

THE FRIENDSHIP CLUB

May/June Newsletter

Hello and Welcome!

What wonderful news that we will be merging with the Bidding Box! Your board and Cessy Robinson and Dick Savitt have worked tirelessly to try to make this a reality. The executive committee and the Elks Lodge are working to try to insure that we have more parking and also to create a new lease. Please be patient. We want this to become a reality and believe the merger is just around the corner. While parking will continue to be an issue, we should look to carpooling to resolve some of the problem. No doubt we will have additional glitches, but with your forbearance and positive attitude, they, too, will be ironed out. While we have more than doubled in size, we still will enjoy the competitive game we love in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Our newsletter, which is written bimonthly, is meant to catch everyone up with the accomplishments of our members, with new ways to approach the game, and with announcements. We feature an interview with a member whom you may think you know but likely don't know well. Past interviews can be found on our website. If you have an idea for something you would like to see, please contact me at audreyf@comcast.net, and I will pass your thoughts along to the appropriate people. After this issue, I am grateful that David Babcock will be taking the reins of the newsletter.

Our website is www.bridgewebs.com/friendship. It is a terrific website which allows you to see results and examine how you might have played a hand a bit better or celebrate a success you have enjoyed. It also has a Competitions page which reflects how you do over the span of a month or year and how you do with each partner. There are also important links on the website including one that spells out the rules of our game. In the future, the website may also be the source of partnerships and a contact list. We are working on that for you. Check it out. If you have problems with it, let us know, and we will try to assist you. Remember - www.bridgewebs.com/friendship. If you know someone who is not on our mailing list, please let David Babcock know, and he will fix that.

In addition to our congratulations and announcements sections, we have our usual blog from Ben Feinswog, the president of our Board of Directors, and also a few funny bridge stories at the end of the newsletter, courtesy of Mal Feinswog. Once again, we are so lucky to have Kim Hall as a contributor. In an Organized Way to Think About Declarer Play, Kim shares strategies we all think we use but often do not. He also is the source of our Learning section this newsletter which teaches about card reading. Finally, we have an up close and personal interview with Alina Castells.

Announcements

PLEASE PLEASE DO NOT wear perfumes or colognes or aftershaves to bridge. We have members who are allergic to scents who have had problems breathing. Just bring your sweet selves to the club, not the scents.

Please remember NOT TO USE the handicap bathroom stall unless **you cannot use a regular one**. Yes, we know it is bigger and more inviting, but should a person using a walker enter the bathroom while someone is in the larger stall, that person has to stand and wait. Please be considerate of those who actually need the extra room. And thank you!

Our directors ask that we remember that bridge is a game of rules, and that it is also a timed event. If the Director takes a board away because of slow play, PLEASE do not argue or say that the table behind you has just begun a board. Directors are aware of the pace of play throughout the room. If he or she removes a board, it is because of the tempo in the room. Also, please remember that a Director call is not meant as a punishment or as an embarrassment. Calling the Director to rule on a perceived infringement is the correct thing to do. We do not want players to determine who is at fault. NO ONE wants to commit a rule infraction, of course, but sometimes mistakes occur. Please be patient with your opponents, partners and Directors, and remember Directors actually had to take an exam to be a Director, while most members have not.

Congratulations

We congratulate the following members who have achieved recent changes in ACBL ranking, including for the first time those folks from the Bidding Box:

Claire Alpert - Diamond Life Master
John Stimmel - Bronze Life Master
Fran and Henry Storper and Gabriella Silk - Regional Master
Christina Blackburn - Regional Master
Ann Young, Carol Bowen, Barbara Howie - Sectional Master
Carolyn Exposito, Al and JoAnne Davidson - Junior Master
Marge Feldman, Marge Mote, Norma May Isakow - Club Master

Congratulations to Don Weiner who was the Common Game "Open Game - Most Points" winner for the month of April. That earns him a free play courtesy of the Common Game. Great job!

We also congratulate Tina Tessaro and Irina Kislitsyna for their fifth place finish in the Smith Life Master Pairs at the recent ACBL National in Memphis, Tennessee. You go, Girls!

