Southern California **Bridge News**

Volume 61, #1 January 2024 Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Jones

ALACBU Meeting January 20



We will have an ALACBU meeting at 10:00 AM on January 20, 2024. It will be a hybrid meeting, both online and live. The live meeting will be at the Long Beach Bridge Club, 4782 Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach (562-498-8113. I anticipate the meeting will last about 90 minutes. Unit representatives look for an upcoming email from Lillian Slater, the D23 secretary.

Thanks to our new webmaster, Rita Vanlierop, our website is back! The old website had ceased to function. Among other reasons, there was a small charge to the hosting company. The fee was small, and when Dave White was webmaster, he just paid the small fee without telling anyone. We appreciate Dave's hard work and his generosity, but he has retired as webmaster. He was followed by a webmaster who didn't work out very well. Among other things, he didn't know the fee needed to be paid, so it never got paid. Rita Vanlierop has taken over the webmaster position and things are going quite well!

I have a new email address president@d23acbl.org.

If you would like to contact me via email, please use that email address.

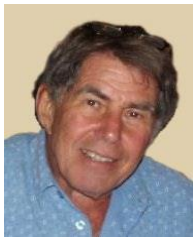
Rita is just one of the appointments I have made since I have been president. Some of the appointments are carryovers from Bob Shore's administration, and some are new. Here is a list of appointments:

BridgeNews Editor – Tom Lill
Caddymaster - Kim Wang
Education - Alex Kolesnik

PRESIDENT continued on page2

Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



I hope you had a chance to participate in the Palm Springs regional. It was a terrific event. Attendance topped 2,000 for the 6-day event meaning that it is once again the 2nd largest (after Gatlinburg) regional in the country. After 4 days, I was anointed with a new nickname, The Third Man. On Monday, I was on a team in the Mini-Soloway events. This event starts on the first day like a typical bracketed teams with each bracket composed of 7 teams. You play 8 boards against every team in your bracket. The top 4 teams in each bracket then go to the second day to play in a knockout amongst themselves. On Monday we were in the Third bracket. At the end of the day, we qualified in Third place for the knockout finals on Tuesday. We lost the semi-final match but won the consolation event to wind up in Third place. Oh, yes, we lost in said semifinal match by 3 IMPs. So now Wednesday comes along and again I'm in a new Mini-Soloway, this time with a different partner and different teammates. Again, we're in the Third bracket. Again, we qualify in Third position. Again, we lose the semi-final match and again we win the consolation to finish in Third place. Such is life! A memorable hand occurred during one of the qualifying rounds. You are declarer and must decide how to play clubs with your singleton opposite dummy's 8 card suit headed by the AKJ10xxxx.

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NAP - Mojo Jones
Online Special Events – Tom Reynolds
STAC Coordinator- Ruth Baker
Tournament Manager, 2025 Carolyn Hannas
Tournament Manager, 2024 - Peter Benjamin
Webmaster - Rita Vanlierop

Our volunteers have been hard at work. Walt has arranged for GNTs to be on Saturday April 6 and Sunday April 7 at the Pasadena Bridge Club. Tom Reynolds is working hard on a new idea, that of having online regionals live at club (players bring their laptop and play online at a local club with a local director and a overall director online).

I am continuing to set up committees and volunteer positions. If anyone would like to be on a committee or help in some way, please email me at johndjones44@yahoo.com. Among the committees we could use help in are: Awards, Charity, Competition, Conduct and Ethics, Education, Elections, Historical, Parliamentary, Supplies, Technology, Tournament. I am welcome to positive ideas. Alex has some exciting ideas for recruiting potential young bridge students into a bridge camp. Carolyn has secured the Long Beach Hilton for our 2025 regional (we still need a site for our 2026 regional (conflicts with Long Beach Centennial) and 2028 (conflicts with the Olympics).

Happy bridging!

