

Southern California

Bridge News

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jordan Chodorow



As your President, I am here to serve you. If I can do anything to enhance your enjoyment of our great game, please let me know at President@D23ACBL.org.

Please join me in congratulating Cornelia Gould (whose column will appear on my right) on her election as Director of Region 11. Cornelia reached out to introduce herself and to express interest in attending our meetings. I look forward to welcoming and working with her in 2026.

We are still in talks with both the Long Beach Hilton and the Glendale Hilton about the possibility of hosting our annual Regional this year, and I will report to you as soon as we know whether, and if so where, the Regional will be held. Please be aware that two of the largest sporting events in the world are coming to our area - the World Cup this year and the Summer Olympics in 2028 - and anything is possible, including in one or both years either not holding the Regional or holding it at one location, with players needing to arrange lodging accommodations elsewhere. I was elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility, and as far as I'm concerned, nothing is off the table.

Get your team together for the District 23 Grand National Teams final, to be held on Sunday, May 31 from 10am at the Long Beach Bridge Center, 4782 PCH. The winners in each flight of this one day, two session event earn the right to represent D23 at the GNT finals July 8-12 at the Summer NABC in Minneapolis. Preregister by May 24. Card fees are an easy, breezy \$160 per team for the entire day. All the details can be found here: [GNT-23-Flyer-2026.pdf](#)

PRESIDENT continued on page 2

Regional Director's Report

by Jordan Chodorow



I am very excited to be the new ACBL Region 11 Director for Districts 22 and 23. My term will run from January 1 this year through 2028. You can read about me in an article written by Jessica Rohm of D22, also in this newsletter.

I want to start by thanking my predecessor, David Lodge, for all of his years serving as Region 11 Director and, before that, District 22 Director. He was a strong Board member who well represented the interests of Districts 22 and 23.

I was able to attend the most recent Board meetings held just prior to the San Francisco NABC this past November as an observer. Here is a brief overview of business conducted at those Board meetings.

Finance: 2026 Operating and Capital Budgets were approved. Revenues of \$18,188,000 are expected, with budgeted expenses slightly lower, resulting in an anticipated gain of approximately \$20,000. The capital budget of \$780,000 will be used primarily to continue to migrate the ACBL online platform to a more updated product.

DIRECTOR continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

New Regional Director	page 2
Unit 551 Sectional Flyer	page 4
Puzzle Page	page 5
District 23 Presidents Listing	page 5
Around the Units	page 6
Rank Changes	page 9
Problem Solvers' Panel	page 10

PRESIDENT continued from page 1

If you are interested in running for one of three positions as a representative to the Advisory Council from District 23, for a term from January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2029, you must submit your declaration of candidacy to elections@acbl.org by no later than 5pm CDT on March 31, 2026. Complete information about requirements and duties can be found at page 8 of the December 2025 Bridge Bulletin. I will announce interim appointments forthwith.

Please join me in congratulating West L.A.'s own Rajath Shourie on winning the highly prestigious Soloway KO Teams at the Fall NABC in San Francisco. Raj partnered Gavin Wolpert and teamed with Sartaj Hans-Andy Hung and Nabil Edgton-Michael Whibley to win the final 150-73, with the Rosenthal team conceding after three of four sets. What's more, Raj's team won the gold medal at the WBF Transnational Teams in Buenos Aires in 2024. Way to go, Raj! You're making Unit 562 and all of District 23 proud.

DIRECTOR from page 1

Membership: Current ACBL membership is approximately 120,000, which is a 7% decline from the prior year. The Board has been focusing on how to assist local Units to increase membership. New free guest memberships are now being offered to try to interest newcomers in maintaining membership in the ACBL. Please encourage your friends to give bridge a try, and sign up for a free guest membership.

Combating Online Cheating: The ACBL continues to use EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect online cheating. It has been determined that there has been an approximately 3% rate of cheating among those whose records have been submitted to EDGAR for review. Approximately 1,462 players have been identified by EDGAR as being potential cheaters. Various disciplinary actions have been taken, depending on the potential offense and the experience of accused cheaters. It is expected that the rate of cheating will decline as offending members become aware that they are likely to be caught.

Sectional Tournament Guidelines: The Board has been evaluating Local Sectionals, a tournament category that enables Units to host lower-cost tournaments using certified local directors, rather than national directors. The goal is to establish a comprehensive structure for tournaments by the end of 2026.

GNTs: The ACBL will continue to cover Championship Flight entry fees for the first two days of GNT (Grand National Teams) events. The costs for days 3 through 5 will continue to be charged back to the Districts. It was recently determined that the formula for chargebacks to districts has been misapplied for many years, resulting in underpayments by districts. No effort will be made to recoup prior undercharged amounts. In the future, the formula will be applied correctly. Management will attempt to assist districts to expand grassroots fundraising to cover the additional costs.

Unit Presidents Handbook: There is now an updated ACBL Unit Presidents Handbook. You may access it here: <https://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/units/unitpresidenthandbook.pdf>.

