

Southern California

Bridge News

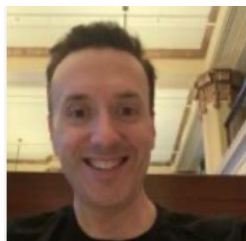
Volume 63, #7

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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.

Shortly after this issue hits the newsstands, the D23 Summer STaC will take place July 20-26.

A month later, August 22 and 23, the Pasadena Sectional will be held at the Pasadena Bridge Club. Space is limited, so reserve early online at rsvpbridge.com.

And don't forget to prequalify by August 31 for the D23 NAP Final, October 4 at the Long Beach Bridge Center. High finishers receive hefty masterpoint awards, and winners earn the right to represent L.A. County at the Spring 2027 NABC in Dallas.

Full details about these and all upcoming D23 events can be found at our website, <http://www.d23acbl.org>, kept up to date by our wonderful Webmaster, Rita Vanlierop.

Good luck to all D23'ers currently competing in Minneapolis. I look forward to seeing all of you at the table soon.



"I favor light opening bids. When you're my age, you're never sure they're going to get back to you in time." (Oswald Jacoby, at age 77)

Regional Director's Report

by Cornelia Gould

(Region11Director@acbl.org)



Greetings from Minneapolis where the summer ACBL Board meetings have commenced. We have a packed agenda, and I'll have a lot to report on in the August newsletter.

One exciting piece of news for District 23. The ACBL Board has made the decision to hold the Fall 2030 NABC in Los Angeles. Negotiations are continuing with the hotel so I cannot name it yet, but I will give you more details after the contract has been signed.

In the meantime, some background on me. Before I became a Board member earlier this year, Ed and I had organized a packed summer. When we sold our house at Lake Tahoe in 2023 (where we used to spend our summers), which left us with our home in Indian Wells in the desert as our only home, we made a decision to spend our summers traveling in order to avoid the extreme heat of the hot months in the Coachella Valley.

This year has included a Regional at Sea trip with Larry Cohen in April, an Oceania cruise from Japan to Seattle in May, and an Oceania cruise from

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London to Miami in June.

We plan more overseas travel in August/September, but then expect to settle in for bridge tournaments and other activities closer to home.

In the meantime, during the cooler months I will once again become more involved with ACBL Board

Committee work. I am serving on the Governance Committee. We are working on many updates and changes to the organization's Bylaws, Codification and other documents.

Enjoy your summer, and I'll be back with more Board news next month.

The Teacher's Corner

Bidding for All Levels

by Dan F. Oakes

I had a great defense hand planned for this month, but for the life of me, I can't find where I put it. So instead, something for everyone (or at least almost all levels) on bidding, inspired by recent questions and happenings at the table.

First, for the relative novice players. Do you have a firm agreement with your partner as to whether bids after partner preempts are forcing or not? In a recent club game, my RHO (that's Right-Hand Opponent, not to be confused with LHO (Left-Hand Opponent) or CHO (Center-Hand Opponent, aka Partner) wasn't sure what to do with a very nice 3=5=0=5 hand when partner opened 3♦. In standard bidding, when partner preempts, new suits by you are forcing, so she had a pretty easy 3♥ bid. Many newer players haven't had the conversation with their partner, though. You don't want to bid 3♥ with a monster and have partner pass, but you also don't want to bid 3♥ with a lousy hand and a diamond void and have partner raise or bid 3NT; you just want to play 3♥! What's the solution?

The solution is two-part. First, you can't have your cake and eat it, too – new suits are either forcing or they're not. As I mentioned above, the standard treatment is that new suits are forcing, but you can play them non-forcing if you want (the weaker your preempts, the more desirable it is to play them non-forcing!) The second part of the solution is, discuss it with partner and stick to your agreement. By the way, that includes bidding over weak 2 bids as well; the standard default agreement is new suits are forcing.

Next up for our intermediate players. When you bid two suits and the second suit is higher ranking at a higher level, you need extra points! The reason is, you're

forcing partner to at least the 3-level if she doesn't like your first suit, and if partner can have a minimum hand, that's dangerous! Here's the recent hand that brought this one to mind...

