Southern California **Bridge News**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Jones



Due to problems arising from the fires in the LA area, there was no January edition. There was an online (BBO) fund raiser game organized by Margie Michelin and Ellis Feigenbaum. There were also several donations that came in. I will give a more complete report including the finances in my column next month. However, if you know of bridge players that lost homes or property or had to evacuate their homes, or might in other ways be in need of financial assistance due to the fires, please send me an email at president@d23acbl.org. Thank you to all that played in the game or made donations!

I also canceled the January 12th hybrid game on Real Bridge. I appreciate all the work and planning that was put into this by several people, especially Tom Reynolds. However, Tom, and his wife Ginny, lost their home in the fires, and it would have been impossible for Tom to have been functional as the organizer of the Hybrid event on that date. Tom learned a tremendous amount from organizing the event. It is possible that the idea of having an online game played on laptops at local clubs can be revived later, but currently no game is scheduled.

Morris (Mojo) Jones has stepped down both as our NAP coordinator and as our D23 Vice-President. We appreciate all the effort Mojo brought in his efforts as NAP coordinator. Thank you, Mojo! Good luck with the Pasadena Bridge Club and your efforts with Jump Start Bridge! Jordan Chodorow has agreed to accept the appointment of D23 Vice-President to fill the remainder of Mojo's term.

Walt Schafer tells me the likely GNT dates for this year will be Saturday May 3 and Sunday 4. Jeff Grotenhuis will be helping with the organization.

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Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



The ACBL BOD president, Margot Hennings, started her second year agenda with among other things, the creation of a Tournament Task Force. This group is to focus on two main topics: staffing, scheduling of tournaments and what events should be emphasized at these tournaments. She appointed me to oversee the staffing element.

Last year, working with the ACBL Director of Finance, Jennifer Webster, I was able to get the finance department to create an analysis of all tournament directors' (TDs) compensation and involvement at tournaments. In the above and what follows, when I say "tournaments," I'm talking almost exclusively about regionals. My suggestion that we create this analysis was driven by the change in how we classify and pay most TDs. Starting in 2024, all but about nine people, irrespective of whether they are full- or part-time employees, are classified as hourly employees and are eligible under the appropriate circumstances to be paid overtime.

From prior experience in other organizations, I know that overtime is an area fraught with potential for significant cost overruns. So, Jennifer created a comprehensive spreadsheet to capture every TD, which tourneys they worked, how much time they charged,

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Brandon Sheumaker will likely be the director and the site is likely to be the Long Beach Bridge Club. Save those dates!

Our district STAC games will return in March. We will not be joined by any other district this year. I appreciate Ruth Baker's work as our STAC coordinator.

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

how those sessions were charged back to the tournament sponsors, etc. She also captured travel time, regular time and overtime. What with other demands on the finance department, this analysis has not yet been updated for this year. It will be updated by the end of this month. This will become a primary tool in my efforts to try and determine if there are more efficient methods to utilize in our staffing of tournaments.

Most of you probably have not been involved with the finances relating to regionals. The league used to have the Director in Charge (DIC) do all the staffing. That might lead to bringing in TDs that the DIC was comfortable with despite the TD being geographically undesirable and costing the district unnecessary travel and hotel reimbursement costs. Or the DIC might have "overstaffed" in the belief that tournament sponsors (in our case Districts 22 and 23) demand such a high degree of service that it's better to start with too much manpower and reduce it if it becomes clear that we don't need as much, as opposed to starting with the minimum required manpower and bringing in additional TD's if table counts get higher than expected.

The former method is much more expensive because the event incurs travel and hotel that could be avoided. While the DICs still have significant input into staffing, the primary function is now done at headquarters. One thing we'll be trying to accomplish is coming up with metrics about the "right level" of staffing. One that's heard constantly over the years, is the number of directors per table. It's a very imperfect measurement. So much depends on the site; one large room vs. more than one room, distance between multiple rooms, where entries are sold, etc. I'll have more to say on this initiative in future articles.

Some people have asked questions about the Clubhouse, the online site available on BBO. In essence, this game is replacing what was created in the early stages of the pandemic that was called Support Your Club. The creation of this game is part of an evolution that went from the SYC, to the creation on the East Coast of the daily short games for limited masterpoint holders. That successful effort was adapted and put into place by Lamya, as the All Western 99er NiteClub. Given that there was a lot of duplication, the next step of the evolutionary process was to have the ACBL take over these games.

We have now taken the additional step of creating not only limited MP holding games, but also open games for all players. And like the original SYC games, nearly all the money is going back to support face to face play. In a recent chat with ACBL Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins, we were informed that approximately $48,000 was generated in a recent month and $42,000 of that was returned to f2f clubs.

San Diego is just around the corner. It's another wonderful D22 regional that we hope you have on your calendar.

FYI Part 3
Why is Duplicate Bridge Called Duplicate?
by Bob Gruber



What is ***duplicate*** bridge and why is it called duplicate? It's a form of bridge competition designed to greatly reduce the element of luck in determining the winners. Many pairs play multiple rounds (consisting of 2 to 5 deals) and they report their results to a central authority, the Director of the game. After each round, the players and the cards move to different tables. At game's end, the Director compares all the results and announces the winners.



How is reducing the element of luck achieved? The main duplicate mechanism is that during the play of the hand, the players keep their 13 cards of a deal

in front of them. Then, when the play is completed, all 4 players put their cards in a specific slot in a numbered, hard plastic holder called a "board" (because they were originally made of wood).

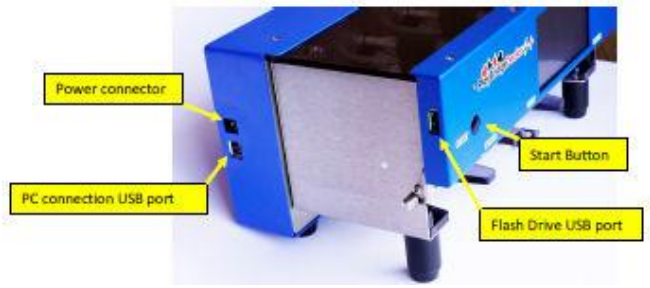
The decks of cards are shuffled and dealt only once—at the start of the 1st round of play[1]. Once dealt, each deal is preserved as just described. By preserving each deal in this way, in all the rounds after round 1, the players are, in essence, playing a "duplicate" of the deals in round 1.