A big congratulations to Ronnie Burman and his partner, Katarzyna Pasternak, also a member of our club, who represented the University of Miami in the College Bridge Online Stratified Pairs Tournament held on Sunday April 14 on BBO (Bridge Base Online). They came in 8th overall out of 40 participating pairs and 18 schools all over the ACBL jurisdiction. Great job!

Many, many Friendship players did well at the recent regional tournament. Congratulations to the following players:

Marcia Greenstein and Beverly Danielson's team won the Stratified Swiss and were fifth in the morning pairs game. Ronnie Burman and Susan George and Donna Penny and Nancy Coogan all earned points in the Florida Gold Rush Pairs event. Allison Freeland and her team placed fourth in a two session Bracketed Swiss in the first division. Claire Alpert and Janice Seamon-Molson were second in an AXY Pairs game. Also earning points were Carol Clifford and her partner and Ronnie Burman and Norman Pestaina. Holly Evans and Anna Ehlert did well in a Gold Rush Pairs event. Eddie Mahler and Richard Robinson won the Charity Gold Rush Pairs with Donna Penny and Nancy Coogan coming in fourth and Dale Dowlen and Gwen Lazenby finishing fifth. Nedra Oren, Dorothy Podhurst, Marsha Bilzen and Roz Stuzin came in third in the Division 3 Swiss Teams, and Phyllis Levy and Rick Holcomb finished second in Division 2. Michale Ranis and Susan Fuller won two of the AXY Open Pairs events, and Carol Clifford and her team won the two session Bracketed Swiss in Division 1. Phyllis Levy, Rick Holcomb, Marsha Bilzen and Roz Stuzin placed third in the Bracketed Knockout, Division 2. Tina Tessaro and Fred Wills came in second in another AXY pairs event in which Michael Ranis also earned fifth with David Rosenblatt.



Finally, we congratulate Becky Bennett from the Elks Club on her recent marriage to Reggie Hernandez, the Grand Dragon of the Elks. Our club gave Becky and Reggie a nice gift since she is so wonderful to all of us whether it is helping us wipe up a spill, resetting the temperature in the room, or sharing a Tylenol. She's terrific, and we wish her Reggie the best!

Extra Point Games

There is an extra point game every day in both May and June. All sanctioned club sessions in May are designated as **Grass Roots FUNd Games**. Funds raised will be returned annually to the individual district in which those funds were raised to help fund Grand National Teams and North American Pairs.

In June, the club holds ten **NAOP Qualifying games**, two World Wide Bridge Contests, six Quarterly Club Championships and six STaC games. A highly prestigious "grassroots" event, the North American Pairs starts at the club level in June, July, and August. Club-level qualifications may be earned at any club in any unit in any district. A player may qualify as often as desired and with as many different partners as desired. Unit-level qualifiers are optional and held after Sept. 1 and before the district final, which may be held after the unit final until the third week in January. At the district final, both players must have qualified at the club level and must be members of the parent district. A fixed amount prize will be awarded in all flights.

The Worldwide Bridge Contest is the event played around the world! Join us for the Worldwide Bridge Contest sponsored by the World Bridge Federation. This international competition is scored across the world using the Internet to give an overall winner. The Friday and Saturday games are separate events. Each participant receives an electronic booklet. The WBF will award prizes based on world matchpointing. The two top district winners by percentage receive bonus awards. Additional recognition comes from the WBF.

STaCs are ACBL tournaments with a sectional rating and are staged at many clubs in a geographical area over a period of up to seven days. Events are played at several clubs, and results are transmitted to a central office manned by the director in charge. The director combines the results to determine the winners and overall places for participants. Masterpoints awarded are silver.

Quarterly Club Championships are simply games held at clubs that award extra points.

Get to know...Alina Hernandez Castells!



Of all the beautiful things Miami has gotten from our Cuban neighbors - delicious food, great night life, and beautiful art - the loveliest thing of all is our own Alina Hernandez!