My LHO opened 1♥, and my partner bid 1NT. RHO passed, as did I. Opener with 5 hearts and 4 spades figured her partner didn't have a heart fit, so was likely to have spades, so she bid 2♠. Unfortunately, her partner DID have 3 hearts; she just wasn't strong enough to bid over 1NT. She only had a doubleton spade, so she ran to the known 8-card heart fit. My partner, who had a good hand with hearts behind opener (remember, he overcalled 1NT) doubled 3♥ and we picked up 500 when all we had was a partscore. Maybe responder should have passed 2♠, but I would have doubled that contract. The real problem was the 2♠ bid – there was no guarantee of a spade fit, and if responder wanted to go back to hearts, she had to go up to the 3-level. You need extra points to potentially force partner to do that.

It would have been very different if opener's first suit was spades and the rebid was 2♠; now responder can go back to the first suit while staying at the 2-level. The 2 level is usually safe when you have close to half the points and some semblance of a fit; you can often make your contract or hold it to down one, and you're rarely doubled. But when you bid to take 9 tricks on short points or a misfit, that's when disaster is much more likely. LHO should have passed out 1NT and hoped for a fairly normal result. Live to fight another day!

My last piece concerns a convention that's on most people's cards, but I noticed a couple of pairs recently with well over 1000 masterpoints that aren't familiar with some of the nuances. So let's look at a few. Although the 5♥ and 5♠ replies to 4NT let the asker know whether responder has the queen of trump, the 5♣ and 5♦ responses are ambiguous as to the trump queen. In response to the next-step queen ask, one pair I was playing against jumped to 6 spades with the queen of

spades. But that potentially misses a grand slam or even 6NT (important at matchpoint scoring). Without the trump queen, responder can just return to the trump suit (everyone does this), but having that agreement frees up a lot of informative bids for responder WITH the trump queen (everything other than a return to the trump suit shows the trump queen)

If you also have a king below the trump suit, bid 6 of the suit of your cheapest king, e.g. if hearts are trump, after 4NT – 5♣; 5♦, a bid of 6♣ shows the queen of hearts and the king of diamonds, but denies the king of spades (responder skipped over 5♠ to bid 6♣). After the 6♣ bid, opener can bid 6♦ to ask for the king of diamonds (any response other than 6♥ would show the king of diamonds).

If you have the queen but no side suit king, jump to 6 of the trump suit.

Finally, what about when partner bids keycard Blackwood and you have a void? If your void is in partner's suit, ignore it and just answer key cards. We only care about "useful" voids, by which we mean...voids *not* in partner's suit. If you're treating voids as aces when you respond to Blackwood, cease and desist immediately. That's a bridge crime. It's not a misdemeanor, either. Instead, here's a useful (and standard) method:

5NT show an even number of keycards (almost always 2) and a void.

6 of a suit below the trump suit shows a void in that suit you bid, and an odd number of keycards (almost always 1).

6 of the trump suit directly over 4NT shows an odd number of keycards (almost always 1) and a void *above* the trump suit.

If you have a void but no keycards, just make your zero-showing response (5♣ if playing 0314 or 5♦ if playing 1430). Your hand stinks; nobody cares about your void. So if hearts are trump, then after 4NT:

5NT = 2 keycards and a useful void.

6♦ = 1 (probably) keycard and a club void.

6♥ = 1 (probably) keycard and a spade void (you would have bid 6♣ or 6♦ with a minor suit void).

Or if spades are trump, after

4NT – 5♣*

5♦** – 6♣***

* 1 or 4 keycards.