Another major aspect of duplicate bridge is that the players and boards move at the end of each round in a manner designed so that as much as possible all pairs play all the boards/deals and all the N/S pairs play all the E/W pairs (which means, of course, that all the E/W pairs play all the N/S pairs). N/S and E/W are arbitrary designators and may or may not be aligned with the actual compass directions.

At the end of the game, each pair is scored on each (numbered) board by comparing their "raw" score on that board with what all the other pairs in that direction achieved and assigning a numeric value. If a pair did relatively poorly, the value is a low number; if their performance was so-so, the value is a medium number; if they did relatively well, the value is a high number. It doesn't matter which side had the better cards, it's how your pair did in comparison to all the other pairs who played that board/deal in your direction. This comparison of raw scores and conversion to a relative numeric value is the last step in greatly reducing the element of luck.

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[1] Actually, at most duplicate clubs, shuffling and dealing is a thing of the past—these clubs own or have access to a dealing machine, initially called a dealing robot. These machines can deal a complete hand in about 7 seconds. Couple that with computer programs that generate random deals and a skilled operator, a whole set of 36 boards can be dealt in 20-25 minutes. And since the deals are computer generated, it's easy to print records, called hand records, showing the cards each player held on each deal.



FYI Part 4
Some Bridge Slang
by Bob Gruber

Blitz: In a team game, a lopsided victory is called a blitz. Often heard as "we blitzed them" and the less frequently heard "we got blitzed."

Bottom (or zero) The minimum number of points you can earn on a board/hand, namely zero (0). You can be tied for bottom, but if no one else did as poorly, you have a "cold bottom," not to be confused with the anatomical condition.

Cash In bridge parlance, cash means winning a trick or tricks. It has nothing to do with the amount of money in your wallet or purse, although playing for money has been known to empty a wallet or purse of its cash.

Crack To double for penalty.



Crash Fall together, e.g., the Ace and King crashed at trick 3.

Fix An unfortunate result due to happenstance or poor bidding or play by the opponents that is undeservedly rewarded. Usually heard as a grumble along the lines of "that was a fix" or "we got fixed."

Go to Bed With Fail to take/win a cashable trick. "He went to bed with the ace of hearts." Ah, true love at the bridge table.

Hand Hog A person who endeavors to direct the auction so that he/she gets to be declarer as often as possible, sometimes leaving the partnership in an inferior contract.



LOL "Little Old Lady" long before LOL was usurped by the texting crowd.

Mastermind To try to guide the bidding or play in a particular direction. Done by a player who feels superior to his/her partner.

Pencil Whipped To achieve a good result, but lose out when the scorekeeper makes an error in his side's favor.

Post-mortem A favorite part of the game for many players in which they dissect a hand in great detail, covering what went wrong, what went right, and how to do better.

Quacks Queens and Jacks. "I had 10 points, but they were all quacks."

Result Merchant An unhappy person who never gives the opponents credit for doing something right, preferring instead to find a way to blame you (his/her partner) for every poor result that your side suffers.

Stiff A holding of exactly 1 card in a suit, i.e., a singleton.

Take a Bath Suffer a large penalty.

Tank Huddle; think for a long time. Example, he was in the tank for 5 minutes.

Wall Street Bridge Standard and Poor.

Wonder Bids Bids made by inexperienced pairs that have everyone at the table thinking, I wonder what that means.

Harkening back to days of yesteryear, you might have seen a bumper sticker that read:

Bridge players do it with finesse.

[*Editor's note: since we still have some white space to fill, and our esteemed contributor above elected to throw in a joke, the floodgates have opened; brace yourself:*]

Old bridge players never die; they just lose their finesse.

"I had a bad hand," the Venus de Milo said disarmingly.

"The contract was unbeatable," he said coldly.

"I didn't have enough to keep the bidding open," said Tom irresponsibly.

"I had a three-suited hand," he said heartlessly.

And our personal favorite Tom Swifty (while Directing a game): "There aren't enough tables for a Mitchell," howled the Director.

[*Editor's note: we have a little extra white space this month, so here's an interesting hand sent in to us.*]

Up-and-Coming Players
by Jordan Chodorow

This hand was bid masterfully by my highly promising clients Mary Sue Foard and Clem Fleshler during one of our bidding practice sessions, shortly after they'd posted a near-70% game at Beverly Hills Bridge Club.

North (Clem)
♠ 7 5 4 2
♥ Q 6
♦ AKQJ86
♣ A

West	East
♠ 6	♠ 10 9 3
♥ K 9 8 3	♥ 5 4
♦ 9 7	♦ 10 4 3
♣ Q J 10 8 7 5	♣ 9 6 4 3 2

South (Mary Sue)
♠ A K Q J 8
♥ A J 10 7 2
♦ 5 2
♣ K

Mary Sue opened 1♠. Clem responded 2♦. Mary Sue rebid 2♥. Clem now set trumps with a forcing 3♠ bid. Mary Sue might have shown something along the way but chose to bid 4♠. Clem now invoked 4NT for keycards and Mary Sue bid 5♦ to show three. Clem, willing to risk a grand slam with AKQxx opposite xxxx but not with AKxxx opposite xxxx, asked about the ♠Q with 5♥, and Mary Sue bid 6♣ to show the ♠Q and the ♣K. Clem now took stock and counted tricks: five spades, six diamonds, the heart ace and the club ace. She realized she had thirteen tricks without needing a trump suit and so bid the granddaddy of them all: 7NT! Watch out for these two; they're coming!

The Teacher's Corner

Case for The Defense
by Daniel F. Oakes

If you've been following this series, you know that we've covered attitude and count signals, and that leaves us with one major category – suit preference signals. Suit preference signals are extremely useful, but also the most abused of the signals. Typically, when players learn about them and start using them, they overdo it, and try to give suit preference signals when in an attitude or count situation. Remember, suit preference signals are at the bottom of the signaling totem pole; attitude or count signals have priority, and the most important part of signaling is both players being on the same page as to which signal applies in a given situation. Playing standard signals, a 2 could mean "I don't like the suit" (attitude), "I have an odd number of cards in the suit" (count), or "I like clubs" (suit-preference), but if you play the 2 of diamonds to tell partner you like clubs, and all your partner gets out of it is "I have an odd number of diamonds," then you might as well not be signaling at all.