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

You're in 6NT and can't afford to lose any tricks in the club suit as you have no other path to twelve tricks. After pard opens a club, RHO bids a diamond, you double with your 19HCP and 5-2-5-1 shape, and LHO offers 2 hearts. Do you play for the ♣Q to drop singleton or doubleton, or play for it to be onside? Right = HERO; Wrong = GOAT. The word "baa" is now firmly implanted in my vocabulary. Yes, we lost 17 IMPs as I took one view, and the person holding my cards at other table took the opposite position.

Margot Hennings from Washington DC area has been elected as the president of the ACBL for 2024. She has tough shoes to follow. Joann Glasson has served in this position for the last 2 years and has done an outstanding job. Margot has served on the BOD longer than any other present member. She's chaired NABCs, regionals and sectionals. She has served on the board as chair of the Governance Committee, the Executive Review Committee and has served on several other committees. Cindy Shoemaker from Tucson was elected as Vice President. Cindy has a strong background in marketing and communications. She has chaired the communications task force for 2 years. I was re-elected as the treasurer-obviously no one else wants the job as I was the only one who offered to do the job.

Margot has asked me to chair the Finance Committee again this year. With only 13 BOD members, each committee will have fewer members and members will serve on fewer committees. Margot is taking a new approach in that she has created task forces to attack certain specific issues. I'll be serving on the task force charged with deciding how we want to go forward with our online platform provider. The current BBO contract expires at the end of June in 2025. Wisely, Margot has acknowledged that this issue is of critical importance and work needs to be started this year.

Here's wishing everyone a healthy, happy and prosperous 2024!

The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy
by John Jones

Category: Starting with M (each term begins with the letter M)

And the answer is …

$100 – Heart and spade contracts score 30 points per trick and are known as this type of suit.

$200 – The ACBL awards this for good finishes in tournaments.

$300 – A bid which is inaccurate given a partnership's agreements.

$400 – An acronym describing a lead system which starts with the second highest of three small cards, and next plays the highest card.

$500 – An opening bid of 2♦ which describes of a weak two bid in either major (and might have a strong option also).

DAILY DOUBLE: In Victor Mollo's "Menagerie," this character radiated good will to all humanity – with the exception of the male half.

Play or Defend?
by John Jones

North
♠ A K 8 6
♥ A K Q 4 3
♦ A
♣ A J 2

West
♠ Q 10 7 5
♥ J 9
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ K 10 8

East
♠ void
♥ 10 8 2
♦ K Q 10 9 8 7 4
♣ 9 7 5

South
♠ J 9 4 3 2
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 6
♣ Q 6 4 3

Contract = 6♠

Opening Lead = ♦2

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

(Solutions to these puzzles are on page 4. No peeking!)

District 23 Rank Changes November 2023

Junior Master
Baoding Chen
Patti Chertok
Lucy F. Kihm
William B. Lacina
Amannda J. Moores

Club Master
David M. Anthopoulos
Kim M. Holmes
Allan Lubitz
Ann Peacock
Whitney Phillips
Marilyn S. Schmitter
Libby Tigner
Ken Weber

Sectional Master
Steve L. Cormier
Hsing C. Fang
Anne S. Kaplan
Uma Shrivastava
Victoria Vaughn

Regional Master
Jan Ladd
Patricia J. Staub

Advanced ABC Master
Leo D. Dittemore
Nina Huang

Bronze Life Master
Michael Piken

Silver Life Master
Terry R. Hane
Linda Lin

Ruby Life Master
Sharon Aronson

Gold Life Master
Eva Schondorf

Solution to "Play or Defend?"

Answer: play. Win the ♦A of course and cash two hearts (stripping West of hearts). Next comes the key play. Lead the ♠8 and let West win the ♠10. Anything West leads is helpful, but the best return is a diamond. On a diamond return, pitch the ♣2 from dummy and ruff in hand. Lead the ♠J from hand. There are two lines from this point depending on whether West covers. If West covers, draw trumps ending in hand and take the ♣ finesse. If West doesn't cover, play small from dummy, take the ♣ finesse and draw the last trump.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

$100 – What is a major suit?

$200 – What are masterpoints?

$300 – What is a misbid?