** Yes, but what about the queen of spades?

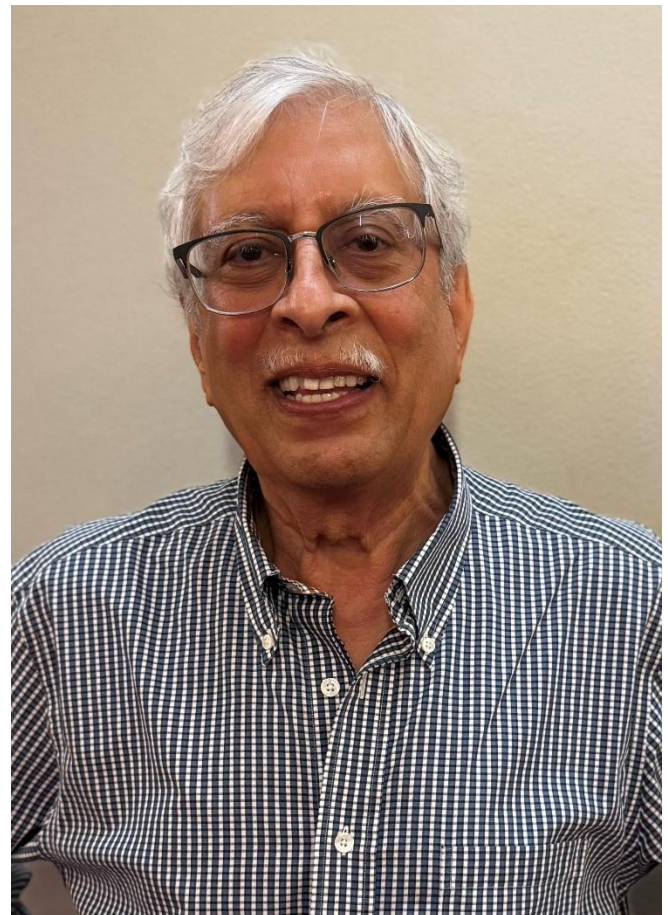
*** Not only do I have the queen of spades, I also have the king of clubs. But I don't have the king of hearts (because I skipped over 5♥).

There's actually one more useful trick over RKC, but I'll save that one. For now.

A Bridge Milestone

submitted by Jordon Chodorow

CONGRATULATIONS to Ifti Baqai who has reached the dizzying heights of 20,000 masterpoints!



District 23 Rank Changes July 2026

Junior Master

James Carroll
Lisa Laurentzius
Chang Paul

Club Master

Nathalie Sarshalom
John J. Wolf

Bronze Life Master

Arthur D. Vatz

Club Master

Miriam Angel
Mark Brifman
Kathryn E. Chapman
Baoding Chen
Richard Feldman
Douglas Nogle
David Nott

Sectional Master

Karen Anthopoulos
Stanley G. Korenman
William B. Lacina
Michael I. Miyagi
Serena Mougharbel

Silver Life Master

Susan J. Briest
Jane Tourino

Sapphire Life Master

Laura L. Gastelum

Platinum Life Master

Sidney Brownstein

Regional Master

Roaling Chang
Julie E. Spore

Bridge Jeopardy *by John Jones*

Category – Famous Bridge Partnerships

First, more from the list of some of my favorite non-bridge partnerships: (1 through 13 were last month, more next month).

- 14 – Sonny & Cher
- 15 – Barack & Michelle
- 16 – PT Barnum & Bailey
- 17 – Minnie & Mickey
- 18 – Napoleon Solo & Illya Kuryakin
- 19 – R2D2 & C3PO
- 20 – Tom Smothers & Dick Smothers
- 21 – Penn & Teller
- 22 – Babe Ruth & Lou Gehrig
- 23 – Jack Lemon & Walter Matheau
- 24 – Shaggy & Scooby
- 25 – Venus & Sereena
- 26 – Captain Kirk & Spock

These are only some of my favorite partnerships. I'll include more next month.

And now, the answer is:

\$100 – She was a beautiful showgirl turned bridge professional. Some experts considered her the best player in the world. He was “Mr. Bridge,” developed a system played around the world and wrote several bridge books.

\$200 – A married couple, he was maybe the best promoter ever in bridge, organizing famous challenge matches, after having developed a bidding system. Some considered her the better player. She invented the 5NT Grand Slam Force bid.

\$300 – Another married couple, she is the only female player to have won a medal in the World Open Pairs contest. She authored two books including Bid Better, Play Better. She developed splinter bids and DOP1. He was the New Times bridge columnist and wrote 13 books on bridge. He represented Britain in world championships, and was a chief witness in the cheating scandal against Reese and Schapiro.

\$400 – Bill and Roseann Pollock were on the winning Grand National Team (Minneapolis summer of 2026) representing District 9 of this southeast state.

\$500 – Norma Borin was born British, and played bridge in the US and Canada. After she married Jim Borin they twice medaled in the Bermuda Bowl representing this country.

