

Bridge News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Robert Shore



Getting Excited About Bridge Week

For the first time in three years (and the first time since my election), District 23 will host a regional. Bridge Week, the Summer's Best Regional, will take place from July 4-10. We will use our usual venue, the Long Beach Hilton. We're in the process of retrieving our equipment from storage and figuring out what survived the long wait and what will need to be replaced. And we are very much looking forward to hosting bridge players from all over the continent.

We will, of course, comply with both the ACBL's requirements and those of local law (primarily the City of Long Beach) with respect to virus safety. I am anticipating that, as with many other nearby tournaments, masks will not be required but we will require proof of vaccination. We will probably use some kind of a bracelet system to memorialize that our players have shown proof of vaccination. Please arrive for your first day of the tournament a little early, to allow some extra time to complete this process.

STAC Week

Monday marks the start of the Great Western STAC. I hope you'll make a point of participating. We held our own Royal STAC in March, to the benefit of our clubs. We were greatly assisted in this endeavor by our neighbor districts to the north and south, Districts 21 and 22. I hope our players will reciprocate by participating early and often in the Great Western STAC. It's also a great way to add silver points to your collection.

Grand National Teams

Another grass roots event is coming. For the first time in three years, we will hold our District's Grand National Teams competition in person. As

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Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge

Face to Face or Virtual or a combination of the two? This is the dilemma facing the organization. One thing appears true to me; given that there is so much validity to arguments on both sides, there is no easy answer and that this issue will continue to vex the board and management. ACBL reacted with remarkable swiftness in spooling up the virtual point issuing on-line bridge experience. The existence of such a product had profound positive effects on players and clubs. But like most solutions, there have been unintended consequences. Now as F2F clubs struggle to reopen, that same vehicle which offered a lifeline at the beginning and through much of the pandemic is now the impediment (as many club owners lament) to their rebuilding of their table counts. Why does it matter as long as people have a place to play F2F if they want and also the ability to play virtually if they so choose? Because in many locales there will be no option for F2F play. Clubs are not opening or are opening and shutting down. Further, historically, new members come from teaching programs done F2F. While there are a few examples of successful on-line teaching programs which are resulting in the recruitment of new players, for the most part, the number of new players recruited has fallen dramatically. So should we eliminate on-line play with the hope that it results in a major surge of players going back to F2F? No! We know that on-line has turned out to be a wonderful way for people to stay connected to the game. The likelihood is that masterpoints awarded on-line might be made less available on-line. This can be done by reducing the number of points awarded in

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usual during recent years, we will hold it at the Long Beach Bridge Club. The winners (and if there's enough participation in lower flights, the second-place teams) will earn the opportunity to represent our District at the Summer NABC, which will be in Providence this year. That's a lovely part of the country, and I highly recommend it.

Upcoming Board Meetings

Our next Board meeting will take place in person. It will occur at Long Beach on July 9, 2022, after the conclusion of the afternoon session. Make your plans now. We'll send an e-mail around about a week in advance asking folks to RSVP so that we know how many people we'll need to feed at the meeting.

Something you want me to know? Contact me at Bob78164@yahoo.com.

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on-line play, reducing or eliminating on-line events which pay pigmented points and reducing points when robots are in play. While these actions might have some impact, I doubt they will amount to dramatic increases in F2F play. So what is the solution if we are ever to turn our ship around, to stop the loss of members (the league lost 10,000 members in 2021) and to start to attract new members to our ranks? I think the emphasis should be on the Teachers. To the extent that most of them will be associated with brick and mortar clubs, the F2F games will thrive. The league has to step up and create bold plans that will excite teachers and then give those teachers lots of assistance in initially attracting and then nurturing new players. As the chair of the Finance Committee, I am working with the BOD and management to try and come up with the type of recruitment tools that exceeds in scope what the league has tried before.

The corporation is in fine financial shape. As of the end of last year, Net Assets were \$9.9mil. The increase in Net Assets for the year was \$2.65mil. This included a COVID relief item from the federal government of \$1.5mil. It also included \$450,000 of non-operating items. Therefore, the actual gain from operations was approximately \$700,000. The budgeted loss for 2022 is \$858,000 which includes depreciation of \$302,000. The Reno NABC loss has yet to be determined but will significantly impact the actual loss for the year if all other items remain as budgeted. We ended the year with approximately 140,000 members. We lost approximately 10,000 members throughout the year. The budget calls for an increase in membership of 4,000 for the year.

Cheating is a major issue with the league. The league acknowledges that on-line bridge is here to stay and that steps have to be taken to improve the experience. A

new initiative nicknamed EDGAR is in the works to create an anti-cheating software application that will identify people who are performing outside of expected norms. Steps are being taken with respect to the administration of expected cheating cases. As we go forward, certain "minor" cases will be dealt with much more rapidly. All cases will be subject to a streamlined administrative process that will move the cases through the system in an expeditious manner. The administrative changes combined with the application of this artificial intelligence will go a long way to eliminate virtually all cheating from the on-line experience.

Tournament staffing at regionals and sectionals was the topic of much informal discussion in Reno. The mentality of the organization has been to overstaff tournaments at the beginning in order to assure an excellent experience by the players. In other words, let's spend the extra money to make sure we have enough manpower on staff to overcome any unknown eventuality at the outset of the event. Then once we see what the attendance is like, if necessary, we can cut back on staffing and send directors home. While this is an admirable position, it is, in the opinion of many, no longer financially sustainable, given the current environment of face to face tournaments where attendance is likely to be well less than half of pre-pandemic numbers. An emphasis will be made to use local directing talent. With respect to staffing at the NABC's we are waiting to see the numbers from Reno. Were they on budget? Or in fact, did they come in at a significantly reduced amount given the difference in budgeted versus actual attendance?