Elections and Honors: Cindy Shoemaker, Region 10 Director, was elected President of the ACBL Board for 2026. James Holzhauer from District 17 was named 2026 ACBL Honorary Member of the Year. Susan Bridges from District 10 was named 2026 ACBL Volunteer Member of the Year. Noel Stewart from District 10 was named the 2026 Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year.

You are welcome to contact me if you have bridge-related issues or concerns that might be of interest to the Board. You can reach me at Region11Director@acbl.org.

**Director for Southern California
Representing Districts 22 & 23 on the
ACBL National Board: Cornelia Gould
by Jessica Rohm, District 22:**

Some people measure their lives in years; Cornelia Gould measures hers in horizons—legal, nautical, and now, bridge regional director. From Pasadena to the Pacific and beyond, her story is one of curiosity, courage, and community.

Early Roots and Global Perspectives

Born and raised in Pasadena, California, Cornelia showed an early appetite for exploration and learning. In high school, she spent a year as an AFS exchange student in Johannesburg, South Africa—an experience that opened her eyes to a world far beyond her California roots.

After returning home, Cornelia attended UC Davis and graduated from Pitzer College with a degree in Political Science. Her intellectual curiosity and commitment to rigorous thinking led her to law school, where she earned her Juris Doctor and became a member of the California Bar. Never one to stop learning, she also earned a master's degree in Taxation.

A Career in Law and a Leap to Freedom

Cornelia spent over two decades practicing as an ERISA attorney—specializing in retirement plan law—with several prominent San Francisco firms. From 1977 through 1998, she built a respected career advising on complex financial and regulatory matters. But in 1998, Cornelia decided it was time for a different kind of challenge: one that traded legal briefs for blue water and boardrooms for the open sea.

Five Years Under Sail

When her husband, Ed Gould, retired in 2007, the couple embarked on an extraordinary new chapter—literally casting off into the unknown. They moved onto a sailboat, and spent the next five years exploring the world's oceans.

Their voyage began along the Mexican and Central American coasts before they crossed the vast Pacific in 2010. Starting from Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands, they navigated to the Marquesas, Tuamotus, the Societies, Cook Islands, American Samoa, Samoa, Tonga, and finally New Zealand. The following years took them to Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia before their odyssey ended in Brisbane, Australia, where they sold their boat in 2012.

“It was the adventure of a lifetime,” Cornelia recalls. “Every day brought a new horizon—sometimes calm, sometimes challenging—but always unforgettable.”

From the High Seas to the Bridge Table

After returning to land, the Goulds settled first in Walnut Creek, then Incline Village, Nevada, and now Indian Wells, California. Along the way, they discovered a new shared passion: bridge.

Cornelia and Ed joined the ACBL in 2011, initially while back on shore between voyages. Their real immersion into the bridge world began at Rossmoor in Walnut Creek where they played duplicate for the first time. Then it progressed when they moved to Incline Village, where they became directors and founded the Top of Tahoe Bridge Club, hosting weekly summer games. Their involvement deepened through

Unit 465 in Carson City, where Cornelia served on the Board and co-chaired a Sectional Tournament. She was slated to chair the following year's event—but then COVID-19 hit.

Still, Cornelia's leadership was undeterred. She became one of her Unit's representatives to the D21 Board, later serving on its Executive Committee. After moving south in 2024, she transitioned to representing D22 on the ACBL Advisory Council. In 2025, she became a member of both the D22 and Unit 533 Boards, serving as D22's District Tournament Coordinator and STaC (Sectional Tournament at Clubs) Coordinator, and as Secretary of Unit 533.

Life Today: Balance and Adventure

Cornelia's calendar may be full of bridge commitments, but her zest for life extends well beyond the card table. She enjoys walking Harley, her yellow lab; playing bocce ball and trivia; staying active with water aerobics; and spending time with family and friends—including Ed, two children and five grandchildren.

Summers are devoted to travel—a well-earned escape from the desert heat of Indian Wells. Cruises are a favorite, especially those featuring ACBL bridge onboard. “We love the combination,” she says. “Traveling the world while playing the game we love—it's perfect.”

Looking Ahead

Whether navigating complex legal codes, the open sea, or a tricky 3 NT contract, Cornelia approaches life with the same qualities: intelligence, persistence, and grace. “There's always something new to learn,” she says with a smile. “And that's what keeps life interesting.”

From Pasadena to Papeete, and now from the bridge table to the ACBL boardroom, Cornelia Gould continues to chart her own remarkable course—one defined by curiosity, courage, and connection.

St. Patty's Day Open Sectional*



Fri-Sun, Mar 20-22, 2026

Upland Women's Club

590 N. Second Ave. Upland, CA 91786



PARKING PERMIT is required on Friday and Saturday.