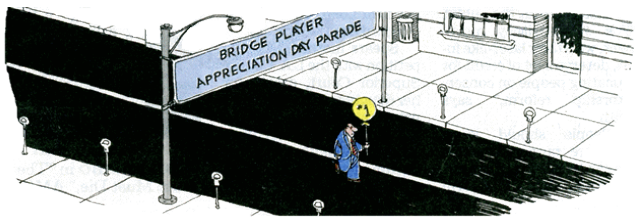
$400 – What is MUD (Middle Up Down)?

$500 – What is Multi?

DAILY DOUBLE – Who is Molly the Mule?

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Submitted by John Jones



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Southern California Bridge News
Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.
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Los Angeles, CA 90067
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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.

Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

Individual: January 6, 10 a.m., Ontario
February 3, 10 a.m., TBD
Unit Game: January 20, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

The December Individual was captured by Gary Atwell, with 68.18% In second we find, Your Truly, followed by Dale Quasny, Linda Tessier, and Tom Cusack.

In the December Unit Game, Fredy Minter – Amr Elghamry took top honors again, with a 66.20% effort. In second were Roger Boyar – Yours Truly , followed by Peter Kavounas – Daniel Robinson, who tied with Vic Sartor – Bill Papa.

We have only one promotion to announce again this month. Baoding Chen is now a Junior Master.

There were only three big games in December – and one of those was only good for second place! The top score was turned in by Caryn Mason – Mary Ann Wotring, 67.36%. Fredy Minter and Roger Boyar turned in the other to big scores, 65.48% and 65.28%. That last score was a second-place finish.

Other winners in December were Lulu Minter, Bill Papa, Vic Sartor, Art Weinstein, Karen McCarthy, and Karen Olin.

Our Unit did fairly well at the Palm Springs Regional. 11 players brought home a total of 84.38 masterpoints. Topping the list is Mary Ann Wotring, with 16.04. Vic Sartor and Caryn Mason each brought home 15.25. Art Weinstein earned 5.69, and Steve Andersen rounded out the top five with 5.27. Where did Yore Correspondent wind up? Next question, please!

For this month's interesting hand, I'm going to blow my own horn. Well, why not, I write this silly column. You want to see your name here, *you* send me a hand. This is one of those rare cases where I "took a view" and it actually worked out.

Both sides vulnerable, South deals. This hand came up in a bracketed teams event. You, South, picked up

♠ Axx ♥ xxx ♦ AKQxx ♣ Qx

OK, you have 15 HCP. Walter the Walrus opens 1NT. Do you?

I hope not. With 13 of your 15 points in two suits, and a doubleton Queen in the bargain, let's take a view and open 1♦.

So that's what I did, everyone passed, and I proceeded to make exactly 7 tricks. Dummy came down with

♠ xxx ♥ Jxx ♦ xx ♣ Kxxxx.

The opening lead was the ♣A, so it looks like I should get a club trick. Nope. RHO had a singleton and ruffed the club continuation! Dummy is somewhat short of entries, so the ♣K withered on the vine.

And what happened at the other table? South opened 1NT, and took only 4 tricks, -300. That's 9 IMPs to the good guys!

Sometimes, you just *have* to "break the rules" and use some judgement. It helps morale when you turn out to have been right. (Said he, with a sigh of relief.)

The opponents didn't balance because they both had flat hands with 10 or 11 HCP and no long suit. It was the next-to-last board of a very long day, so I did not look to see if E-W could actually make anything.

Quote for the month: "Musical – a series of catastrophes ending with a floor show." (Oscar Levant



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley
by Beth Morrin

The Santa Clarita Community Center has a modified schedule during school vacations so we will have one more Saturday morning game on January 6th.

We will resume our Friday F2F games in January on the 12th with our "After the Holidays" party. - free pizza and snacks. Again, if interested in playing on Friday, please contact Ruth Baker (rbaker1243@sbcglobal.net) as space is limited.