District 22 held its San Diego regional from April 11-17. The tournament was well attended (compared to other post pandemic regionals) and seemed to be enjoyed by all participants. It was held at a very nice Marriott Hotel. I have been talking about the need, in my opinion, to change our culture when it comes to regionals. While the attendance was 55% of pre-pandemic averages, which is the second highest in the country since the return to tournament play, D22 will still lose a small amount of money. This result is anecdotal but illustrates that districts for the most part cannot commit themselves several years out to room levels and food and beverage purchases. We have to rethink the norm and be prepared to play, for example, in community centers with no hotel connections. Hopefully, if we return to what was norm before the pandemic, we can revert to the classic style of regional.

Stay well and be safe!

Trivia Time: Ted Geisel, aka Dr Seuss, estimated that writing "The Cat in the Hat" would take him about a week. He finally finished it a year and a half later.

The Director's Corner by David White

If I did everything right, I wouldn't be playing with
you.

Tactical Bid or Outright Lie



I am willing to bet large sums of money that at least 90% of the bridge players today either took a lesson from Eddie Kantar, read a book by Eddie, or used one his many witticisms. He won two world Championships and thirteen North American titles.

I was only able to interact with Eddie twice, both were memorable.

In 2002, I was just returning to bridge after a 20 year sanity check. In the previous month I had filled in for a player who couldn't tell time and was 45 minutes late. On those six boards we had a 95% game and the partner had the mistaken impression that I knew how to play. So he got us on a good team at the next regional.

The teammates asked how many points we had.

"I've got 3000," said partner.

"I've got 190," I mumbled.

"Good," said a teammate, "we've got 28,000. We're still in bracket 1."

The first three sessions were a blur, but we won them all. After twelve boards of the final were up 15 IMPs. (Bridge is such an easy game).

Sitting for the last half, my RHO is Eddie Kantar. Now I'm nervous, really nervous.

They are Vul, we aren't.

LHO	Partner	Eddie	Me
Pass	2♦	Pass	?

I hold:

♠ 4 3 2 ♥ K 3 2 ♦ 5 4 3 2 ♣ 4 3 2

Maybe I had a couple of 7s or 8s.

Then I remembered a hand in Victor Mollo's column of the Bulletin. I looked at the seriousness of the three other players. Then at the gallery of kibitzers watching Eddie, and the twelve year old in me took over.

"3NT."

Long hesitation and Pass, Pass, Pass

The opening lead was a Heart and dummy came down with:

♠ 6 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ K Q J 8 7 6 ♣ 7 6 5

The heart was ducked around to my King and I conceded "down 8, for minus 400."

Time stops. The room is deathly quiet. I'm waiting for the blood curdling scream for a director. When Eddie turns to his kibitzers and says: "It's been years since anybody pulled that one on me."

A valuable lesson for players: after the session, Eddie asked me what I would have done if they doubled.

"Run to 4 Diamonds."

"No" Eddie said, "run to five Diamonds. Five diamonds makes it look like you were trying for an easier game with a long suit and a couple of stoppers. And, you might not get doubled in five diamonds."

A valuable lesson for directors: that three no trump bid is not illegal. It's not even a psych. As long as it isn't forcing, it is a legitimate effort to set the final contract, it is legal. Like every other sacrifice, some work and some don't.

And the rest of the story: the outcome of that 2002 match. We were up by 15. they could make six NT so we won another 10. In the last eleven boards Eddie and his teammates played some spectacular bridge and beat us by 20.

Second meeting: about fifteen years later, I'm directing a sectional in West LA and Eddie stopped by to say hi to some friends. As he walked past the directors table he pointed at me and said "Three No Trump". What an honor.

Kantar was born in 1932. He learned bridge at 11 and started teaching it at the age of 17.

Kantar started writing about bridge with an article on notrump bidding in the December 1954 issue of *The Bridge World*. He wrote more than 35 bridge

books and was a regular contributor to the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin* (with two monthly columns), *The Bridge World*, and *Bridge Today*. In a survey of bridge writers and players taken in 1994, *Complete Defensive Play* was among the top 20 of all-time favorite bridge books.

Kantar wrote at home in California and lectured on bridge cruises. He also taught in the Los Angeles area as well as lectured several times a year in the U.S. and Canada. When not writing about bridge, Eddie could be found at Venice Beach playing paddle tennis, a sport in which he also garnered several trophies. Eddie was the only person ever to have played in a World Bridge Championship and a World Table Tennis Championship.

Kantar died on April 8, 2022, at the age of 89.

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[*Editor's note:* we have changed the email address for submittals. No one seems to have ownership of the old address, and we've been unable to have the settings changed such that emails are forwarded to the Editor. Such is life.]

District 23 Rank Changes March 2022		
<p>Junior Master Esteban Andryjowicz Jeffrey P. Johnson Peter Kavounas Cathleen R. Togut M. Arlene Wade Cliff R. Warren</p>	<p>Sectional Master James T. Boehnlein Phyllis A. Fuller Robert S. Molina</p> <p>Regional Master Barbara J. Fuller Caryn Mason Michael Vernia</p>	<p>Life Master Ron Birnbaum</p> <p>Bronze Life Master Carole Hamburger</p>
<p>Club Master Premi Thomas Rita B. Wright</p>	<p>Advanced NABC Master Karmen Armoudjian</p>	<p>Silver Life Master Kathy M. Harouche Kathy Rudolph</p> <p>Gold Life Master Carole L. Frank</p>

Bridgemates Offered

Clubs, here's a chance to upgrade to Bridgemate scoring. I have access to bridgemates at a discount from a club that has disbanded. Any club wanting to upgrade to Bridgemate scoring, here's a chance to save some money. If interested, contact Fred Reker: Fredreker326@gmail.com.