Pick up your parking permit when you arrive, or
email Caryn Mason in advance: cremingtonm@gmail.com

Tournament Chair/DIC

Tom Lill (909) 518-6403
thomasmlill8@gmail.com

Partnership Chair

Caryn Mason (909) 588-8699
cremingtonm@gmail.com

Restaurants: Variety of choices within 10 minutes

Hospitality: Free coffee and snacks every day. Lunch included Sunday!

Fee All sessions: \$15**

TEAM GAME: \$150 per team

Friday,

10:00 a.m. / 3:00 p.m.

Open Pairs, single sessions

10:00 a.m. / 3:00 p.m.

749er Pairs, single sessions

Saturday,

10:00 a.m. / 3:00 p.m.

Open Pairs, single sessions

10:00 a.m. / 3:00 p.m.

749er Pairs, single sessions

Sunday,

10:00 a.m. / TBD

Stratified Swiss Teams, 2 sessions

Strats for pairs games: 2000+/750 (open games); 750/500/150 (749er games). Stratification for all games based on attendance and team average.

*Co-hosted by Units 516 & 551. Sanction# 2603372

**\$20 Unpaid ACBL Members per session.

Bridge Jeopardy

by John Jones

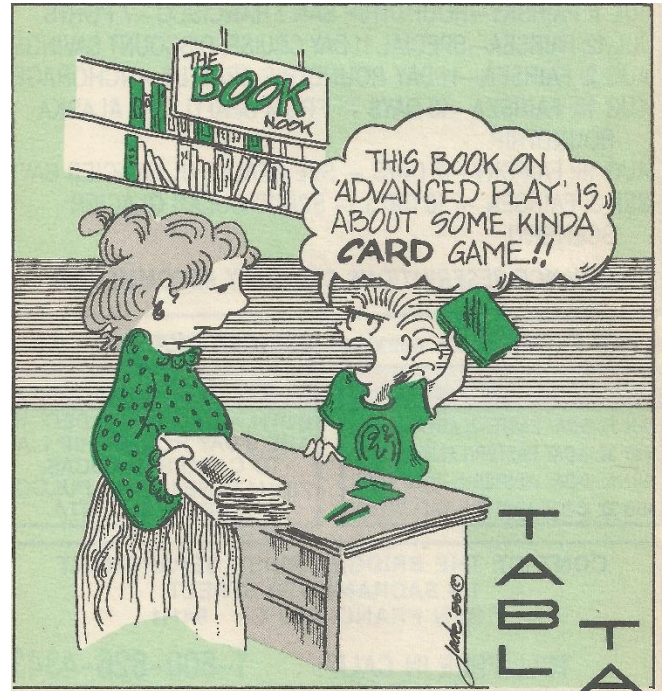
And the answer is ...

\$500 – This lead method leads the second highest honor.

The Presidents of our nine Units in District 23 do a lot to make *your* bridge experience better. They seldom get any thanks or even recognition. To help redress that imbalance, here is a list of the current incumbent Unit Presidents:

Unit	President
551 – Pomona – Covina	Eileen Finlay
553 – Glendale-Verdugo	Adam Barron
556 – Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley	Paula Olivares
557 – Long Beach	Leo Dittimore
559 – Pasadena – San Gabriel	Lisa Walker
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	Kent Burrell
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

(Solutions to Bridge Jeopardy are on page 9. No peeking!)



Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

La Fetra Games: Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45

Claremont Bridge Club: Thursdays 9:30

Individual: February 7, 10:00 a.m., Ontario

Unit Pairs Game: January 17, 11:00 a.m., Ontario

Unit Pairs Game: February 21, 11:00 a.m., Ontario

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

And another BIG ANNOUNCEMENT: after a hiatus of more than two decades (we held our last Sectional, a 299er affair, in 2003), we are going to try again. This will be a joint effort with Unit 516, the High Desert unit. It will be held at the Upland Women's Club (in Upland, if you had not guessed that), March 20-22. It will be a "Local Sectional," and guess who will be the DIC? Nope. Guess again. Details will be announced as they become available. The flyer is not ready yet, but should be soon.

In the December Unit Game, we had another nice turnout, enabling us to run another Mitchell – 7 tables, this time. The overall winners were Mary Ann Wotring – Vic Sartor, with 61.56%. Second overall, and first E-W were Steve Andersen – Art Weinstein. Next in the overalls: Kiran Kumar – Judy Mogharbel, then Tom Lill – Amr Elghamry, and finally Tim and Eileen Finlay.

Not enough players showed up for the January Individual. Possibly this is due to the fact that (*sarcasm alert*) Your Local Genius forgot to send out the Bridge Alert in late December. We'll try again in February, on the normal date (first Saturday, 2/7). Sigh.