OK, enough caveats; let's get to it. Recap of the basics – suit preference signals are given to tell partner which of two (usually) suits you prefer. A "high" card suggests the higher ranking of the suits, and a "low" card suggests the lower ranking. So if the cards you can afford to part with are the 8 and the 3, and you're trying to direct partner as between hearts (higher ranking) and diamonds (lower ranking), then you play the 8 to suggest hearts, and the 3 to suggest diamonds.

Of course, there are four suits, not two, so how do we know which suits the choice is between? First off, a suit preference card doesn't apply to the suit actually being played. So if I'm playing a diamond as a suit preference signal, diamonds are not part of the suit preference picture; the choice is between other suits. Also, we don't direct partner toward the trump suit when we make a suit preference signal. So if spades are trump, and I discard a suit preference diamond, a high diamond is a signal for hearts, and a low diamond is a signal for clubs. Suit preference signals don't have to be discards. Sometimes, we'd like to direct partner to a particular suit when we're defending NT and declarer is running a long suit, but we can't make an attitude discard, because we have to follow suit. If declarer is running a long diamond suit in dummy, and it's apparent that I'll be unable to win a trick in the suit (so my attitude and count are either known or don't matter), then I might play my diamonds from highest to lowest to suggest spade values. Suit preference takes center stage when attitude and count are either known, or don't matter.

There are some situations where suit preference signals are standard, and adding them to your mental pattern recognition will help you be alert to them. The most common is when giving partner a ruff. Let's say spades are trump, and partner leads a heart that we know or suspect is a singleton. We're going to return a heart for partner to ruff, but which heart? Our attitude in hearts doesn't matter to partner; he doesn't have any more. Similarly, partner doesn't need to know how many hearts I have. What partner *really* wants to know is, after he ruffs this trick, how can he put me back in to get another ruff.

So in my example, spades are trump, and I'm returning a heart, so those two suits are eliminated from the suit preference equation. If I have an entry in *diamonds*, I'm going to return a high heart for partner to ruff. If I have an entry in *clubs* (lower ranking than diamonds), I'm going to return a *low* heart for partner to ruff. When partner is signaling suit preference, be alert to the visible spot cards; a 6 might be "low" from 679, or it might be "high" from 642. It's the relative size that matters. If you lead the 3, and you see the 2456 in dummy, then partner's 7 is low; don't be lazy.

Here's another common (and commonly overlooked) suit preference situation. Let's say partner overcalls in spades so you know s/he has a 5-card suit. You're on lead against NT, and you lead your doubleton spade. Declarer holds up as partner wins the first two tricks, and at trick 3, declarer is forced to win the ace. Later, declarer takes a losing finesse, and you get in with your one entry card. How do you get to partner so he can cash his two good spades? Were you watching the spots? When partner plays a spade at trick 3, it's a *perfect* suit preference situation. Partner is the only one left with spades; attitude and count don't matter. Partner has three spades left, and should play the highest of them with a heart entry, the lowest with a club entry, and the middle with a diamond entry. An expert partnership will *never* get this wrong; many other pairs will be guessing. If you and your partner are aware of this situation and paying attention, even if you have 50

masterpoints between you, you'll never get it wrong, either.

Two other situations that aren't universal; discuss with your partner. The first is, some partnerships play suit preference in the trump suit. The classical standard trump suit signal is to play low then high with a doubleton, and high then low with a third (at least) trump. So with a trump holding of 62, you'd play the 2, but with 642, you'd play the 6 then the 2, letting partner know that you have another trump and are therefore possibly able to ruff something. The more sophisticated method is to high-low with three trump *if and only if you can (and want to) ruff something*. That way, you'd don't give away any information to declarer when it wouldn't help you. For instance, if you're on declarer's left, if you wantonly signaled a third trump when it wouldn't benefit you, declarer would know he could ruff something small in dummy without worrying about being over-ruffed (since if you have 3 trump, partner presumably would only have 2 in a typical 8-card trump fit).

As I said, though, that's the "classical" (read: traditional) way to signal in the trump suit. What gained some traction over the decades is using the trump suit to signal suit preference. So if you follow up the line when declarer draws trump, that carries minimal information – you might like the lower of the plausible suits (usually dummy will have a suit that can be discounted, because it's appearance makes it unlikely that you'd be interested in it), or you might have no preference; you're just following suit. However, if you play a high trump followed by a low one, that shows a clear interest in favor of the higher plausible side-suit. You can do it either way; you just have to have the conversation with your partner and decide which you want to do – does a high trump followed by a low one mean you have another trump and a desire to ruff something, or does it mean you have an interest in a high side suit? Good conversation to have, and whichever way you choose, as long as you're on the same page as your partner, it will beat playing your cards randomly.

The other situation is when there's a singleton on the board. Let's say opening leader against 4♠ leads the ace of hearts, holding the trick when dummy shows up with a singleton. Since a heart continuation can be ruffed in dummy, it's common (though not universal) to play that this is a suit preference situation; a high heart suggests a switch to a diamond, and a low heart suggests a switch to a club. This isn't a bad agreement to have, though it's not a no-brainer, mostly because sometimes a continuation, forcing declarer to take the ruff he's entitled to anyway, is best, and sometimes a trump switch is best. Of course, after seeing partner's suit preference signal, the opening leader can still switch to trump or continue the suit originally led if that looks best. Often, the auction coupled with the appearance of dummy suggests an "obvious shift," and even with a singleton on the board, you could play attitude signals, with a discouraging signal suggesting that it's ok to make the obvious shift, and an encouraging signal in the suit led suggesting that the obvious shift might not be a good idea. In fact, Matthew and Pamela Granovetter wrote a very good book about this "obvious shift principle." The easier agreement, and not a bad one at all, is to just play suit preference in a suit in which dummy has a singleton, but again, the important thing is to be on the same page as your partner, so have a short conversation with your favorite partner and come to an agreement.

So, now that we've covered (ad nauseum?!) signaling basics, starting next month, we'll get to formulating a plan and helping partner help you.