Trivia Time:

The 4-3-2-1 point count was first published by Milton C. Work in 1915.

The Chinese invented playing cards in AD 1000.

D23 Point Leaders

by Mike Marcucci

Each year, we not only have Unit Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs winners, but we also have District winners. We also have a top 30 in total Masterpoints that enter our District history each year. Here are those leaders for 2021:

D23 2021 Mini-McKenney leaders (#1 for reference only)

1	Mark Itabashi	2324
2	Mitch Dunitz	1441
45	Ifti Baqai	739
63	Lulu Minter	663
69	Alex Kolesnik	642
121	Ernie Wong	569
126	Finn Kolesnik	562
130	Jordan Chodorow	552
140	Peter Knee	536
198	Subba Ravipudi	449
263	Viktor Anikovich	407
329	Steve Mager	372
345	Joan Rubin	363
370	John Ramos	357
14	Gil Stinebaugh	322
15	Steve Gross	319
16	Billy Cohen	308
17	Bill Schreiber	304
18	Om Chokriwala	289
19	Rae Murbach	284
20	Bob Becker	265
21	Paul Poareo	243
22	Jackie Stultz	230
23	Kiran Kumar	221
24	Rick Turner	215
25	Ted Glaessner	213
26	Kathy Swaine	205
27	Jim Lopes	204
28	Jackie Hess	204
29	Sin Orensztajn	200
30	Jim Perkins	199

D23 2021 Ace of Clubs leaders

1	Mitch Dunitz	673
2	Lulu Minter	601
3	Peter Knee	517
4	Ernie Wong	497
5	Jordan Chodorow	492
6	Steve Mager	370
7	Joan Rubin	331
8	Viktor Anikovich	320
9	Gil Stinebaugh	304
10	Ifti Baqai	298
11	Alex Kolesnik	280
12	Bill Schreiber	277
13	Rae Murbach	269
14	Om Chokriwala	250
15	John Ramos	246
16	Paul Poareo	238
17	Bob Becker	219
18	Rick Turner	215
19	Ted Glaessner	212
20	Jim Lopes	204
21	Jackie Hess	203
22	Kathy Swaine	201
23	Michael Nash	197
24	Rand Pinsky	193
25	Bill Brodek	188
26	Kiran Kumar	188
27	Steve Gross	187
28	Jackie Stultz	186
29	Peter Benjamin	184
30	Adrienne Green	184

D23 Total Lifetime MPs

1	Steve Gross	30796.7
2	Mitch Dunitz	27019.3
3	Ellen Anten	26081.8
4	Jill Meyers	21235.5
5	Steve Mager	19604.8
6	Rebecca Clough	19057.0
7	Roger Clough	17135.7
8	Billy Cohen	16346.3
9	Ed Davis	15488.4
10	Pam Wittes	14057.4
11	Ifti Baqai	13268.6
12	Alex Kolesnik	12769.1
13	Walt Schafer Jr	12085.7
14	John Jones	11958.8
15	Peter Benjamin	11895.3
16	Gil Stinebaugh	11567.3
17	Bruce Horiguchi	11532.5
18	Jordan Chodorow	11502.6
19	Aram Bedros	11372.8
20	John Swanson	11326.4
21	Mike Savage	11307.3
22	Eddie Kantar	10891.9
23	Gene White Jr	10462.7
24	Lulu Minter	10347.9
25	Steve Onderwyzer	10291.0
26	Rhoda Himmell	10068.4
27	David Chechelashvili	9611.0
28	Viktor Anikovich	8965.1
29	Dr Sid Brownstein	8923.4
30	George Wang	8767.4

Legend

- xxxxxx - Grand Life Master
- xxx - National rank
- xxx - District rank

We also have District winners in each point category.
For 2021, they are:

Category	Mini McKenney
> 10000	Mitch Dunitz
7500-10K	Lulu Minter
5000-7500	Peter Knee
3500-5000	Jackie Hess
2500-3500	Ernest Wong
1500-2500	Kiran Kumar
1000-1500	Jacqueline Stultz
500-1000	Joan Oliver
300-500	Bob Becker
200-300	Sofi Kasubhai
100-200	Paul Poareo
50-100	Lynda Gordon
20-50	Yvonne Kroneberger
5-20	Stephen Andersen
0-5	Caryn Mason

Category	Ace of Clubs
> 10000	Mitch Dunitz
7500-10K	Lulu Minter
5000-7500	Peter Knee
3500-5000	Jackie Hess
2500-3500	Ernest Wong
1500-2500	Rick Turner
1000-1500	Jacqueline Stultz
500-1000	Joan Oliver
300-500	Bob Becker
200-300	Sofi Kasubhai
100-200	Paul Poareo
50-100	Lynda Gordon
20-50	Yvonne Kroneberger
5-20	Stephen Andersen
0-5	Caryn Mason



DISTRICT 23

Grand National Teams Finals

June 11th and 12th 2022

Long Beach Bridge Center

sanction #220633

Swiss Qualifying

Saturday, June 11 @ 10 am
and
Saturday, June 11 @ 3 pm

Knock Out Finals

Sunday, June 12 @ 10 am
and
Sunday, June 12 @ 3 pm

National Finals will be held July 13-July 17 during
Summer Nationals in Providence, Rhode Island

\$17 per team member per session. Teams play
2-4 sessions. If winners do not attend finals, second place finishers
will have the right to attend.