Winners of the Friday F2F game:

Dec. 1

N/S	Barbara Jones – Tom Jones	60.42%
E/W	Carol Trenda – Gary Trenda	60.83%

Dec. 8*

N/S	Carol Reukauf – Paul Reukauf	63.65%
E/W	Harry Randhawa - Alan Nueman	60.25%

*Royal STaC game

Winners of the Saturday F2F game:

Dec. 16

N/S	David Khalieque – Jerrod Mason	60.97%
E/W	Carol Ashbacher – Kristi Kubo	73.39%

Unit 556 Board Nominations

Are you looking for an adventure of a new and different kind? Unit 556 is seeking members who are interested in running for the Unit Board. This is an opportunity to give back to the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley bridge community, meet new friends, and have an impact on changing things for the betterment of Unit 556 bridge players. If you wish to self-nominate, please contact Ruth Baker (rbaker1243@sbcglobal.net).

Nominations must be received by March 1st.

Virtual Game Schedule

Monday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Tuesday:	6:15 PM	Open game
Thursday:	10:15 AM	Open game
Sunday:	12:30 PM	Open game

Contact our club manager at virtualclub@bridgemojo.com for reservations. ACBL is increasing the minimum entry fee to $5 starting January 1, 2024. Virtual games are now available to all BBO players. Invite your favorite partner to play with you in one of our games.

Big Virtual Club Games (65+%):

Mon. Nov. 27
Cathryn Martin – Jeanette Deverian 68.25%

Sun. Dec. 3
Amr Elghamry – Rae Murbach 65.52%

Mon. Dec. 4
Bill Langlois – Donna Davidson 65.08%

Tues. Dec. 5
Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore 68.98%

Thurs. Dec. 7
Carolyn Cohen – Dominique Moore 67.14%

Sun. Dec. 10
Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinksy 72.22%

Sun. Dec. 17
Greg Vernon – Robot 66.67%

Mon. Dec. 18
Gunnar Gunnarsson – Jacque Gilbert 66.39%

Sun. Dec. 24
Greg Vernon – Robot 67.22%
Sharon Wolf – Robot 65.56%

Next Board Meeting: TBA

Pasadena – San Gabriel
by Morris "Mojo" Jones

bridgemojo.com



December featured a great holiday party at the Arcadia Community Center with 13 tables and a fabulous taco buffet. Desserts and drinks were wonderful! We held a STaC game, with tons of masterpoints awarded in black, silver, red, and gold.

Winners at the holiday party:

- N/S: Stan Majcher, Madhu Sudan
- E/W: Adam Barron, Sherry Hansen

The unit also graciously sponsored a New Year's Eve Swiss team tournament on December 31. We had eight teams play -- five of the teams had no player over 100 masterpoints! For the vast majority of the room it was their first team tournament, and they all did splendidly. Indeed the 2nd place finisher had a team of players none of whom were yet Junior Masters! Congratulations to Fred Register, Leslie Klein, William Snyder, and Yuriko Bonds!

Placing first at the New Year's Eve tournament were Roy Wilson, Gloria Rommel, Angela Peters, and Ray Boncato.

For the first three months of 2024 our unit games will be held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. The first Sunday will be at the Pasadena Bridge Club, and the third at the Arcadia Bridge Center.

Please make reservations for the unit games on the 7th or 21st by contacting Miriam Harrington, (626) 232-0558, or miratpf@aol.com.

Congratulations to the following players for achieving new ranks in the ACBL!

- New Sectional Masters: Hsing Fang, Uma Shrivastava
- New Regional Master: Patricia Staub
- New Adv NABC Master: Nina Huang

New courses starting at the Pasadena Bridge Club this month:

- Bridge Basics 1 - Introduction, January 10
- Introduction to Declarer Play, January 11
- Introduction to Defense, January 6

For information on all courses, visit https://pasadenabridgeclub.com/available_courses

Word has it that Nina Huang earned enough silver points in a STaC game at the Pasadena Bridge Club to earn her Life Master certificate! We'll be celebrating that officially next month, I'm sure.

The unit is reviving the "unit directory" of players and contact information, but we're only including players who are opting in to being listed. Most of you received an email with the opt-in form recently, or you can find a copy at either bridge club. If you would like other players in the unit to be able to contact you for a game, be sure to fill out one of the forms.