District 23 Masterpoint Summaries for 2024

by Mike Marcucci
District Historian

Every year, as most players know, ACBL tracks certain categories and levels of play in our bridge world and gives awards to those leaders.

The Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs races are held at the Unit and District levels. The Barry Crane Top 500 is held at the national level. Here are the 2024 summaries on those races for our District 23.

Our District leaders for each level of play in the Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs races:

Mini McKenney

MP Level	Name	MPs
>10000	Mitch Dunitz	1609.4
7500-10000	Mike Mikyska	476.5
5000-7500	Ed Piken	322.2
3500-5000	Sheila Bozin	381.5
2500-3500	David Peim	393.6
1500-2500	Laura Gastelum	342.4
1000-1500	Terry Hane	272.2
500-1000	Ramani Ravikandan	321.3
300-500	William Taylor	364.9
200-300	Sri Nagesh	102.1
100-200	Michael Lam	168.4
50-100	Robert Jennings	164.0

20-50	Cherene Birkholz	69.1
5-20	Andy Rooke	29.6
0-5	Les Klein	86.6

Note: Each of these players has also won the Unit award in their respective categories. It's a 2 for 1! There are 8 other Unit winners in these categories, but only 1 winner for the District.

Ace of Clubs

MP Level	Name	MPs
>10000	Gil Stinebaugh	354.3
7500-10000	Viktor Anikovich	67.9
5000-7500	Bill McClean	188.4
3500-5000	Sheila Bozin	320.1
2500-3500	Sin Orensztein	225.7
1500-2500	Fuad Khuri	224.4
1000-1500	Jeff Goldberg	162.9
500-1000	Leo Dittemore	128.0
300-500	William Taylor	158.1
200-300	Sri Nagesh	94.3
100-200	Jeffrey Johnson	86.7
50-100	George Chilko	54.2
20-50	Patrick Finley	43.6
5-20	Salina Lo	20.3
0-5	Les Klein	68.1

Our District MP leaders for 2024 points:

Grand Life Master

Rank	Name	MPs
1	Mitch Dunitz	1609.4
2	Ifti Baqai	1317.4
3	Billy Cohen	1180.4
4	Alex Kolesnik	895.3
5	Lulu Minter	569.9
6	Gil Stinebaugh	508.1
7	Mike Mikyska	476.5
8	John Jones	464.6
9	Steve Gross	430.0
10	David Peim	393.6
11	Sheila Bozin	381.5
12	Sin Orensztein	375.7
13	William Taylor	364.9
14	Hemant Lall	359.3
15	Mark Peters	356.9
16	Junko Hemus	344.1
17	Laura Gastelum	342.4
18	Viktor Anikovich	327.0
19	Ed Piken	322.2
20	Ramani Ravikandan	321.3
21	Neal Kleiner	319.2
22	Peter Knee	316.2
23	Mori Taylor	306.3
24	Diane Elliott	303.3
25	Fredy Minter	295.3
26	Fuad Khuri	295.1
27	Joan Rubin	276.8
28	Terry Hane	272.2
29	Rajath Shourie	270.9
30	John Ramos	267.9

Our District Top 30 for overall MP totals:

Grand Life Master

Rank	Name	MPs
1	Mitch Dunitz	32955
2	Steve Gross	32476
3	Ellen Anten	27458
4	Jill Meyers	22175
5	Hemant Lall	21468
6	Billy Cohen	20022
7	Rebecca Clough	19437
8	Ken Scholes	18897
9	Ifti Baqai	17858
10	Roger Clough	17275
11	Pam Wittes	14864
12	Alex Kolesnik	14821
13	Jordan Chodorow	14438
14	John Jones	13587
15	Gil Stinebaugh	13255
16	Lulu Minter	12753
17	Gene White Jr	12669
18	Steve Onderwyzer	12347
19	Peter Benjamin	12316
20	Aram Bedros	12303
21	Mike Savage	11810
22	David Schudson	11746
23	Bruce Horiguchi	11532
24	Viktor Anikovich	10650
25	Peter Knee	10286
26	Jing Dong Chen*	10227
27	Rhoda Himmell	10068
28	David Chechelashvili	9777
29	Dr Sid Brownstein	9656
30	Mike Mikyska	9650

* not a LM

No awards here but we keep track anyway!

Pins are awarded by each Unit for their Mini-McKenney category leaders.

Certificates from ACBL are distributed to the Unit Ace of Clubs leaders.

District leaders can also expect ACBL certificates in both categories. It may take some time to get these, since there are so many to draw up.

We congratulate all players for the time and effort each award takes. We hope you are proud of each one and continue striving for more. That competition is one of those things that keeps us young!

District 23 Rank Changes December 2024 – January 2025

Junior Master
Merrily D. Adams
Eileen Braeman
Kirk Bretney
Barbara M. Clark
Debra Collins
Daniel J. Collins
Ronni Coulter
Ann O. Devlin
Robin Drapeau
John Frye
Angela Grant
Sarah Grossi
Cary Hoffman
Denise Hoffman
Vaughan W. Inman
Peter S Lorman
Aeshna Mathur
Melissa M. Murray
Jonathan Penzner
Sharon Rosenberger
Elaine Sarnoff
Steven D. Schneider
Jerome Y. Shiohama
Elizabeth Sweedyk
Bryce Walther
Stephen Wright
Lisa Wyatt

Club Master
Carol Grosz
Ilona M. Guillemet
Sue A. Jones
William B. Lacina
Robert M. Lea

Club Master
Hossein Madadi
Michael I. Miyagi
Marcia L. Nicholson
Kris Perry
Gene Polgar
Elizabeth Sweedyk
Lydia L. Xie

Sectional Master
Esteban Andryjowicz
Derald E. Brackmann
Anthony I. Gronich
Leslie Klein
Allan Lubitz
Andy P. Rooke
Rita B. Wright

Regional Master
George E. Chilko
Gloria Frankel
Linda Leventhal
Kyle S. Miller
Victoria Vaughn

NABC Master
John H. Barrow
Elizabeth A. Biggins
Sheila Bub
Larry Cheung
Toni Hansen
Stuart B. Hoffman
Ming Hu
Jeffrey P. Johnson
Michael Lam
Saul F. Leonard

NABC Master
Richard E. Parker
Judith A. Scott
Bruce J. Walker

Advanced NABC Master
Paulette L. Burkitt
Larry Feldman
Sofi Kasubhai

Life Master
Lewis Anten
Glen Musicer

Bronze Life Master
Leo D. Dittemore
Glen Musicer

Silver Life Master
Adam M. Barron
Diane L. Elliott
Phil H. Rabichow
Renee Wishengrad

Ruby Life Master
Liang Fan
Laura Waisler
Wenjia Yan

Sapphire Life Master
Jeanette Deverian
C. Valerie Gamio
Neil A. Littmann

Emerald Life Master
Roy A. Wilson

The Puzzle Page

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Bridge Jeopardy
by John Jones

Category: Starting with Y or Z (each term begins with the letter Y or Z)

And the answer is …

$100 – The lowest possible score in a matchpoint game, also a bottom.