Point Limits and Conventions

Points as of August 6, 2021

Championship: Unlimited, Open + chart

Flight A : 0-6000, Open chart

Flight B : 0-2500, Basic + chart

Flight C : Non-LM < 500, Basic chart

Maximum Masterpoint Awards

May be less, depending on game size

Championship Flight: 48.00 Gold

Flight A : 40.00 Gold

Flight B : 33.50 Gold

Flight C : 20.00, 50% Gold, 50% Red

Event chair

Jeff Grotenhuis • District 23 GNT Coordinator
email: jeffgro@gmail.com • cell: 310-600-4275



Conditions of Contest may be found at:
<http://www.bridgewebs.com/acbl23>



The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy by John Jones

Category: Bridge Authors

And the answer is ...

- \$100 – He wrote Bridge for Dummies.
- \$200 – He wrote Introduction to Defender’s Play.
- \$300 – He wrote Gamesman Bridge.
- \$400 – He wrote Roman Keycard Blackwood: The Final Word.
- \$500 – He wrote Bridge Humor.

Play or Defend? by John Jones

North

♠ J 10
♥ A Q 5 4
♦ 7 6
♣ A 10 9 8 7

West

♠ 6 5 4
♥ K J 9 7
♦ A Q 3 2
♣ Q J

East

♠ 3 2
♥ 10 3 2
♦ 10 9 8 5 4
♣ K 3 2

South

♠ A K Q 9 8 7
♥ 8 6
♦ K J
♣ 6 5 4

Contract = 4♣

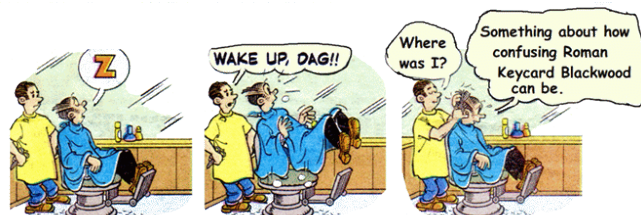
Opening Lead = ♠5

All players can see all the cards. Do you play or defend?

(Solutions to these puzzles are on page 9. No peeking!)



Submitted by John Jones:



April Rebus

Well, can you figure out what this says?



-B D



Solution to “Play or Defend?”

Solution: Choose to play. Win the opening lead in hand and take the heart finesse. Cash the second heart and ruff a heart. Play a spade to the dummy and ruff the fourth heart. Draw the last trump. Play a club to the ace and another club. If East wins then you only have one club loser, but if West wins then West has to lead a diamond from the AQ.

This is another double dummy problem that I have used with permission from Eddie Kantar.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

\$100 – Who was Eddie Kantar?

\$200 – Who was Eddie Kantar?

\$300 – Who was Eddie Kantar?

\$400 – Who was Eddie Kantar?

\$500 – Who was Eddie Kantar?

Solution to “Rebus”

“Eddie Kantar”

Have a good bridge rebus? Send it to johndjones44@yahoo.com

Trivia Time:

Did you know that the traditional deck of playing cards are a strikingly coherent form of a calendar?

There are 52 weeks in the year and there are 52 playing cards in a deck.

There are 13 weeks in each season and there are 13 cards in each suit.

There are 4 seasons in a year and 4 suits in the deck.

There are 12 months in a year so there are 12 court cards. (Those with faces, namely Jack, Queen, King in each suit.)

The red cards represent day, while black cards represent the night.

If you let Jacks = 11, Queens = 12, and Kings = 13, then add up all the sums of $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots$ to 13 = 91.

Multiply this by 4, for the 4 suits, therefore $91 \times 4 = 364$, add 1 that is the Joker and you will arrive at the number 365 being the days in a year.

Is that a mere coincidence or a greater intelligence?

The Spades indicate plowing or working.

The Hearts indicate love thy crops.

The Clubs indicate flourishing and growth.

The Diamonds indicate reaping the wealth.

There is a deeper philosophy than just merely playing cards.

The mathematical perfection is mind-blowing.

Around the Units
in District 23



Long Beach
by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Our unit has resumed its face-to-face unit games as of March this year. Both March and April had 11 tables in the Open and four in the 0-199'er section. Unit games are scheduled the fourth Sunday of each month (except November/December).

Join us for our May game on Sunday, May 22nd, at 12:30 p.m. at the Long Beach Bridge Center.

Steve Ramos and Ed Piken continued their streak with a second consecutive month with a high scoring game. They scored 73.13% in Long Beach Bridge's April 14th Open game with a field of five tables. Congratulations, again!



Steve Ramos, Ed Piken



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

Individual: May 7, 10:00, Ontario
June 4, 10:00, Ontario

STaC Games: May 3, 6, and 7

Club Championships: May 10 and 13, La Fetra

Unit Game: Saturday May 21, 11:00 a.m., Glendora

Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

In the April Individual – it was a three way tie! Peter Kavounas, Susie Emminger, and Arthur Wallace all posted a 61.9% game, not leaving much for the rest of us!

With the Individual returning to Ontario for a while, the rec room we had been using has been restored to use, with brand new SQUARE tables! Remember, it is a STaC this month, so the entry fee will be \$2 more than usual. (The same applies to the STaC games at La Fetra.)