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for December. At La Fetra:

1	11.25	Vic Sartor
2	10.27	Caryn Mason
3	9.61	Patrick Finley
4	7.07	Mary Ann Wotring
5	6.92	Tom Lill
6	5.90	Judy Mogharbel
7	4.64	Steve Andersen
8	3.44	Peter Kavounas
8	3.44	Richard Parker
10	2.76	Ramona Hernandez
10	2.76	Nona Stokes

The leaders for 2025:

1	125.51	Fredy Minter
2	125.43	Patrick Finley
3	119.66	Caryn Mason
4	118.08	Lulu Minter
5	82.63	Mary Ann Wotring
6	72.10	Ramona Hernandez
7	69.66	Nona Stokes
8	66.36	Steve Andersen
9	63.07	Tom Lill
10	61.04	Peter Kavounas

The above totals include all La Fetra games (including the individual games), and the Unit games.

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	1.51	Steve Andersen
2	0.90	Olivia Esquibel
2	0.90	Todd Shimoda
4	0.86	David Ochroch
5	0.84	Patrick Finley
5	0.84	Patrick Rogers

The leaders for 2025:

1	12.33	Patrick Finley
2	9.29	Steve Andersen
3	8.64	Patrick Rogers
4	7.69	David Ochroch
5	6.48	Duane Woodman
6	6.20	Gary Atwell
7	5.17	Kitty Moon
8	4.59	Tom Lill
9	3.73	Dan Robinson
10	3.13	Carl Silsbee

We had a pretty good year, considering. We had 602.5 tables at La Fetra, 120 at our Unit games, and

114.5 over in Claremont. For La Fetra, that's our best year since 2017, and for the Unit, the best since before 2006 (that's as far back as the ACBL website shows). Of course, in 2025, we had some team games which add to the total. And this is the first year of operation for Claremont.

At La Fetra, two pairs topped the magic 65% benchmark: Fredy and Lulu Minter had a monster 72.46% game, and Vic Sartor – Caryn Mason had an impressive 70.24 outing. Other winners: Mary Ann Wotring, Patrick Finley, Judy Mogharbel, and Yours Truly.

Over in Claremont, again two of the three game-winners topped 65%. Gary Atwell – Duane Woodman scored an impressive 77.08%, and while Caryn Mason – Steve Mancini scored 73.96%. Tom Lill – Steve Andersen were the only other leader – only three games in December, Christmas falling on a Thursday.

There were no promotions again last month; rather surprising, considering the recently concluded Palm Springs Regional.

For our Hand of the Month, we return to the Laurel & Hardy School of Bridge

East Deals, no one vulnerable

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

OK, it isn't the hand itself that is unusual, it's the auction and the result!

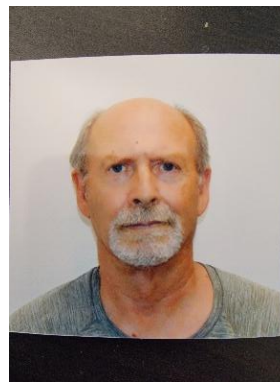
East opened 1♦, which was Alerted and explained as either 11-16 with or without diamonds, OR a big hand with diamonds which planned to reverse on the next round. OK, so I called 2♣. West passed with that dog pile, and North bid 2♦! This was questioned by West, and was explained as "limit raise or better in

clubs," which was certainly our agreement ... although it does not *quite* describe the North hand accurately. East had nowhere to go, and neither did I, so 3♣. Pass, then 3♥ from North! Pass from East, and oh, boy what now? Hoping that partner had something in spades, I tried 3NT, which became the final contract. The opening lead was the ♠10.

As you can see, on any lead but a heart, all 13 tricks roll home. On a low heart lead, making 5, and on the lead of the ♥J, making 4. According to Bridge Composer, North makes 6NT (remember this is double-dummy) and South makes 4NT.

Our +520 was a tie for top; no one found the slam. Well, North is sort of semi-balanced: 6-4-2-1!

Quote for the month: "Never Explain – Friends do not need it and your Enemies will not believe you anyway." (Elbert Hubbard)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley by Don Dachner

The Santa Clarita Bridge Club has games at the Newhall Community Center on Fridays and Wednesdays at 10 AM.

The Friday game is an open game, and the Wednesday game is mainly for people in the learning stage, but all are welcome. You can take back your bid, for example, or ask any question about what's happening. There are mentors at all the tables to help out. We usually have 4 or 5 tables, and both games are free.

Also, on Wednesdays at 9:30, there is a half hour lesson covering various introductory topics usually attended by 10 people or so. We are covering forcing bids, currently.

December results.

12/5

NS	Donna Davidson and Bill Langlois	71%
EW	Gary and Carol Trendera	62%

12/19

NS	Donna Davidson and Bill Langlois	54%
EW	Bernard Seal and Ruth Baker	72%

12/27

NS	Alan Nueman and Harry Randhawa	62%
EW	John Langer and Margie Pinkers	63%

Notable achievements.

Barry Parikh is now a Sectional Master

Rollie Crim is now a Club Master

Congratulations!!

BRIDGE BEFORE BOOKKEEPING

by Bill Langlois

Do you find that you're often the one holding up the game? Here's some tips for speeding things up without rushing your bidding or play.

When you're on opening lead, make your lead before entering the contract in your private score, which you can always do later. Bridge before bookkeeping.