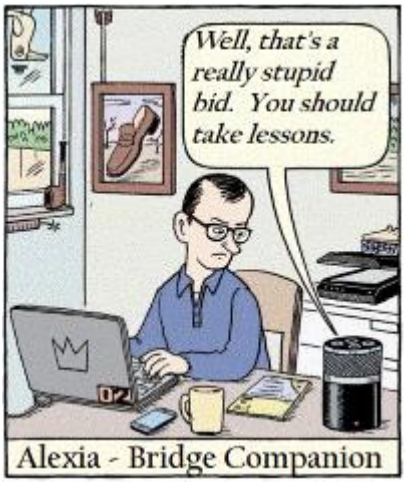
$200 – A standard system defined by the listings on a convention card and identified by its color.

$300 – A hand with no card higher than a 9.

$400 – Author of Bridge My Way, his last name is Mahmood, but he is normally referred to only by his three letter first name.

$500 – This lead convention combines with Jack Denies. With this convention a lead of a ten or nine shows the number of higher cards in the suit.

(Solutions to Bridge Jeopardy is on page 14. No peeking!)



Submitted by John Jones

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Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

La Fetra Games: Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45
Individual: March 1, 10 a.m., Ontario
Club Championships: February 18, 21, La Fetra
Unit Game: February 15, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
STaC: March 11, 14, La Fetra
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

The December (yes, not having published in January really put us behind!) Individual was captured by both Ramona Hernandez and Yours Truly – a tie at 59.52%. Linda Tessier took third.

We didn't hold a January Individual game; Your Favorite (I hope) Director was on the way back from an excursion. Bucket-list trip, don't you know?

Peter Kavounas won the February Individual with a 61.46 game. Yours Truly was second, Linda Tessier third, Steve Andersen fourth, John Jones fifth (yes we had a good turnout!), and Nony Bernal sixth.

We also did not hold a Unit game in December, due to conflicts with Rancho Mirage, Pasadena, and the Christmas holiday. In the January Unit Team Game (YES – we are trying this on for size – if it's popular enough, we'll do it more often), The winners were Steve Anderson, Gary Atwell, Kiran Kumar, and Woody Woodman. They posted 5½ wins and 107 Victory Points. Second, with 5 wins and 98 VPs we find John Jones, Tom Reynolds, Roger Boyar, and Dale Quasny. Also with 5½ wins but only 90 VPs, the team of Bill Papa, Peter Kavounas, Kitty Moon, and Tom Cusack, took third. Finally, the team of Tim and Eileen Finlay, Nona Stokes, and Ramona Hernandez took home first place in Flight C. No one was shut out, each team won at least two matches (out of 8), so no one went home empty handed.

To show how frustrating this game can be, the team including Yours Truly beat the team boasting more than 17,000 masterpoints … and lost to the team with 630 points. As Marty Bergen said in a different context, "Points – Shmoints!"

The vagaries of the calendar have allowed us to report on the February Unit game. The winners were Caryn Mason – Patrick Finley, 63.35%. Second (and 1st, E-W) were Karen McCarthy – Karen Olin. (I guess if you weren't named "Karen," any spelling, you were out of luck.) Third were Peter Kavounas – Mary Ann Wotring, in fourth we find Ramona Hernandez – Nona Stokes, and rounding out the leader board, Kitty Moon – Thomas Cusack.

It's time to relate how our members fared in the Rancho Mirage Regional last December. Thanks to Vic Sartor and Caryn Mason for the following material:

A number of Unit 551 players acquitted themselves well at the recent Palm Springs / Rancho Mirage regional tournament. The foursome of Mary Ann Wotring, Vic Sartor, Richard Parker, and Caryn Mason played in various combinations in several team-of-four sessions, winning two events and finishing second in a third.

Caryn also partnered District 23 President John Jones on the winning team in a top level team event and even played a starring role – bidding and bringing home a tough slam to win a crucial match. For the week, she led all local players with 43.30 gold points in just three days. Richard Parker was close behind with 34.88. Vic Sartor brought home 29.97, and Mary Ann Wotring (who missed one session due to illness) garnered 25.89.

Several other La Fetrians brought home masterpoints. David Ochroch collected 7.19 in various events. Art Weinstein had two successful team sessions with Richard Parker early in the week and would up with 4.91. Amr Elghamry netted 5.37 in his only event – a strong pairs contest. Dan Robinson got 1.07 for a fine 61% morning session with David Ochroch in the Gold Rush pairs. Not a bad performance for our little contingent.



THU: TEAMS - BRT 1
John Jones - Caryn Mason - Sue Treble - Bill Treble



THU: TEAMS - BKT 6
Vic Sartor - Mary Ann Wotring - Nasra Kwentus - Richard Parker

Promotions since our December issue: Vaughan Inman and Aeshna Mathur are now Junior Masters; Esteban Andryjowicz has reached Sectional Master; Richard Parker has advanced to NABC Master; and Sofi Kasubhai is an Advanced NABC Master. Congratulations, and keep up the good play.

Special congratulations go to Dan Robinson, who has been selected by the California Pharmacist Association as the 2025 Pharmacist of the Year.

It is quite unusual for a retired pharmacist to get this recognition, but it is largely related to his continued work on the state and national level on health policy and political advocacy that supports the delivery of pharmaceutical care in all practice settings.