President Lisa Walker is also making preparations for unit board elections in March, and updates to the unit by-laws. Give her letter a read when you can.



Long Beach

by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org

www.LongBeachBridge.com

Unit 557 celebrated the holidays with its party at Long Beach Bridge Center on December 17th. Fern Dunbar organized the festivities and set up the feast with help from Kay Tseng, who also decorates the club for the all holidays and seasons. With music by Ralph Brunson, all had a great time and raised $242 for the Long Beach Women's Shelter. After the feast and unit board elections, 11 Open and seven NLM tables enjoyed a challenging game of duplicate bridge!



Holiday Party Overview



Ralph Brunson at the Piano



Fern Dunbar and Kay Tseng

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Wafik Abdou, Mark Bartusek, Jordan Chodorow, Mitch Dunitz, David Grainger, Daniel Korbel, 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.

1

IMPs
None Vul

North	East	South	West
3NT*	pass	???	

* 4-level preempt in either minor

You, South, hold: ♠ AJ7532 ♥ AKQ32 ♦ K ♣ A

What call do you make?

I made some mistakes on this problem. The first mistake was mistyping the problem as I sent it out (I repeated part of the auction). My second mistake was to assume that the entire panel was familiar with this convention. Wrong (see Grainger)! The third mistake was to fail to realize how much this problem depends on partnership methods going forward (see the comments of several panelists). There is one valid point to this problem though. As several panelists inferred, this is a better hand for diamonds than it is for clubs. We would rather have the king of trumps and a side ace, than to hold the ace of trumps and a side king. The side ace will be valuable unless partner is void there. The side king may or may not be of significant value.

Shuster: 5♣. Presumably 4♦ is some sort of ask? For simplicity, I'll bid 5♣, pass or correct. If partner corrects, I'll bid six.

Chodorow: 5NT. Pick a slam.

Dunitz: 6♣. I'm afraid that 5NT is grand slam force. So, I'll bid 6♣ which I think (hope) is pass or correct.

Grainger: RKC. I have never played this convention and have no idea on the style implications nor what any of my bids mean. If my partner had opened a normal 4m, I would bid RKC (4♦ or 5♣).

Korbel: 5♣ (or 4NT), whichever is Pass or Correct). If partner corrects to diamonds, I will raise to slam. But I am worried about the solidity of clubs.

Abdou: 6♣. Pass or correct. I will raise 6♦ to 7♦!

Bartusek: 4NT. Initially I thought I'd bid 6♣ for pass or correct. Obviously, I want to be in slam if partner has diamonds, but a club slam also rates to be decent. If I'm tapped in diamonds at trick 2 partner could easily have ♣KQTxxxxx (besides, the opponents might lead the wrong suit). After eventually finding out partner has one keycard plus the trump queen, I'll bid 6♣ as pass or correct. If partner corrects to 6♦ then I'll be able to comfortably bid the grand! Unfortunately, a 5♦ response might get a lead-directing double if I eventually play 6♣; thus, just jumping to 6♣ might be better at the risk of missing 7♦.

Roeder: 5NT. You cannot find out what you need to know. So, as Elvis crooned in 1960, "It's Now or Never."

Wittes: 4NT. The worst trump holding partner should have is QJTxxxxx. Over 5♦ I'll bid 6♦. Over 5♣, I have a tougher problem. If partner has KQ(J)xxxxx we could still have a reasonable play for slam. Even if partner has QJ10xxxxx, we might make with a non-diamond lead.

2

Matchpoints
N-S Vul

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♠	X	Pass
???			

You, South, hold: ♠ K ♥ A82 ♦ QJ8632 ♣ AQJ

What call do you make?

I'll start with the panelist who knows what the former moderator of this column likely would have done. Bid 3NT! Marshall Miles would bid 3NT with a stiff king whenever possible. Yes, it almost always worked for him. But most of us don't have a guardian angel that rivals the Rueful Rabbit's. The rest of us need to bid accurately to get to reasonable contracts.