In the April Unit game, Fredy and Lulu Mintor took top honors with a 65.84% effort. Bill Papa – Vic Sartor were second, Larry Shannon – Harrish Singh third, and Eddie Rose - Ann Gillespie fourth. Perhaps because we were presenting the Ace of Clubs and Mini-McKenney awards, we got to run our first Mitchell movement in over two years. Now if we can only keep it up ...

The Ace of Clubs and Mini-McKenney races gave rise to some interesting statistics. Well, sort of interesting. Of course the statistics got skewed a bit because there was little or no F2F play in 2020-2021. Here's some trivia gleaned from the races:

The narrowest win (Ace of Clubs) was 0.05 points, and (Mini-McKenney) was 0.77 points.

The lowest winning totals were 0.84 (Ace) and 1.61 (MM).

The largest totals were 161.79 (Ace) and 190.86 (MM). That Ace of Clubs winner was in the 200-300 point bracket, by the way.

Three of our members took top honors not only in our Unit, but in the District races. See Mike Marcucci's article earlier in this issue.

We have once again signed up for The Longest Day. We will hold a single-session fundraising game on Friday, June 24, 8:45 a.m. (our normal start time). ALL funds received are donated to the Alzheimer's Association. The entry fee for this special game – awarding extra masterpoints – will be \$7. If you can't make the game, but wish to donate, please visit <http://act.alz.org/goto/unit551>.

Two rank advancements this month. Peter Kavounas has taken the first step upwards, to Club Master. Caryn Mason has advanced to Regional Master.

There were so many impressive scores this month I'll have to list more than one. The very top score at La Fetra in March was 72.22%, posted by Vic Sartor – Bill Papa. In that same contest, Caryn Mason – Patrick Finley scored 70.63% to finish *second*. Now there's something you don't see everyday, Chauncy¹. Other impressive scores, all first place finishes of course, were 68.75% (Roger Boyar, Steve Mancini), 67.82% (Mary Ann Wotring – Patrick Finley), 67.46% (Vic Sartor – Bill Papa), and 67.36% (Clint Lew – Linda Tessier). Other winners not quite achieving those lofty heights: Fredy and Lulu Minter, Sofi Kasubhai, Gary Atwell, Hanan Mogharbel, and Yours Truly.

For our first hand-of-the-month, we present a hand which is just plain fun. Well, it was for me, at least. The opponents weren't quite as amused. Sitting South, at favorable vulnerability, with East dealing and passing, you find yourself holding

♠ A ♥ 8652 ♦ K1075432 ♣ Q.

Well, Charles Goren would have frowned, but what the heck, I decided to damn the torpedoes and open 3♦. Pass, pass, 3♠; pass, 4♠. Partner – a forward bidder if there ever was one – now chimed in with 5♦. Pass, pass, 5♠, 6♦! Oh well, perhaps it is time to lie back and think of England, what? Double, and passed out from there.

The opening lead was a spade (imagine that!), and I got a look at dummy:

♠ 2 ♥ A4 ♦ QJ98 ♣ AKJ1096.

Making 6, +1090! Lucky, I guess. In spades, E-W lose one trump, one heart, no diamonds, and three clubs provided we get them before their hearts are established. So there's no good sacrifice for them at these colors. Ah, the power of shape.

For our second entry, here's that not-semi-balanced-hand you've all been waiting for: East deals, opens 3♣, and you, South, have to decide what to do with:

♠ AQ7 ♥ A106 ♦ A73 ♣ Q865.

Oh, yes, we are vulnerable, the opponents are not.

Well, you have enough to double, but your hand really screams "notrump," does it not? So I invoked Hamman's Rule and called 3NT, passed out. The opening lead was a small diamond. Dummy flopped with

♠ J109652 ♥ 43 ♦ Q64 ♣ 97.

Well! It's rather surprising that partner didn't go 4♠, given the known 8-card fit! Hmmmm. "With my shield, or on it!"

Not surprisingly, dummy's ♦Q held the trick, and when I played spades, East had the stiff King! So 9 tricks rolled home.

And how did others fare? The hand was played nine times. At seven tables, the contract was a spade partial, scoring anywhere from +730 (3♠X) to minus 100 (3♠, 1 down). And someone sold out to 3♣, which made for -110.

I guess this hand definitely belongs in the "better lucky than good" category. I must confess that had I held partner's cards I would have gone 4♠. Presumably I was the only one to invoke the Rule. And partner showed a *lot* of faith!

Quote for the month: "Genius is more often found in a cracked pot than in a whole one." (E. B. White)

=====

¹ One of the running gags from "Rocky and Bullwinkle." Surely, you remember! Or did Jay Ward live in vain? And OK, OK, I won't call you Shirley any more.

Downey – Whittier by Liz Burrell

March lumbered along at the Downey Bridge Club without much excitement ... until we reached the 23rd. On that date, we participated in (what we believe to be) the first ever “Royal STaC Game” for Districts 21, 22 and 23. Several of our players earned points (John Petrie/Shankar Reddy, Tim Cole/Joyce Roberts, Bob/Linda Krause, Terry Binns/ID Patel, but I’m not sure exactly what colors. Gold, silver, red and black points were awarded. Fredy and Lulu Minter scored a very nice 71.53% which was in the top 5 or 6 players in all of Districts 21, 22 and 23. Congratulations to all winners and better luck next time to the rest of us.

If one didn’t know better, you would think that some dark, sinister force has been working to eliminate our favorite pastime. First we were completely shut down for over a year due to the unspeakably awful virus. Then we finally reopened for face-to-face play. Despite dismal attendance, we were hanging on by a thread and those of us who persevered welcomed the camaraderie and the challenges we faced at the bridge table each week. Then inflation began to soar and gas prices became absolutely ridiculous. Enough already.

