Sacks: 4♠. Probably not making, but they are probably making five or six of a red suit.

Dunitz: 4♠.

Korbel: 4♠. I won't try 3NT here, and I won't double the opponents at the 5 level.

Roeder: 3NT. Time to dig in the tool box and pull out a semi -psychic. The opponents may easily be able to take 11+ tricks in a red suit. I think this has a better chance to buy the hand than an unimaginative 4♠ call.

Goldsmith: 3NT. It might make. It might go down one fewer than 3♠. Or West might find East's entry and we go down a zillion. It's worth a shot. And if partner has ♠QJ10xxxx ♥x ♦Kx ♣xxx, and both red aces are off, maybe I can go down 9 and win 1 vs. 480. "How did they make only 5?"

One hand means little, but the last two panelists duplicated Valerie's winning 3NT bid. Val caught ♠QJT9xx ♥xx ♦ATxx ♣x. She got an opening lead of a spade and knocked the ♣A. When the opening leader shifted to a diamond (still trying to find a way to get his partner in). Val made 490, scoring 6 spades, 5 clubs and the ♦A.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">5</h1> <p>Matchpoints E-W Vul.</p>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1♦	pass	2♦*	2♠
	4♠**	pass	???	

* Inverted, 10+ HCP with 4+D, no 4 card major
 ** Splinter

You, South, hold: ♠K73 ♥AJ ♦AK952 ♣862

What call do you make?

Kantar: 5♦.

Dunitz: 5♥. I have a monster hand. Unfortunately, there is no way to get to 7. The third round club loser may be a problem (there may be a pitch on hearts if partner holds ♥KQx or ♥KQxx). I'm bidding 5♥ and passing the buck.

Bare: 5♥. No problem forcing to slam.

Bartusek: 5♥. Partner will work out that I have the ♥A and great trumps. The alternative 4NT call may leave us strapped for good continuations when partner has a spade void. I have difficulty making up hands for partner that don't include either a spade void or the ♣A.

Davis: 5♥. Partner might have bid 3♠ to try to reach 3NT with something like ♠x ♥KQx ♦QJxxxx ♣AKx so there is a reasonable chance partner is void in spades. But void or not, I have enough to force to slam and I want to give partner the opportunity to make a grand slam force. I will not correct 6♦ to 6NT (right to correct if partner has ♠x ♥KQxx ♦QJxxxx ♣AK but not if partner has ♠x ♥KQx ♦QJxxxx ♣AKx).

Mealy mouth: 5♥. I hate ambiguous splinters, as there's a huge difference between a singleton and a void. I expect partner to try to sign off with 6♦ if he has a singleton, in which case I'll convert to a matchpoint-greedy 6NT, or to cue-bid 6♣ with a spade void and the club ace, in which case I'll put him in 7♦.

Meyers: 6♦.

Korbel: 4NT. Partner must have a pretty decent hand to risk going past 3NT when he could have just cuebid 3♣ to similar effect. I think I'll have play for slam and it might be cold. May as well check on keycards.

Goldsmith: 6♦. Give partner ♠x ♥KQx ♦QJxxxx ♣AKx and slam's cold. Give him ♠x ♥KQ ♦QJxxxx ♣AKxx. And we have no play. He can have either of those hands. If 5♣ were Last Train, I'd pick it, but it's not. If 4NT were a general slam try, I'd pick it, but it's not. So I have to guess. Since I know 3NT is playable from my side and will score more than 5♦, I pretty much have to bid a slam. I sure don't want to cue bid 5♥ if partner has ♠A ♥Q10xx ♦QJ10xxx ♣Ax. If he has ♠void ♥KQx ♦QJ10xxx ♣AKxx (and he might well), that's just too bad.

You mentioned Last Train. What does Ricky think of that?

Roeder: 4NT. Partner has made a serious slam try, bypassing 3NT in matchpoints, and I have 3 key cards. Rip up the king of spades and I still have an acceptance. A last train 5♣ is for poor souls who sadly live their lives in ambiguity and buck passing.

Yep, Rick knows the hand, It came from the Rancho Mirage regional Fast Pairs and his wimpy partner was me! Worried needlessly about my lack of a club control, I bid a Last Train 5♣ and passed Rick's 5♦ bid. Rick held: ♠void ♥QT82 ♦QJT7 ♣AQJ74. I'm thinking of writing a new book "Confessions of a Wimpy Bidder".

Send me your hands!