Chodorow: 3♠. My diamonds need time to establish, so don't give me Marshall Miles and his confident notrump.

Yes, this hand is more than just trying to steal trick one. The ace and king of diamonds are very important. A panelist who frequently partnered Marshall agrees with Chodorow.

Bartusek: 3♠. I can't assume my diamonds are running in order to bid a gambling 3NT. The cuebid will allow us to reach a 5-3 heart fit when available, or else we'll default to diamonds.

Korbel: 3♠. 3NT is superficially appealing, but we might belong in hearts or diamonds and I think my hand is too good to gamble like that on both stopper and strain.

Wittes: 3♠. A bit aggressive. If partner bids 3NT (unlikely), I'll pass. If partner has five hearts we rate to have a play for 4♥.

Shuster: 3NT. RHO didn't raise, so partner has some spade length. Nothing else appeals even slightly.

Dunitz: 3NT. It's filthy, my 2-level weak jump over all's are ugly, and this one could be too! 3♠ could be right, but if we belong in NT, best to be played from my side.

Grainger: 3NT. At MP, 3NT and hope for the best. They are white versus red and didn't get raised. 3♠ getting 3NT is just so bad when partner has Qxx.

Abdou: 3NT. Why didn't I open a NT? It's right on values, but short one spade. What's a spade amongst friends?

Roeder: 3♥. Ugh! A slight underbid and perhaps a misbid. Alas, 3♠ is a clear overbid. One spade stopper (or even two) may not be enough with my topper-less diamond suit. A 3♦ rebid is for those who have never taken one chance in their entire lifetime. Where is the Tylenol? To minimize future Tylenol purchases, I would open an admittedly imperfect 1NT in the future. Evan Bailey always said that the "Viagra card" (stiff King) suggests No Trump. *Bailey like Marshall, liked bidding 3NT with a stiff king. But Evan calling it the "Viagra card"? Never!*

This problem was given to me by Canadian expert Bill Treble. I believe Bill got the problem from a panel he was on. Bill liked 3♥. 3♦ garnered no bids, but the conservatives who choose it will be right a fair amount. That being said I bid 3NT, and 3NT with a stiff king doesn't always work for me.

3

IMP Pairs
N-S Vul

West	North	East	South
2♦	pass	3♦	3♥
pass	4♦	X	???

* Weak

You, South, hold: ♠ A74 ♥ AJ1093 ♦ void ♣ A8763

What call do you make?

The experts love their hand on this auction. Many redouble to get the first-round diamond control into play.

Roeder: Redouble. Partner's 4♦ bid did not guarantee a diamond control as it was the only unambiguous slam try available. Slam might be skinny because partner did not overcall 2NT over the 2♦ opener. However, I must cooperate. My ego could not handle it if I went low and we missed a slam. I would be terrified as partner sneered at me, saying, "I can see why you were conservative. After all, you did not have five first-round controls."

Shuster: Redouble. I have first round control and a max. I'll start with XX and continue 4♠ if partner tries to sign off.

Chodorow: Redouble. If I don't redouble, I don't have first round control.

Grainger: Redouble. I have first round diamond control and at least some interest in going forward.

Korbel: Redouble. This shows first round control. Let's see what partner wants to do. I'm probably not passing 4♥.

What is the difference between 5♦ and redouble?

Abdou: Redouble, first round control? Usually, redouble is the ace and a cuebid is the void, but I am unwilling to raise the level opposite a passed partner, yet slam is still possible.

Dunitz: 5♦. This is a monster 13-count. I will pass 5♥.

One panelist doesn't redouble because he doesn't want the opponents to know about the void.

Bartusek: 6♥. Most likely to be a decent contract. I don't want to redouble to steer opening leader away from a diamond lead (unless I want partner to make the final decision regarding slam). Additionally, the opponents could easily take out insurance by sacrificing in 7♦. Note: you usually have to gamble in IMP pair events anyway to win the event! *Yes, IMP Pairs can be very interesting. A few great hands can overshadow several mediocre hands. You need to be lucky at IMP Pairs!*

The last panelist is the man who presented the problem.