Likewise, when partner declares, put down dummy as soon as the lead is made.

At the start of a round, sort your hand as soon as one opponent is at the table.

Think but don't dither. Some choices are statistical no-brainers.

For example, if partner opens no-trump and you have a five card major, transfer to it. Don't waste time trying to decide if this hand is one of the exceptions that might play better in 1 NT.

Another example. With 4=5=2=2 pattern, you open 1♥, minimum range. If partner responds with a forcing NT, you know that, much as you hate it, you have to rebid 2♣. Don't mentally curse the Red Baron, just do it.

A third example you might not have thought about. Playing a 4-4 fit, you hope to guess the queen of trumps. If there are no clues from bidding or overt play, don't sit there awaiting divine revelation. Even if the Almighty is kibitzing, He won't tell you. Play the opening leader for the queen. Without it, he might have led a trump.



Long Beach by Leo Dittmore

www.acblunit557.org

www.LongBeachBridge.com

Unit 557 continues to thrive as our 12:30 PM games roll on six days each week, consistently drawing 10 or more tables. The energy in the room has been terrific, and we're grateful for the steady turnout that keeps our schedule vibrant and competitive.

Our spring calendar is already taking shape as we prepare for two major events in May:

- The Non-Life Master Sectional, offering rising players a welcoming and encouraging arena to shine.
- The District GNT Finals, where our local teams will once again represent Unit 557 with skill and pride.

We also celebrate outstanding performances at the club. Congratulations to Alan Flower & Jon Baclavic, Ed&Michael Piken, Bill McClean & Jon Yinger, and newer players Jim Werner & Vince Vilkr for posting a 70% game, a remarkable achievement that reflects sharp partnership play and disciplined card sense.

Unit 557 moves into the coming months with enthusiasm, strong attendance, and a full slate of opportunities for every level of player.

San Fernando Valley by Alan Curtis

Happy New Year from UNIT 561! We had several players do well at the Palm Springs Regional - our biggest point winners were Mikie Alpert, Phil Rabichow, Gary Ansok and Doug Timmer.....congrats to them and to ALL who did well!

We've had a few players advance in rank recently:

Mikie Alpert - Ruby Life Master
 Mark Peters - Sapphire Life Master
 Irv Klasky - Bronze Life Master
 Mike Schiff - Bronze Life Master

Congrats to all of these players!!!!

The January Unit Game (kick-off to 2026) will be held on Sunday, January 25th at 1:00 pm. Lunch will be served at noon beforehand. Fee for game and lunch will be \$15. Come join us!!!

Finally, Our Beginning EasyBridge Program (being run by Toni and Jay Hansen) will be starting this coming Saturday, January 17th at 9:30 am at the 750 Bridge Club in Woodland Hills. The class currently has 16 players signed up.....good job Toni and Jay for promoting and introducing our great game to new players!

Have a beautiful year everyone!

Downey-Whittier by Daniel F. Oakes

Sorry, nothing to report this month.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

\$100 – What is fourth best?

\$200 – What is third or fifth best?

\$300 – What is attitude?

\$400 – What are MUD leads? (I would pay my opponents to use these!)

\$500 – What is Rusinow?

District 23 Rank Changes January 2025

Junior Master

Carol Argo
 Miriam Angel
 Gretchen K. Greene
 Michael Jackson-Polek
 William Klibanow
 Ray Nakelsky
 Maryjane Sherry
 Melisa Wilson

Club Master

Roland Crim
 Gary Fletcher
 Angela Grant
 Mary S. Ohalloran
 Christine Parker
 Deke Thomas

Club Master

Wendy L. Weber

Sectional Master

Tommy B. Howard
 Piyush Parikh
 Diana Parmeter
 Margo Peck
 Reuben Silva

Regional Master

Chris Sun

Life Master

Mitchell Blumenfeld
 Michael Vernia

Bronze Life Master

Shirley F. Knopf

Silver Life Master

Ted M. Teweles

Ruby Life Master

Lynn W. Edelson
 Phil S. Feldman
 Rachel Simon

Gold Life Master

David Chechelashvili

Sapphire Life Master

Alan R. Golden

Problem Solvers' Panel

Panelists are Ifti Baqui, Ed Davis, Mitch Dunitz, Mister Mealy-mouth, Ed Piken, David Sacks, Mike Shuster, and John Swanson. Moderator is John Jones.

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.

First, except for the dedication, this is an old column. I ran out of time to get the intended column finished by deadline. This column originally appeared as the June 2018 column.