In an effort to encourage our few loyal members who valiantly hung in there with us, and to hopefully spur more “old” members to return, members from other clubs, and basically anyone who knows a spade from a diamond to join us, the Downey Board of Directors has voted to make some changes. First, we reduced our card fees from \$11 each week to the bargain price of \$8, AND we are reinstating our monthly Potluck Lunches on the third Wednesday of the month.

The price reduction started Wednesday, April 6, and the next Potluck was held on April 20. The attendance wasn’t what we had hoped but everyone there seemed to enjoy the food as well as the camaraderie. We will reassess the situation after three months. By that time, we hope to see measurable positive results. Let’s hope brighter days are ahead for all of us. Come visit us at Downey, Wednesday mornings at 11. Stay safe, everyone.



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

The first board meeting for 2022 was held on Thursday, March 31st, and the new officers are: President, Rand Pinsky; Vice President, David Khalieque; Secretary, Beth Morrin; Treasurer, Ruth Baker. We need volunteers for Sunshine, tournament coordinator, and District 22 representatives. Let Rand know if you are interested in any of these positions. Jan Ladd will continue to be our electronic contact person.

We would like to thank Paula Olivares for her service as president for over 10 years. The Virtual Club is doing very well and she will continue to share the position of Virtual Club Manager with Mojo.

A face-to-face Unit Championship was held Tuesday, April 26th at the Joshua Tree Bridge Club in Lancaster. This was the last game for Joshua Tree Bridge Club as they are closing due to increased costs and the decline in players for face-to-face bridge.

Virtual Game Schedule

Monday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Tuesday:	10:15 AM	749er game (cost is \$5)
	6:15 PM	Open game
Wednesday:	10:15 AM	749er game (cost is \$5)
Thursday:	10:15 AM	Open game
Friday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Sunday:	12:15 PM	749er game
	12:30 PM	Open game

Contact our club manager at paula@pacbell.net for reservations. Our games cost \$3 unless it is a special game series.

Winners in Unit 556+ Open MP games:

Mon. Mar. 21			
N/S	Gerard Geremia – Rae Murbach		63.66%
E/W	Diana Borgatti – Carolyn Cohen		62.38%
Tues. Mar. 22			
N/S	Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore		68.65%
E/W	Julie Hanson – Angela Peters		58.73%

Thurs. Mar. 24		
N/S	Ernest Wong – BBO: buildingbg	70.20%
E/W	Roshen Hadulla – Kiran Kumar	63.38%
Fri. Mar. 25		
N/S	Diana Borgatti – Cathryn Martin	62.12%
E/W	Harry Randhawa – Alan Nueman	58.33%
Sun. Mar. 27		
	Kathy Flynn – Bob McBroom	68.75%
Mon. Mar. 28		
N/S	Tomoko Stock – David Khalieque	61.57%
E/W	Sandra Marsh – Robot	62.50%
Tues. Mar. 29		
N/S	Capri Ohara – BBO: mattrev	58.80%
E/W	Carol Ashbacher – Robot	65.28%
Thurs. Mar. 31		
N/S	Ann McClelland – Robot	70.05%
E/W	Kathy Flynn – Ruth Baker	68.09%
Fri. Apr. 1		
N/S	Diana Borgatti – Cathryn Martin	64.44%
E/W	Carolyn Cohen – Bill Brodek	61.11%
Sun. Apr. 3		
N/S	Kathy Flynn – Bob McBroom	68.75%
E/W	Carol Ashbacher – Robot	56.39%
Mon. Apr. 4		
N/S	Kathy Flynn – Bob McBroom	68.75%
E/W	Pat Larin – David White	66.90%
Tues. Apr. 5		
	Lulu Minter – Ernest Wong	66.67%
Thurs. Apr. 7		
N/S	Diana Borgatti – Rae Murbach	59.26%
E/W	Helen Wang – Robot	58.33%
	Lulu Minter – Ernest Wong	58.33%
Fri. Apr. 8		
N/S	Lulu Minter – Ernest Wong	59.44%
E/W	Rae Murbach – Gerard Geremia	60.56%
Sun. Apr. 10		
N/S	Jerome Paul – Margaret Shifley	59.38%
E/W	Rae Murbach – Joseph Viola	64.93%
Mon. Apr. 11		
N/S	Sharon Wolf – Steve Shanker	58.84 %
E/W	Rae Murbach – Gerard Geremia	69.70%
Tues. Apr. 12		
	Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore	63.89%

Thurs. Apr. 14		
N/S	Bob McBroom – Robot	62.35%
E/W	Elliot Nueman – Alan Nueman	65.20%
Fri. Apr. 15		
N/S	Bob McBroom – Bill Brodek	67.90%
E/W	Lulu Minter – Ernest Wong	64.20%
Sun. Apr. 17		
	Amr Elghamry – Gerard Geremia	69.44%

Winners in Unit 556+ Limited MP games:

Tues. Mar. 22		
	Jerome Paul – Margaret Shifley	65.28%
Wed. Mar. 23		
	Jim Campbell – Michael Connell	58.33%
Sun. Mar. 27		
	Caryn Musicer – Glen Musicer	59.72%
Tues. Mar. 29		
	Jerome Paul – Margaret Shifley	60.00%
Wed. Mar. 30		
	Anita Walker – Robot	62.50%
Tues. Apr. 5		
	Maria Marvosh – Robot	63.89%
Wed. Apr. 6		
	Sofi Kasubhai – Robot	57.64%
Sun. Apr. 10		
	Thomas Beggane – Robot	73.61%
Tues. Apr. 12		
	Aggi Oschin – David Khalieque	66.67%
Wed. Apr. 13		
	Hilary Clark – Robot	60.42%
Sun. Apr. 17		
	Steve Mancini – Michael Connell	60.19%

Next Board meeting: TBA, via Zoom.