Wittes: Redouble. This is my actual problem hand (from the Palm Springs Regional). Partner had the miracle hand ♠Kx ♥KQx ♦Jxxx ♣KQJ10. We got to 6♥ which was still worth 8 or 9 imps. The ideal contract of course is 7♣. 7♥ could be beaten with a diamond lead if hearts are 5-0.

4

IMPs
Both Vul

South	West	North	East
1♠	pass	1NT	pass
???			

You, South, hold: ♠ AKQ9852 ♥ A83 ♦ K95 ♣ void

What call do you make?

Shuster: 4♣. Textbook self-splinter.

Chodorow: 4♠. Practical.

Dunitz: 4♣. I have a slam try with a void. I think after 1M - 2M or 1M - 1NT a jump to 4 of new suit should both be a slam try with a void. Care to dance?

Grainger: 4♣. Self-splinter in case partner has a good hand.

Korbel: 4♣. Self-splinter. Finally, an easy problem!

Abdou: 4♣ self -splinter, unimaginative but accurate. Would pard realize the value of ♠Jx ♥KQxx ♦QJx ♣xxxx? Maybe it's a 30-point deck.

Bartusek: 4♣. Self-splinter. The key to slam is whether partner has wasted club cards. As little as Kxx of hearts and QJTx of diamonds would make this a great slam (assuming x or xx in trumps opposite).

I actually received two versions of this problem. I used Rick's problem, knowing that it would become an advertisement for one of his pet toys.

Roeder: 2NT. Absolutely no problem in the Rick Roeder partnerships. Theory indicates that 2NT should be an artificial game force. Then, I can rebid my spades if need be. However, if partner shows hearts (via a 3♦ transfer) or diamonds (via a 3NT rebid), you are also in Seventh Heaven. For less enlightened souls, I suppose one could rebid 3♠ and pray you land in the right spot.

Wittes: 4♠. If partner has a perfecta, we could make a slam. On the other hand, if partner has a weak hand with secondary club cards, 4♠ might be in jeopardy.

5

Matchpoints
Neither Vul.

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
pass*	pass	2♥	2♠
pass	pass	???	

* Denies 3 hearts

You, South, hold: ♠ A ♥ KJ6543 ♦ 1042 ♣ J86

What call do you make?

The argument for not bidding:

Dunitz: Pass. What is partner's likely distribution? 4=1=3=5 seems about right. Partner might bid with a doubleton. Partner would have bid 2♣ with six clubs. Any diamonds partner has will be finessable. Unlike the last hand, I don't want to dance. I pass.

The arguments for bidding:

Shuster: 3♣. I'm not selling all white at MPs to the enemies' eight+ card fit. Partner already knows about my six hearts, so that story does not need to be repeated. Partner could easily be 4=1=3=5 or 4=0=4=5.

Bartusek: 3♣. I hate holding Txx in RHO's suit. I don't have extras and partner could easily be 4=2=3=4 which suggests that I pass. It seems more likely partner is 3=2=3=5 or 4=1=3=5 because there was no 1NT call. Thus, pass seems right at IMPs, but since we're non-vul at MPs and the opponents have at least an 8-card spade fit it probably is best to compete with 3♣ (doubled down 1 is only –100).

Roeder: 3♣. Maybe we can push them to 3♠.

Wittes: 3♣. Just enough to compete at the 3-level. If partner has two hearts or five clubs, we are likely to have a play.

Abdou: Double (takeout). How much can I have after bidding 2♥? I don't fancy bidding 3♣ in case partner is 4=2=3=4 and forgot to double!

Chodorow: Double. When you have extra values and don't know what to do, depending on the auction it's double or cue.

Grainger: Double (takeout). Partner can expect exactly six hearts and three clubs and already knows you don't have a big hand.

Korbel: Double. Clear cut! I've limited my hand, I've shown six hearts, I have defense, and don't care what partner does.

I'm with the doublers on this one.