This column is dedication to my friend and occasional partner Luis Gamio. Luis passed away either late New Years Eve, or early New Years Day. He died peacefully in his sleep, likely of complications from his kidney failure. Luis had three medals in international competition, the last being a Silver Medal in the Open Pairs last year in Cali, which he won playing with his Argentine friend Carlos Peligrini. Luis was an extremely flexible partner. He could play well with just about anybody. This was put to an extreme test a few years ago while playing in the South American Championships in Medellin, Columbia. Luis, his wife Valerie, and I arrived at the tournament only to find that none of the three players who were to team with us were available at the start. One of them would not be showing at all, and two others (who rated to be our strongest pair) were not available until very late in the event. The directors did not want us to drop out (we had come a long way, pre-paid the entry fees, and dropping out would cause problems with their movement). They agreed to help find fill-ins, and to allow us to use more than 6 players on the team as long as we could field 4 players for each segment. The bottom line was that Luis wound up playing about 70% of the boards with 4 different partners, using a new convention card each time. He handled it quite well, never any disasters or significant misunderstandings. We lead through the round robin segment and won our semi-final match. We lost a competitive match in the final to settle for the silver. RIP, Luis!

1	South	West	North	East
	???			2♦
	You, South, hold: ♠ J763 ♥ AQ ♦ 742 ♣ AKQ3			
	What call do you make?			

Matchpoints
E-W Vul

This problem comes from a recent STaC game, and one panelist, Mealy-mouth, recognized the problem. Double and pass are both possibilities. 2NT, 2♠ and 3♣ could be right and were each mentioned by at least one panelist.

Dunitz: Double. I won't enjoy a 2♥ bid, but too much to pass.

Shuster: Double. Not perfect, but life seldom is.

Swanson: Double. I am willing to be convinced by cogent arguments that the percentage bid is pass.

Davis: Pass. Lots of high cards but no reasonable way to show them.

Sacks: Pass. The best imperfect bid.

Piken: Pass. I love to bid but fear any action will lead to trouble. Therefore, I pass and hope partner can balance. By partnership agreement a double with a balanced hand promises at least as many hearts as spades. *[I thought possibly Ed didn't mean this (he worded it differently), and I sent a follow-up email. Yes, he did mean that his agreement is that a double shows*

hearts equal to or longer than spades. While this agreement might work on some hands at the one-level where a four-card overcall is possible, this agreement doesn't really work at the two-level and higher because hands with four spades and three hearts are forced to double.]

Mealymouth: Pass. It's easy to miss the only theoretically-making contract, which is 3♣ opposite ♣8762, but my partner managed to reach 2♥ played from the right side, (Zia would say, "my side"), as I held ♥K532. Fortunately, trumps split favorably (5-2), so I made 2♥. I had feared an unlucky 6-1 split. I took my partner to the woodshed after the session and spanked her quite soundly for her off shape takeout double. How could one reach the optimal 3♣ after getting an advance peek at the hand records? Well, -90 against 2♦ making isn't as bad as -100 in 2♥ down one, is it?

[Mealy asks how to get to 3♣. Here's how!]

Baqui: 3♣. Pass, 2♠ and 3♣ are all reasonable options, with pass being the best if our side doesn't have a game. There is also a possibility that partner has the right distribution and strength to balance, but what about LHO raising to 3♦? I like my ♣ suit well enough to overcall 3♣.

[I don't ever recall an expert overcalling a four card suit at the three-level, but Ifiti suggested it, presumably without knowing the hand. A 3♣ overcall might be the winner on the actual hand if partner passes holding ♠Kxx ♥Kxxx ♦Qx ♣xxxx. The pair that gave me the problem had doubled. The partner of the 2♦ bidder raised to 3♦ on a doubleton. The ♠Kxx ♥Kxxx ♦Qx ♣xxxx hand freely bid 3♥ and went down two for -200. They asked me who goofed. I answered "Nobody, the hand is just too tough. Accept that the card gods were reminding us that they are in charge and go on to the next hand."]

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">2</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Matchpoints None Vul</div>	South	West	North	East
		pass	pass	3♣
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠ K43 ♥ K65 ♦ AJ542 ♣ A3 What call do you make?			

This might have been a good problem a couple decades ago, but my panel thought it was child's play now. We have learned to take the flexible route and double over preempts when it's a possibility. Sorry panelists, no insult intended!

Shuster: Double. Too easy. *[True, my bad!]*

Swanson: Double. This seems clear-cut. I won't be convinced to bid otherwise this time.

Dunitz. Double. There's no close second choice.

Baqui: Double. I think a double here preserves all our options.

Davis: Double. 3NT might be the winner, but double will be right more often, and that is what counts at matchpoints.

Are we worried about the possible four-three major fit?

Sacks: Double: 3♦ might avoid the four-three fit in a major. *[David spotted the problem but doesn't seem concerned.]*

Piken: Double. I can take the tap with my doubleton if we get into a four-three fit. My partners, particularly Steve Cohen, like playing Moysian (four-three) fits. *[I think Ed speaks for the majority of the panel. Expert declarers don't fear Moysians. They think that a Moysian with the tap taken in the short hand is fun!]*

I have had very few unanimous panel votes over the years. Just when I thought I had one, there was a dissenting vote.