Born in Havana during Batista's regime, Alina said her life was wonderful. Her dad was a successful insurance and banking businessman, and her mom's family were also in the banking business. Her paternal grandfather was a lawyer and was Prime Minister of Cuba. He wrote many law books that are still used in universities. Alina had two brothers with whom she was close. They also emigrated to Miami, but they have passed away now. Alina has many happy memories of growing up in Cuba. After school, she and her friends would go to a club and have fun. She reports that they were more like brothers and sisters than friends. Everyone knew everyone and enjoyed being together.

Alina met her first husband at fourteen! At that time, when a boy and a girl went out together for some time, they were expected to marry, and so they joyfully did when Alina was just eighteen. She had a daughter and

was pregnant with her son when Castro took over. The government took much of what her family had, and life was no longer good. Alina and her husband made plans to leave and to seek asylum in the US. Before they could do so, her husband, who was in the underground, was shot and had to hide. Meanwhile, as planned, Alina left on the very last transport plane to the U.S. with just her mom and her

daughter, landing in Miami. Her husband sought refuge in the Italian Embassy, but ultimately, he found his way via the Archbishop to the Mexican Embassy where he received a safe conduct permit to leave. Still, it was a year before he could join Alina and see his new son.

Alina's father had connections with an insurance company and was able to help her husband find employment, but that meant moving to New York. They lived in both Manhattan and Queens. Ultimately, because her husband spoke little English, they moved to Lima, Peru. There, with her dad's help again, they had their own company, and together, they built a successful business. They spent over twenty years there and had another son. Ultimately, Alina chose to return to Miami in 1992.

Once here, Alina initially was a secretary for a doctor, but soon she moved to sales at H Stern, a jewelry company on Miracle Mile. She was so good that the jewelry store across the street, Jae's Jewelers, recruited her to manage the store and also to do sales. Meanwhile, a friend invited Alina to a luncheon to which she had secretly also invited Rodolfo, a very simpatico and dashing widow. Her friend wanted them to meet and quickly introduced them. One and a half years later, in 2007, they were married, and Alina stopped working. Until Rodolfo got sick with Parkinson's and Glaucoma, they had a terrific life. Sadly, Rodolfo passed in September of 2018, but Alina has no regrets.

When asked about when she began to play bridge, Alina explained that she had grown up playing card games. At age four she used to play gin rummy with her dad who enjoyed going to the casinos. Though she and her brothers always enjoyed cards while in Cuba, it wasn't until she was in Lima that Alina learned bridge. Her friend, Zita Fleishman, played bridge and became her mentor. It all started after Alina had taken a guitar lesson. Her teacher had a regular bridge game after she taught guitar. She encouraged her to watch them play. Alina was almost hooked. After her next lesson, one of the players didn't show up, and they drafted Alina to fill in. After that, she was hooked, and Zita said she would have to learn how to really play. Our star was born. Since then, Alina has played in many international tournaments, and while she never won a national tournament, she did well enough to become both a bronze and silver life master.

Now Alina devotes herself to her ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren with a fifth on the way. Actually, she told me she adores them and loves spending time with them. Her youngest great grandchildren, one and a half year old twins, live just five blocks from her, and she sees them all the time. She is also a devoted member of her church and helps there. She said she always prays for good health and strives to enjoy people as they are. But it's at Friendship Club that we have all come to know and love her. She plays three times a week and is a valued and sought after partner. Her calm demeanor and quickness with a smile make her a pleasure play to with or to compete against. In fact, we view her as a diamond in our midst.

Kim's Corner

AN ORGANIZED WAY TO THINK ABOUT DECLARER PLAY

Declarer play is a general term that is hard to measure. To make it easier, bridge players must be organized and thorough. By paying strict attention to analysis and techniques, we can be more effective. The good news is that, for the most part, it is not complex. There are many details but some are more important than others.

USING THE KEY WORD "ARCH"

A = Analyze the opening lead

Be precise. Ask about your opponents' lead conventions. Look carefully at the card that was led and decide the exact holdings that the opener leader could have in that suit.