Surprisingly, *no one* managed to crack the 65% barrier in December! Well, we lost several games due to both the holidays and the construction at La Fetra. The best effort was a 64.81% game turned in by Mary Ann Wotring and Steve Mancini. Others who topped the leader board in December: Fredy and Lulu Minter, Ramona Hernandez, Nona Stokes, Helen Wang, and Vic Sartor.

Lots of winners in January! One thing that has increased the number of winners: attendance has picked up to the point where we often play a Mitchell movement (two winning pairs) rather than the dreaded Howell movement (one winner). Breaking the 65% barrier in January: Fredy and Lulu Minter, 69.84%; Vic Sartor – Steve Mancini, 67.63%; Vic Sartor – Mary Ann Wotring, 66.07%; and the Minters again, 65.83%. Others topping the leader board were Peter Kavounas, Caryn Mason, Bill Papa, Kurt Trieselmann, Woody Woodman, Tim and Eileen Finlay, Karen McCarthy, and Yours Truly.

Here's a hand that came up some time ago, that I've been holding onto (for when there are no really bizarre ones to report on). South is the dealer, no one is vulnerable. I'll show the whole hand:

	North ♠ 10 7 5 ♥ None ♦ AK10654 ♣ 8763	
West ♠ J ♥ KJ10642 ♦ None ♣ AKJ854		East ♠ A8642 ♥ 8 ♦ QJ873 ♣ 102
	South ♠ KQ93 ♥ AQ9753 ♦ 92 ♣ Q	

So! You are West, and all set to either bid 2♠ after South opens 1♠, or else 2NT after an opening bid of 1♦. Otherwise you can just bid your heart suit, right?

Guess again! South upsets the apple card by opening one HEART. Eek. Well, you can just bid 2♣, which you do.

North passes, and East – for reasons best known to herself – bids 2♠ on that sturdy five-card suit. South passes, and you certainly have nowhere to go. Now North chimes in with 3♦!

This awful contract goes one down due to the horrid trump split, but it was not such a bad board for N-S after all. While -50 was the normal result, one enterprising E-W pair went for 3NT, making four! Hmmm, on a diamond lead, you get six clubs, one diamond, one heart, and one spade. Don't ask me where the 10th trick comes from.

Quote for the month: "Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies." (Groucho Marx)

TRIVIA TIME (no fair looking it up – you *know*, or you *don't*): What was Groucho's actual first name? Answer next month!



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley
by Beth Morrin

Our Face-to-Face game is being held at the Newhall Community Center in Santa Clarita at 10:00 am on Fridays. The game is FREE but reservations are required as our space is limited.

For more information, please contact Ruth Baker (rbaker1243@sbcglobal.net) or Paula Olivares (paula@pacbell.net).

Winners of the Friday F2F game:

Oct. 11		
N/S	John Langer – Kathy Flynn	63.57%
E/W	May Abagi – Hani Abraham	66.76%
Oct. 18		
N/S	Paula Olivares – Tomoko Stock	60.35%
E/W	Harry Randhawa- Alan Nueman	61.88%
Oct. 26		
N/S	George MacDonald – Ruth Baker	65.86%
E/W	Rand Pinsky – Kathy Swaine	58.04%
Nov. 1		
N/S	Donna Davidson – Bill Langlois	58.046%
E/W	Mark Brifman – Susan Strassner	58.33%

Virtual Game Schedule

Monday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Tuesday:	6:15 PM	Open game
Sunday:	12:30 PM	Open game

Contact our club manager at virtualclub@bridgemojo.com for reservations. ACBL has increased the minimum entry fee to $5. 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+%):

Tues. Oct. 8	
Jin Hu – Zachary Madden	75.00%
Mon. Oct. 21	
Donna Davidson – Bill Langlois	73.26%
Tues. Oct. 27	
Paula Olivares – Bill Brodek	66.67%
Tues. Nov. 5	
Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinsky	68.06%
Sun. Nov. 10	
Jerome Paul – Margaret Shifley	70.83%

Next Board Meeting: TBA

Pasadena – San Gabriel
by Morris "Mojo" Jones
bridgemojo.com



Our first unit game of March is also our **annual membership meeting** and election of board members. That's Sunday, March 2. We'll be serving a pizza lunch from Blaze Pizza at noon, hold our meeting and elections, and follow that with bridge. We should be able to acknowledge our 2024 Mini-McKinney and Ace of Clubs winners as well.

Our club was the closest club to the Eaton fire, and many, too many, of our regular players and students lost homes or have been otherwise displaced in the aftermath. It's been a struggle for all of us coping with loss or trying to support friends through their recovery. The attendance at the bridge club seems to be extra high

this month, which just affirms the ability of bridge to provide connection, distraction, comfort, and community. It's good to share this time with our bridge playing friends.

The Unit Games have been well attended. Here are winners from January and February:

January 5, 11 tables:

- N/S: Gary Moore, Gilbert Stinebaugh
- E/W: Robert Shore, Bruce Altshuler

January 19, the Elliott Mazur Open Pairs, 10.5 tables:

- N/S: Karmen Armoudjian, Janet Wickersham
- E/W: Zachary Vedro, Andy Rooke

February 2, 10 tables:

- N/S: Jeanette Deverian, Joan Mesias
- E/W: Amr Elghamry, Dominique Moore

Let's catch up on a couple months of rank changes. (I may have missed some!):

January:

Junior Master
Jonathan Penzner

Club Master
Carol Grosz

Sectional Master
Derald Brackman
Leslie Klein

NABC Master
John Barrow

Sapphire Life Master
Jeanette Deverian

Emerald Life Master
Roy Wilson

February:

Junior Master
Stephen Wright

Adv NABC Master
Paulette Burkitt



Long Beach
by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, nothing from Long Beach this month.

Downey-Whittier
by Daniel F. Oakes

A couple of months of reporting, but with the holidays falling on Wednesdays, it all evens out sort of. John Petrie and Sankar Reddy blew the doors off the place to start December with a bang, posting a 70.69% game on the 4th. Not to be overlooked, Liz and Kent Burrell were 1st C, 1st B, and 2nd overall. With Petrie and Reddy hogging all the matchpoints, it was a challenge for anyone else to even break 50% but the Burrells still hit 53.47.