Mealymouth: Pass. It's close between pass and double. Eddie Kantar taught me how to answer questions like this. If the woman *[did only the ladies telephone the handsome, athletic Mr. Kantar with questions?]* who telephones you to ask includes good spot-cards (eights, nines and tens), you'll please her by taking bold action. If she specifies wretched spot-cards like the ones in this hand (or only "x's"), you'll please her by pretending to be Caspar Milquetoast. Eddie is the original Mr. Mealymouth. Opposite an expert, I'd pass, from both hope and fear: hope that good defense will beat 3♣ for a plus, and fear that if I double, partner will drive to game on a 4-3 fit and go minus. Opposite a duffer, I'd double, hoping that partner will bid only 3♥ or 3♠ with many of the hands that she should drive to game, while fearing to let East declare 3♣ against the expected poor defense. Of course, I make decisions like this at the start of a session, not mid-auction.

3

IMPs
Both Vul

South	West	North	East
		1♦	pass♥
1♠	pass	2♦	pass
2♥	pass	3♦	pass
???			
You, South, hold: ♠ KQ987 ♥ AKQ106 ♦ A ♣ Q6			
What call do you make?			

I managed to follow-up one poor problem with another. I didn't include enough information. I needed to delineate how strong 2♥ was and how far it forced the partnership. Many years ago, ♥ followed by 3♥ wouldn't be forcing. I believe most partnerships today would play a style that made 3♥ forcing. My bad again!

Shuster: 4NT. Not enough information. *[Again Mike exposes my sloppiness!]* Was 2♥ game-forcing? If not, I needed to bid 3♥ last time. I'm not sure why my guy didn't just bid 2NT or 2♠. He needs a black ace for the auction to-date. Without agreements about what is forcing and what isn't forcing, I'll just drive to 6♦ opposite a two-with-the-queen response.

Less aggressive, but also looking for 6♦ is ...

Baqui: 4♣. Partner can easily have a hand like: ♠A ♥xxx ♦KQJxxxx ♣Jx where there is no chance of a slam. So, while I like my hand, I can only suggest a slam by bidding 4♣ and go from there.

Sacks: 3♥. Perhaps best to find a strain first.

Dunitz: 3♥. I might as well continue dancing into the abyss. I will bid 4♦ over 3NT.

Swanson: 3♥. There are likely to be more difficult decisions on later rounds.

Davis: 3♥. Lots of contracts are still possible (I hope partner doesn't think 3♥ is one of them).

Mealymouth: 4♥. However, I object to my previous bid. I'd have jumped to 3♥ at my second turn to flash a prompt slam signal. Now I'm stumped, as I must fear a hand like ♠A ♥82 ♦KQJ10853 ♣J102 opposite.

Piken: 4♥. I play that bidding diamonds three times in this sequence denies a stopper in the fourth suit and could be an opener based largely on shape. Therefore, partner must have some help for me in the majors including the ♠A for his opening bid.

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">4</div> <div style="text-align: center;">BAM Both Vul</div>	South	West	North	East
			1♠	2♦
	???			
	You, South, hold: ♠ Q7 ♥ A96 ♦ 52 ♣ K107543 What call do you make?			

I won't apologize for the quality of the problem this time. Pass, double, 2♠, 2NT, and 3♣ are all possibilities. I maybe be influenced by my days playing money bridge, but I'm a 2♠ bidder.

We'll hear from the doublers first.

Sacks: Double: Lots of negatives about this bid, but closer than any other bid.

Baqui: Double. Life is not always kind, neither are the bridge gods! I'll pretend that I have 4♥ and 5♣ and start with a negative double. The other reasonable option is to bid 2♠.

Davis: Double. There are two advantages in doubling rather than the alternative of passing. One is that partner won't be selling out to 2♦ with a balanced minimum and three diamonds. The other is that by knowing that I have some strength, we might be able to get to game when partner has a good hand. I will make the cheapest bid in spades over a heart bid by partner, pass over 2♠, and bid 3♣ over 2NT.

Dunitz 2NT. A lot to hate about this, but too much to pass when vulnerable at IMPs. *[Mitch is a great Board-A-Match player, (although he apparently misread the conditions) but overbidding and counting two small as a stopper seems to be accepting two flaws when most of the other calls only have one flaw. 2♠ is short a spade but right on values. Double is short a heart but right on values. 3♣ has the correct shape but is about a king light in HCP. 2NT shows a decent 10 HCP (close) and a diamond-stopper (not close, and might wrong-side 3NT).]*

Piken: 3♣. I have good/bad 2NT available but feel this hand is too strong for that bid. 3♣ keeps exploration for a game in the majors open. I will therefore slightly overbid. *[Good/bad 2NT is a great convention to have in this situation! If I had a Good/bad 2NT bid available, I would bid 2NT and pass if my partner accepted the puppet to 3♣.]*

Shuster: 2♠. With three probable cover cards, I must make a positive noise. 4♠ is the most likely game, and 2♠ is the call that brings that into direct focus. Additionally, if this is a part score deal, we need to play in spades, not clubs.

Swanson: 2♠. There are too many hands which partner will pass 2♦, so I must risk deceiving him about my trump length.