Pasadena – San Gabriel
by Morris “Mojo” Jones

bridgemojo.com



Sorry, nothing from 559 this month.

Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

Mark Bartusek, Leo Bell, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

A few weeks ago, we lost Eddie Kantar, by far the most iconic Southern California bridge player ever. Until three years ago, Eddie was a regular on this panel. Eddie was one of my favorite bridge authors. Beyond that, Eddie was a legend for his skills in racket sports. I shared with Eddie a love for basketball legend Elgin Baylor. We talked about bridge problems and I occasionally checked Eddie's probability computations on his problems. I will miss him! The problems in this set are all old problems from 2019, the last year that Eddie was answering panel problems. Most of the panelists on this panel were also panelists on some of the problems from 2019. I will quote from their old answers and also from Eddie's answers. When I do quote from old answers I will put (2019) in the response. Panelist answers without a year were answered within the last month.

<h1>1</h1> <p>IMPs Neither Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	1♣	pass	1♥	1♠
	???			
You, South, hold: ♠ J ♥ AJ82 ♦ 863 ♣ AK975				
What call do you make?				

Most problems that I present I try to have at least three plausible choices. This problem only has two: 2♥ and 3♥. Either you make the conservative 2♥ bid or the aggressive 3♥ call. I used the problem because of the underlying story (see below).

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

Jones (moderator in 2019): *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,*

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."

Bell (2019): 2♥. Would anyone really consider anything else? Even in today's aggressive bidding world, this is a minimum opening hand.

Roeder (2019): 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. ☺]

Bartusek (2019): 2♥. Too many losers for 3♥ (losing trick count is seven). Change my ♥J to the ♥Q and my hand would barely qualify for a 3♥ bid.

Jones (moderator in 2019): *I like 3♥, and three of my most regular partners like 2♥. Isn't partnership bridge an easy game?*

Shuster: 3♥. The cool kids like to call me “bonus aware.” That is to say that you get extra points in your score column when you bid and make a game (or slam!) For example, on this deal, by jumping, not only do I zoom straight past 2♠ and deny LHO a cuebid below game, but I also inform partner that I am bullish about our side’s prospects for game.

Bartusek: 2♥/3♥. *(A little wimpy: two choices and you select both of them).* This is a very difficult decision. I bid 3♥ on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; while bidding my slightly preferred 2♥ on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. *(Speaking of Wimpy and Tuesday “I’ll gladly pay you Tuesday*

for a hamburger today!”). It really depends upon how light your partnership opens, and how aggressive you’ve decided to invite and accept. Note that after 2♥ partner will be able to figure out the distribution and the location of my honors if LHO raises spades (especially via 3♠ or 4♠).

Bell: 2♥. Despite the temptation to jam the auction, I’m not terribly concerned that the opponents can outbid us in the master suit. These days, I expect many would jump to 3♥, but for now I’m content to show my minimum raise.

Roeder: 2♥. While 3♥ is not a big overbid, no need to get overly exuberant at white. Pre-support doubles, 3♥ would have been much more attractive. Thank you, Rodwell!

Wittes: 2♥. Almost good enough for a 3♥ bid, but not quite. I will compete to 3♥ if they bid 2♠.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">2</h1> <p>IMPs N-S Vul</p>	South	West	North	East
	???			2♦*
	<p>* Described as weak, but random.</p> <p>You, South, hold: ♠ AJ ♥ AKQ964 ♦ A2 ♣ Q74</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>			

We have an excellent hand. How do we best make progress?

Shuster: Double. I'd like to recommend co-panelist Eddie Kantar's work, "Bridge for Dummies" for people who are unsure what to do with a flexible one-suited hand too strong to overcall. By doubling first, our later heart bid will show more strength.

Bartusek: 3♥. Seems like the classic description of my hand. Second choice is double, although a follow-up heart bid by you won't do justice to your suit (and you'll have difficulty describing your hand). Admittedly 3NT might be the only making game contract opposite some poor hands (but then you'd have to bash 3NT because you won't get cooperation from partner holding one useful honor).

Roeder: Double. No problem yet.

Roeder (2109): Double. No bid by partner can embarrass you. Even if partner bids 4♠, you will not be ashamed to rebid 5♥.

Wittes: Double. I will jump to 4♥ over any minimum response. Over extras, I will cue bid and pursue a slam, possibly even a grand.

Kantar (2109): 3NT. Where there are eight there will be nine. Where there are nine (bidding 4♥) there may not be ten.

Bell: 3NT. The Marshall Miles Memorial bid. Given no worse than 3-2 hearts, I have 8 tricks in my hand. A good partner will have a trick or two.

The incredible thing about Marshall was not just that he consistently found these bids, but that he made them in tempo as if he had no problem at all. I liked the 3NT response in 2019 and still like it.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Matchpoints Neither Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	1♥	2♣	2♠	pass
	3♥	pass	4♦	pass
	???			
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ void ♥ AJ10943 ♦ 1076 ♣ AJ43</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

I miscopied the original problem. The clubs were supposed to be A543, not AJ43. This changes the problem, so I won't quote from the 2019 column on this problem.

Bell: 4♥. Despite 4♦ being a cuebid supporting hearts, partner just needs too many cover cards to consider bidding on. If partner makes another try, I'll certainly cooperate.