R = Review the bidding

There are 40 points in the deck. They must be somewhere. Count the number of points between your hand and the dummy and decide how the rest of the points are distributed based on the bidding (or lack of bidding.)

C = Count your winner and/or losers

If you are playing in a suit contract, count your losers. In a notrump contract, count your winners. Count your SURE losers/winners only.

H = How can I make this hand (or if it looks easy, how might I go down?)

The first three parts of the formula will lead you to strategies (see below) to produce a good result. Seeing the big picture can help you make close decisions.

Whenever you have a general problem (What should I do?), break it down into smaller steps to judge your progress along the way. The above formula seems one-dimensional, but if you trust the formula, it will work. It may even seem like magic.

STRATEGIES

The strategies for declarer play can be complex. Fortunately, the ones that are important (about 95% of the time) are easy. When playing in a suit contract:

1. Draw trump unless there is a reason not to do so (see below.)
2. Trump in the short hand of trump. This is **BY FAR** the most common and important strategy to use.
3. Setting up a long side suit (a suit that is five cards or longer.)

Other suit contract strategies are cross-ruff, end-play, squeeze and trump reduction. All of these strategies happen rarely. If you can execute numbers 1, 2, and 3 you will be very successful.

In Notrump contracts:

1. Knock out their high cards in your longest suit.
2. Keep high cards in all the other suits.

In both types of contracts, there are some refinements.

1. Avoidance (keeping the dangerous opponent off lead.)
2. Ducking (maintaining communication between declarer and dummy.)

You can learn much more, of course. Declarer play can become difficult in rare instances but the information here will be successful most of the time. To do that you must be alert and disciplined. If you do you will be ahead of 95% of the other players.

Learning

Kim Hall has also been gracious to share his thoughts on Card Reading for our Learning Section. Each newsletter tries to feature a learning section with offerings from our community. If you want to share a new way to think about play or defense or if you would like to see a particular topic covered in the Newsletter, please contact David Babcock or me.

CARD READING AND INFERENCES ON DEFENSE

This title may seem scary but the ideas are not that difficult. Card reading means the ability to understand what the cards mean while playing the hand. Inferences mean assumptions made (which may not always be true) based on the information you have about the situation. You will not always have all the information you need immediately, but there is a fair chance that you will have enough information soon enough to make the correct decision in time. The strategies are: counting dummy's points, estimating declarer's distribution and high card placement, making assumptions from the opening lead, and estimating the number of points in partner's hand and the actual number of tricks the declarer is likely to be able to take.

COUNTING DUMMY'S POINTS

Every time you see the dummy, you should count the points. You can add the HCPs you see to your own HCPs, review the bidding, and have a good idea about the high card placement in the other two hands. Also, you can estimate how well the declarer will fare in his contract. If dummy has overbid you might well think that the declarer is going to have trouble making his contract. If he has underbid you want to think about making sure you take the tricks to which you are entitled (a good matchpoint strategy always!)

ESTIMATING DECLARER'S HIGH CARD PLACEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

Defenders perform this technique mainly by reviewing the bidding. Some auctions are not particularly informative (like 1NT - 3NT) but many auctions give a lot of information about both of these variables in the declarer's hand.

ASSUMPTIONS FROM THE OPENING LEAD

When your partner makes an opening lead there are several considerations. The card he leads and the card he didn't lead can often give you considerable information. If partner leads an honor (ten or higher) you should have specific agreements about the particular suit combinations that card indicates. If partner leads a "spot card" (nine or lower) you also need to know what your agreements are about that situation. Do you play fourth best leads (yes, even in suit contracts.) Do you play third and fifth best leads in suit contracts and fourth best in notrump? If you are not sure, you are in big trouble.

How about the rule of 11? It is vital to defense. It isn't important every time but many times it is **very** important. This is a mathematical calculation used when the lead is fourth highest. It can be used by the partner of the opening leader and the declarer. Subtract the number of the card led from 11. The result is the number of cards higher than the one led that are in the other three hands, two of which you can see.

ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF POINTS IN PARTNER'S HAND

This goes along with the idea of counting the HCP in the unseen hands. There are 40 points in the deck. You are looking at half the deck and have heard some bidding. You can make some reasonable assumptions about where the unseen points are.

You can also use the rule of 14. When the offense is in a game contract (4H, 4S or 3NT), the defense has about 14 points ($40 - 26 = 14$). Count your points, subtract from 14 and you will know the approximate number of points in partner's hand.

ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF TRICKS THE DECLARER CAN TAKE

This is a logical procedure. See the big picture. If you step back and look at the overall situation you can often see whether to be aggressive or passive. You may see that you need to take what appear to be big risks that aren't really big risks in a particular situation. You will many times think, "the declarer is about to make his contract in three suits." It is usually correct to lead the fourth suit, **regardless** of the risk.

As always, experience is the best teacher. You will not make every decision correctly. The opponents will behave in strange ways that will obstruct your reasoning. The better the player, the more you can count on his information. Good players know that it is better to inform partner than fool the opponent. Bridge is a partnership game. If you keep that in mind, you will be a good defender and everyone will want to be your partner, too.

Ben's Blog

I had hoped in this blog to be able to celebrate the successful merger of the Friendship Club and the Bidding Box and the initiation of play of our combined super club.

Well, we're almost there....

Happily, at least the merger part has been approved by both clubs. At a Special Meeting of the Friendships Club's Board of Directors, held on April 4th, the merger was approved unanimously. In anticipation of a successful merger, Cessy Robinson and Dick Savitt are to be appointed as Members of the Board of Directors and Cessy as co-Club Manager along with Richard DeQuattro. An Executive Committee was created to include Cessy, Dick, Richard, Doug Winship (Club VP), and myself.

The Board then authorized the Executive Committee to negotiate and enter into a new lease with the Elks Lodge, to be effective on January 1, 2020, when the City of Coral Gables will stop paying our rent. As soon as the new lease is signed, our joint group, as well as classes, will start at the Elks Lodge.

We believe we have successfully resolved all terms of our new lease with the Elks Lodge – with the critical exception of ensuring maximum possible parking for us all, which we are diligently pursuing as of this writing. With our anticipated large number of players, however, some carpooling will still be required.

We know this merger is foremost on everyone's minds, and we have spent a great deal of time and energy to make it happen. We ask for your patience a little longer. We are hopeful that we will be able to finalize both the parking issue and lease in the immediate future and that we will move forward to having the premier club in Miami for years to come.

We will send an email to everyone as soon as the lease is signed, and immediately start joint play at the Elks Lodge.

Feinswog Funnies

Have you heard...About the man who wanted to learn bridge in one day? He ordered 35 copies of Five Weeks To Winning Bridge.

About the lady who always went down one in 3 NT? When asked about this she said she was just following her teacher's advice: "Eight ever, Nine never."

About the Elvis Presley coup? It's when your left-hand opponent leads from A-Q around to your K-x: the King is no longer dead!

Regardless of what sadistic impulses we may harbor, winning bridge means helping partner avoid mistakes.

-Frank Stewart

A player who can't defend accurately should try to become declarer (or dummy).

-Alfred Sheinwold

Learn from the mistake of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself.

-Alfred Sheinwold

Number One Desire

A man is stranded on a deserted island for 10 years. One day he notices a speck on the horizon, and he watches intently as it draws near. "It can't be a boat," he thinks. "It can't be a fish." Suddenly, a beautiful woman emerges from the sea wearing scuba gear and a wet suit.

"Hi there!" she says.

The man is amazed. "But... but... how did you get here?"

"Never mind," says the woman as she unzips the left pocket of her wet suit and hands the man a cigarette.

"Wow, this is terrific! I haven't had a smoke in 10 years!"

“Enjoy!” says the woman as she unzips the right pocket of her wet suit and gives the man a flask of whiskey.

“I can’t believe it! This tastes so good!”

Next the woman starts to unzip the long zipper that runs down the front of her wet suit.

“Now I’ve got something you must really want bad.”

“What!” he says, “Don’t tell me you’ve got a deck of cards in there too!”