Mealymouth: 2♠. Stumped again! With an expert partner, I'll bid 2♠ in tempo. She'll understand that I might raise to two with tertiary support under pressure of competition. With anyone else, I'll pass promptly. *[Mealy gave multiple answers several times in this problem set. I left in his possibilities, but always recorded his answer as the call he would make with an expert partner. The problems presented in this Problem Solvers column are presumed to be with an expert as your partner.]*

5

IMPs
N-S Vul.

South	West	North	East
???	pass	1♥	pass

You, South, hold: ♠ AK753 ♥ QJ82 ♦ void ♣ A1083

What call do you make?

This problem doesn't suffer from the "Too easy" or "Not enough info" that problems two and three did, but has a different problem: it depends too heavily on partnership agreements, rather than bidding judgement. I normally want panelists discussing their favorite tools, but for this problem, there were just too many different possibilities.

Mealy-mouth: Depends on partnership methods. This leans heavily on partnership agreements about void-showing. (a) With a partner who plays the simplest method (4♣ or 4♦ is a void splinter, 3NT shows a void splinter in the unbid major), I bid 4♦ immediately. Of course, I expect partner to have ♦AKQ among her goodies, and she'll retreat to 4♥, but the ♦AKQ may be good for club discards, so I'll drive to 6♥ anyway. (b) With a partner who plays Under-and-Over Splinters, I'll bid 3♠, one step over three of opener's major, to show an unspecified void. Then, over her 3NT inquiry, I'll bypass the one-step-over-my-void 4♥, to bid 4♠, showing not only a diamond void but the ♠A and a hand too good to risk settling for 4♥. (c) With a partner who does not use specific void-showing methods, I'll start with an old-fashioned 2♠ jump shift, planning to anchor hearts next and proceed with cue-bidding thereafter. (d) With dear old Mrs. Guggenheim, I'll bid 6♥ directly, hoping to be doubled by a hand with two aces. There, how's that for living up to my name?

Will 1♠ be effective here? One panelist argues "yes", while another counters with "no".

Dunitz: 1♠. Auctions that start out 1♥ pass 1♠ are amongst the most difficult in Standard bidding. If partner rebids 2♦ I will bid 3♣ to create a force. There we will be, with partner having little clue about my hand.

Piken: 2♣. I bypass spades, so I don't muddle which suit is trump later, which could happen if partner supports me in spades. 2NT seems easy, but what do I do when partner bids 4♥ and on many hands I still have

easy slam. Therefore, I bid clubs which is the suit I have the most interest in clarifying and gives me the most room to explore. If partner does not support me, I am delighted.

Will Jacoby 2NT be effective here? One panelist argues "yes", while another counters with "no".

Davis: 2♣. Assuming a strong jump shift is not available, I think the best approach is to start with 2♣ because a) it creates a game-force (thus making the auction easier than if I started with 1♠) and b) it will probably deter a club opening lead (which is the lead that I think I do not want). Beyond that I am not sure how the auction will unfold. (Maybe partner will bid notrump when I have not yet bid spades so that I can place him with the ♠Q.) Regardless of how the auction goes, I am admitting that I will not be able to stay out of slam, and my objective is to reach a grand slam when it is a good contract. As far as other initial actions, I don't care for a Jacoby 2NT bid as that is not going to tell me what I need to know. A splinter in diamonds takes up too much room on a hand where I am not going to stop below slam.

Shuster: 2NT. Or whatever the forcing raise is. Conventional wisdom says to not make this call with shortness. Conventional wisdom is wrong. I care very much about partner's potential shortness, so I'll ask. 1♠ would also be OK. A splinter would be an error.

Strong jump-shifts used to be common. Oddly, they are mostly used by experts today. They are a marvelous tool when they come up.

Sacks: 2♠. I'll show diamond shortness next.

If a 2♠ Soloway Jump-shift is available, it's almost certainly the optimal start. Partner will puppet to 2NT, and you will rebid 3♦. This shows: better than a game-force, good spades, four-card heart support, and diamond shortness.

Baqui: 2♠. This hand offers multiple possibilities: 1) Start with Jacoby 2NT indicating a game-forcing heart raise. 2) Use a Soloway jump shift in spades followed by a bid indicating diamond shortness. 3) Start with splinter bid in diamonds with the intention of bidding again if partner signs off. All the options are reasonable. Your choice will depend on whether you want to tell partner about your hand or elicit information about hers. As you are likely to be the dummy on this hand, I would vote for telling rather than asking and hence go for a Soloway jump shift in spades assuming that option is available.

Swanson: 4♦. Followed by 5♦, showing the void. In an established partnership that has agreements on how to bid after 1♥ – 1♠; 2♦, I might go that route. It is difficult to get oneself to stop short of 6♥ after partner's opening bid.

If a Soloway jump-shift is not available, I'd bid the hand like Swanson did – splinter in diamonds and then follow with 5♦. This should be a diamond void and not exclusion RKC. A direct 5♦ would be exclusion RKC.