Roeder: 5♦. Best move: Feign nausea and leave playing site.

Wittes: 5♦. Surely partner has five diamonds on this auction. If by some chance partner was cue bidding in support of hearts, their next bid will clarify.

Shuster: 5♦. This time we have an uncomfortable auction, but no real alternative to 5♦. Partner might find our lack of any high card points in his suits a disappointment, although Jeff should be used to it by now.

Bartusek: 5♦. Second choice is 5♣. Partner will usually have five diamonds for this call (e.g. 5=1=5=2). I am tempted to cuebid 5♣, but partner will expect a better hand for this. If I had a fourth trump then I'd cuebid 5♣ since the void would likely be more useful.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">4</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs N-S Vul</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; text-align: center;">South</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; text-align: center;">West</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; text-align: center;">North</td> <td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; text-align: center;">East</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">???</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">dbl</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> </tr> </table>	South	West	North	East	???	2♥	dbl	4♥
	South	West	North	East					
	???	2♥	dbl	4♥					
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ KQ532 ♥ 7 ♦ A ♣ AQJ863</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>									

Kantar (2019): 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.

Wittes: 5♥. I'll raise spades, or correct 6♦ to 6♠. If by some chance partner bids 5NT, I'll bid 6♣.

Bell (2019): 5♥. It would seem the alternatives are 5NT (probably two 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.

Bell: 5NT. Pick a suit for slam. If partner bids 6♦, I'll correct to 6♠. I can't see a logical path to bid a grand slam though I have the feeling it will make.

Shuster: 4NT. How to make it clear to partner we are trying for seven? 5NT is giving up, but I'm not sure how easy it will be to follow up after 4NT either. 4NT then 5NT ought to be a grand try, but how will partner know that ♠AJxx ♥Ax ♦KQxx ♣xxx is a coin toss while ♠AJxx ♥Ax ♦xxx ♣Kxxx is easy? At least 4NT-then-5NT ought to work when partner has everything. I predict Eddie and Marshall would finish this auction thusly: 4NT - 5♠; 5NT - 6♣; 6♦ - Pass. Thereby strategically avoiding 7♠ off the heart ace while simultaneously committing a triple infraction of Burn's Law.

Shuster (2019): 5NT. Pick a slam without the ♥A (5♥ would be that.) Not that we'll be bidding seven, but bridge is an imperfect science.

Bartusek: 4NT. Let's give partner a choice of two places to play. We can even figure out that we have a grand...e.g. 4NT-5♦-6♣-6♥.

Bartusek (2019): 4NT. Takeout showing at least two 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♠.

Roeder: 6♣. If partner holds the major aces and the ♣K, he will know what to do.

Roeder (2019): 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 originally 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.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">5</h1> <p>Matchpoints Neither Vul.</p>	South	West	North	East
		1♦	2♣	pass
	2♥	pass	3♦	pass
	3NT	dbl	pass	pass
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠ 932 ♥ KQ1084 ♦ 10642 ♣ A			
	What call do you make?			

Jones (2019) *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 experts' 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.]*

Addressing LHO's sanity is:

Bartusek: Pass/4♦. I take a good hard look at my LHO. If an intelligent, talented person with a knack for the game, then I pass since I think they're making a speculative double expecting to give up one diamond trick and then get back in with the ♥A (with 3NT probably cold opposite something like ♠AKx ♥Jx ♦xx ♣KQJ10xx or ♠AKx ♥Jx ♦J ♣KQJxxxx). Otherwise, I bid 4♦ to request that partner choose between 4♥ and 5♣. Honor doubleton of hearts will often make 4♥ a playable contract. The fear of me running from 3NT will stop a lot of people from doubling with only solid diamonds, I don't have an agreement with partners as to the meaning of a redouble here (which some partnerships might choose to show doubt about 3NT). Partner did not redouble telling me not to pull. Note that partner is often strapped for a bid in this auction since 3♣ on the second round would not be forcing.

In this column all players are assumed to be experts unless otherwise stated. Thus, I will put you down for pass.

Bell: 4♣. Redouble would indicate doubt. I have many doubts! No way am I sitting for 3NT. I'm hoping partner has a decent 6 card suit or ♥Ax.

Bell (2019): 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.

Roeder: 4♣. Only an ostrich (*is an ostrich one of the Mollo animals that I missed?*) would sit this out. Redouble, showing doubt, is semi-reasonable, BUT REALLY: how much doubt do you have??

Roeder (2019): 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 3=2=1=7. 3NT might make if either pard or RHO has a stiff ♦J 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.

Shuster: 4♣. Pass the shovel. Are we done digging yet or should we go deeper? 4♣. Don't show this to anyone. (*Mike sent me a follow up email during proofread indicating he misread the problem, so he might have answered differently otherwise. His 2019 answer probably is a better reflection of his view of the problem.*)

Shuster (2019): 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.

Bartusek (2019): Pass. I don't see anything better. It's only one board at matchpoints. 3NT seems right

on the second round: my diamonds rate to be a stopper after 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!)

Wittes: Pass. Most interesting problem of the set. (*I agree*). What can partner have to bid 3♦ and sit for 3NT doubled, missing the ace of clubs after I've bid a constructive but non-forcing 2♥? I have to put more trust in partner than the opponents. I think partner needs at least a partial diamond stopper like Jx for this auction to make sense. Maybe the doubler has ♦AKQxxx and a major suit ace.

Last word goes to Eddie!

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 a 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 hilariously 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 this problem to the panel sometime.