On December 11th, Barbara Horn, in anticipation of her 97th birthday, celebrated by winning the club championship game with 63.19% (and a little help from partner John Dobson). Petrie and Reddy came back down to earth, but still took 2nd overall with 58.81%

On the 18th, Barbara and John posted their second consecutive 63% game, this time good for equal first E/W (and overall) with Dan Oakes and Mike Ventri. Jack Rainsberry and Bill Skupen were 1st N/S with 61.25%. The Burrells were 1st C overall, and Shelby Oakes (Hi, mom!) and Ruth Salisbury were 1st C E/W and 2nd C overall.

On the 25th, Santa came, and on January 1st, everyone was hung over, but we returned on January 8th, when Petrie and Reddy picked up where they left off with 68% for 1st overall, a score so high that this time, none of the other E/W pairs could break 50%. On the other side of the table, the Burrells posted an impressive 63% game, good for 1st C N/S…and 1st B N/S…and 1st A N/S and 2nd overall.

Oakes (Dan) and Ventri led the way on January 15 with 64.58%. Anita Frost and Jim Gorin won a tightly contested battle for 2nd, with 55.56%, less than half a board ahead of Gabby Sill and Debra (since I don't know if it's Debbie or Debby) Thorpe. The Burrells tied for 2nd B with Neil Rhodes and Raj Ramchandani.

On January 22, Rainsberry and Skupen set the pace with 65.69%, 1st E/W (and overall). Horn and Dobson were back in the mix, 2nd E/W (and overall). Petrie and Reddy led the N/S pairs, with Jon Yinger and Kiran Kumar 2nd and Bob and Linda Krause 1st B.

January 29th was the second of two consecutive Junior Fund games, and Petrie and Reddy (I'm getting carpal tunnel syndrome typing their names) again set the pace, with 67.08%. Second overall and 1st N/S were Ventri & Oakes. 1st B (and 2nd A) E/W were Rainsberry & Skupen, and Forst & Gorin were 1st C E/W. Rhodes & Ramchandani were 2nd A (and 1st B & C) N/S.

Morbid curiosity compelled me to run the numbers – Petrie & Reddy didn't take a day off from the club in the two months span (as they rarely do) and averaged over 60%. That's some good consistency!

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

$100 – What is zero?

$200 – What is Yellow Card?

$300 – What is a Yarbrough?

$400 – Who is Zia?

$500 – What is Zero or Two Higher?

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Mark Bartusek, Jordan Chodorow, Kitty Cooper, Mitch Dunitz, Lynne Feldman, Ross Grabel, 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

Matchpoints
Both Vul

South	West	North	East
1♦	3♠	pass	pass
???			

You, South, hold: ♠ Q9 ♥ KJ ♦ KQ963 ♣ AKJ8

What call do you make?

We have 19 HCP but no call looks attractive. This problem was submitted by Jordan, so I'll start with him.

Chodorow: 3NT. It hasn't gotten any easier a month later. Any of pass, double, 3NT, or 4♣ could work well or badly on a given day. Pass would be my fourth choice because if partner holds her share of the missing points, we have a red game. Double may be the expert call and wins big when partner has long hearts, but I'd worry; partner will bid 4♥ quite happily on a lot of hands where it's just silly. 4♣ keeps the ball in the fairway, not an unreasonable approach in such doubtful situations as this. Not being allowed to abstain, I'll bid 3NT because it's our likeliest game and I want to declare if partner's spades are ace-third or king-third. That tempo may see me home.

Joining him is Daniel.

Korbel: 3NT. Let's goooooo!

Others try passing, knowing it's as Lynne states, "Wimpy"!

Feldman: Pass. I'll try a wimpy pass.

Shuster: Pass. Vulnerable LHO can very likely run spades against NT, but even if he doesn't do so immediately, they would be very unlucky to not get a second chance to do so. And where are we going? Partner would need a miracle to make 4♥ good and we're off too much fast stuff to hope to make 5♦. But we do rate to beat 3♠, so let's go for a plus score. I'd pass at IMPs, too, nervously.

Bartusek: Pass. Preempts work! If I had another heart then I'd reopen with a double, but it's too dangerous with only a doubleton heart and a likely wasted ♠Q. West is vulnerable and probably has both top spade honors. I need more distribution to balance with 4♣.

Cooper: Pass. I have a good hand but since partner did not bid, it is hard to construct a hand where we make game. ♠Jxx ♥xxx ♦Ax ♣Qxxxx would produce 3NT but unless I bid it that is not happening. 3NT could easily be right, especially if they underlead ♠K. Still 3NT is not that likely to make if partner does not have ♦A.

Some of the panelists like trying their second suit. Normally this would show a five-card suit, but we are sort of stuck.

Roeder: 4♣. Passing with 19, albeit a soft 19: *"It Ain't Me Babe."*

Dunitz: 4♣. Brutal problem. I can't double with two hearts. The choices are Pass and 4♣. I would bid 3NT if LHO was not vulnerable. 4♣, ugh!

Wittes: 4♣. I don't really like any action, but I feel I'm too good to pass and don't like the prospects of playing a 4-2 heart fit if I double.

I'll finish with a vote for the fourth viable option.

Grabel: Double. This is very close between pass and double.

This hand is a big guess, but I think I would try double and hope partner converts it or bids something other than 4♥. If partner does bid 4♥, maybe they'll have significant length there and it will be the best strain. The wimpy pass is my second choice.

2

IMPs
N-S Vul

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

You, South, hold: ♠ K6 ♥ 6 ♦ KQ9852 ♣ AJ75

What call do you make?

This problem was given to me by Caryn Mason, who was partnering Patrick Finley in a BBO game. Caryn tried 3NT, needed 3-3 hearts (she got it) and a club finesse (no luck that time). 4♥ was a better contract. Joining her with a 3NT call (protecting the ♠K) were:

Wittes: 3NT. 4♥ could be right even with my lack of support. If my king of spades were elsewhere, I'd like 4♥ more, but I'm not crazy about a spade lead through my Kx.

Bartusek: 3NT. Tough choice between 3NT and 4♣. Partner can rebid 4♥ if they wish, but the ♠K is likely wasted except in a 3NT contract. Partner can work out that I am under pressure with a hand containing a lot of minor suit cards; thus, partner can pull with good support for one of the minors.

One option is using the forcing nature of the auction and letting partner make the next guess.

Chodorow: Pass. Whatever I'm going to bid, it seems right to tell partner I'm not dying to bid it.

Dunitz: Pass.

Grabel: Pass. We are in a game forcing auction and partner's bid will be useful. I will pass 4♥, raise 4♣ or 4♦, and pass a double denying a seventh heart, four plus clubs, or three diamonds.

Shuster: Pass. Double would show more of a defensive hand. I'm happy to go with whatever partner wants to do. I suppose 3NT could be right, but it would take a very exact catch. I expect game to have play in one of the trump suits, although I have no idea which one. Maybe partner does.

Korbel: Pass. Gross! I'm sure the panel will bid 3NT, and they are probably right.

Some panelists try bidding at the 4-level.

Roeder: 4♦. Be prepared to fall from *"All Along the Watchtower."*

Cooper: 4♣. If partner has the ♦A then 3NT could be a winner. Let's try for some other game and hope 4♥ makes if partner bids it.

Finally, a panelist who wields a red card.

Feldman: Double.

3

Matchpoints
None Vul

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

You, South, hold: ♠ A9765 ♥ KQ ♦ A932 ♣ K6

What call do you make?

This problem came from an Eastern tournament. One good player thought 1NT was the best opening bid. For the rest of us that open a normal 1♠, we now have to choose to defend, underbid with 2NT, or overbid with 3NT. Several panelists choose to defend.

Shuster: Pass. OK, you talked me into it. MP. Favorable. Let's roll the dice. I'm not all that gung-ho on it though; I really would like to have either a singleton heart or only one honor (since the trick the ♥Q represents could possibly also be made with a ruff). Anyone who opens 1NT won't get this chance, so I hope I'm right.

Bartusek: Pass. My second choice is 3NT since partner guarantees at least about 9 HCPs for a negative double at this level. I don't see where nine tricks are coming from, so I'll settle for +200 or +500.

Chodorow: Pass. It's not guaranteed to work and doesn't come close to satisfying the Rule of 9, but the defense looks easy and we don't have a clear alternative direction with as much upside.

Cooper: Pass. I have lots of defense here and no clear place to play for us.

Grabel: Pass. We have no guarantee of a game; this could be juicy.

Dunitz: Pass.

Wittes: Pass. Toughest problem of a tough set. A 3NT bid is certainly a possibility, especially with my ♦9, but the 9 could also be valuable on defense, and they are vulnerable versus non-vulnerable. Partner should have about a 9 or 10 count for a 2-level negative double; we rate to have a lot of tricks against 2♦ doubled.

Korbel: Pass. Finally, an easy one.

Roeder: 2NT. *Mr. Tambourine Man* loves the ♦9.

Feldman: 2NT.

4

IMPs
E-W Vul

East	South	West	North
1♣	???		

You, South, hold: ♠ AQJ852 ♥ 109852 ♦ Q ♣ 10

What call do you make?

We have six strong spades, five mediocre hearts, and a much better hand for offense than defense. Do we bid Michaels getting both majors into play, bid 1♠ allowing for biding hearts later, or preempt with 2♠, 3♠, or 4♠? I'll start with the 1♠ bidders, who present the argument against bidding Michaels on this hand.

Bartusek: 1♠. I would ignore a 4-bagger in hearts for preemptive purposes but not a 5-bagger. I think there is too much potential for hearts (or game) to bid 2♠.

Chodorow: 1♠. I want to emphasize spades (so no 2♣), but will bid my hearts later even if unescorted. 2♠ makes it too likely I'll go to bed never having shown them.

Cooper: 1♠S. Too skewed for Michaels.

Korbel: 1♠. Nothing feels quite right here, so I'll go slow and try to judge well later.

Roeder: 1♠. To do anything else would be "*Blowing In The Wind.*" I'm not a fan of preempting because this hand holds lots of offensive potential. Michaels is not *"All I Really Want To Do"* with this suit discrepancy.

Grabel: 1♠. No second choice!

Let's hear the argument in favor of Michaels.

Wittes: 2♣. 1♠ is tempting with my spades so much better than my hearts, but I do have good heart texture, and my hand looks a lot better in 2♥ if partner is something like 1-3 or even 1-4 in the majors.

Now let's listen to the preemptors, who want to use this opportunity to make life tough on the opponents.

Shuster: 3♠. Yes, it might be our hand for 4♥. In the long run, I believe a spade preempt to be a winner - the side heart length cuts both ways. If it is their hand, perhaps neither has enough hearts to double - that could make their auction very awkward.

Dunitz: 3♠. Maximum pressure on the opponents. This could be silly.

I like 3♠, but this may be even better.

Feldman: 4♠.

5

IMPs
N-S Vul

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	pass	???

You, South, hold: ♠ 5 ♥ J52 ♦ AQJ9542 ♣ A9

What call do you make?

Few, if any, partnerships play any low number of diamonds as natural. So how do we get to bid diamonds naturally? We bid NT first. 2NT is closer on values than 1NT, but 1NT makes it much easier for someone to bid, which is what we want to occur. Which is superior?

Korbel: 1NT. Gross, again!

Roeder: 1NT. *"Don't Think Twice, It's All Right."*

Thanks for joining the panel this month Bob! Rick can use all the help he can get!

Bartusek: 1NT. I'll underbid a little now in order to be able to describe my hand later with a non-forcing diamond bid. The only other option seems like 2NT, but no-trump will play very poorly with diamond length behind me. The auction isn't likely to end here.

Grabel: 1NT. I have too much to pass and if partner bids 2♣, 2♦ is now to play.

Cooper: 1NT. We have to bid NT to be able to bid diamonds natural later (if there is a later). This is too strong a hand to pass.

Dunitz: 1NT. 1NT or 2NT? Put a piece of cheese in front of me - 1NT. A serious underbid, but the misfit screams for caution.

Shuster: 2NT. I bet LHO is 4=4=3=2, so we won't need too many extras to make 3NT. I don't have a natural diamond bid available to me in any of my partnerships.

Chodorow: 2NT. Natural, showing an opening hand with diamonds stopped and denying spade support.

Wittes: 2NT. Yet another very tough problem. 2NT should show an opening bid, but probably not show the distribution I actually have. My second choice would be pass, but there are a lot of hands where that could be very wrong.

And for our optimist!

Feldman: 3NT.