DISTRICT 23

North American Pairs Finals

Oct. 26, 2025

Pasadena Bridge Club 649 N Fair Oaks 201 sanction # 2510723

Unit Level Qualifying

Pre qualification at Club level
required by Aug. 31

Finals

Sunday, Oct. 26 @ 10 am
and
Sunday, Oct. 26 @ 3 pm

National Finals will be held during the Spring
Nationals in St. Louis
Pre-registration for L.A. Final by Oct. 20 required.
Card fees are \$36 (\$18 per session)

Point Limits and Conventions

Points as of September 2025

Championship: Unlimited, Open + chart

Flight A : 0-6000, Open chart Flight

B : 0-3000, Basic + chart Flight C :

Non-LM < 750, Basic chart

Maximum Masterpoint Awards

May be less, depending on game size

Championship Flight: 48.00 Gold

Flight A : 40.00 Gold

Flight B : 33.50 Gold

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

Event chair

Jeff Grotenhuis • District 23 NAP

Coordinator email: jeffgro@gmail.com

cell: 310-600-4275 text preferred



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



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

Unit Pairs Game: July 18, 11:00 a.m., Ontario

Unit Pairs Game: August 15, 11:00 a.m., Ontario

STaC (silver points): July 21, 24, 8:45 a.m., La Fetra

Individual: August 1, 10:00 a.m., Ontario

Unit Pairs Game: August 15, 11:00 a.m., Ontario

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

Still time to donate to “Do What You Love to End Alzheimer’s” (formerly The Longest Day.) Here’s the link for online donations:

<https://events.alz.org/fundraisers/thomaslill/unit-551-acbl-do-what-you-love-to-end-alz>

Sadly, at the last minute, we had to cancel our popular team game for July. Your Director came down with the awfuls (a really nasty reaction to an antibiotic) and was almost certainly going to be admitted to the hospital. While this didn’t happen, events pushed on until there was no time for setup of the game. Sigh!

In the June Unit pairs game, Patrick Finley – Caryn Mason took top honors with 60.42%. Yours Truly – Judy Mogharbel managed a close second, followed by Stephen Andersen – David Ochroch, Kiran Kumar – Avice Osmundson, and Ramona Hernandez – Nona Stokes. Vaughan Inman – Linda Ananea took first in Flight C.

We had two promotions this month: Baoding Chen is now a Club Master. Serena (a.k.a. CeCe) Mougharbel has advanced to Sectional Master

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for June.

1	18.49	Caryn Mason
2	14.72	Patrick Finley
3	13.71	Fredy Minter
4	12.66	Lulu Minter
5	10.05	Tom Lill
6	9.12	Vic Sartor
7	8.63	Judy Mogharbel
8	6.93	Nona Stokes
8	6.93	Ramona Hernandez
10	6.02	Roger Boyar

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	2.76	Steve Mancini
2	2.42	Patrick Finley
3	2.27	Tom Lill
4	2.12	David Ochroch
5	1.77	Peter Kavounas

Year to date, we have the following leaders:

At La Fetra:

1	67.45	Caryn Mason
2	65.51	Patrick Finley
3	55.79	Fredy Minter
4	54.91	Vic Sartor
5	45.50	Lulu Minter
6	31.65	Mary Ann Wotring
7	30.83	Steve Mancini
8	29.55	Tom Lill
9	26.90	Ramona Hernandez
10	25.75	Nona Stokes
11	24.39	Kurt Triselmann
12	23.81	Steve Andersen
13	22.98	Judy Mogharbel
14	22.83	Richard Parker
15	22.21	Peter Kavounas

And at the Claremont Bridge Club:

1	11.78	Patrick Finley
2	7.25	Steve Mancini
3	6.52	David Ochroch
4	5.84	Tom Lill
5	5.29	Steve Andersen
6	4.15	Patrick Rogers
7	4.07	Peter Kavounas
8	4.02	Duane Woodman
9	3.95	Marjorie Preston
10	3.35	Tom Cusack
10	3.35	Sofi Kasubhai

At La Fetra, once again six pairs topped the magic 65% benchmark. Leading the rest Fredy and Lulu Miner, with a whopping 77.08%. They also posted a 70.25%-er. That day, Caryn Mason – Patrick Finley must have been slightly disappointed that their 70.25% game was only good for second place! The remaining big efforts were by Vic Sartor – Cryn Mason, 69.58%; the Minters again, 68.26%; and Judy Mogharbel – Yours Truly just sneaking over the bar at 65.04%. Other winning pairs were Roger Boyar – Kurt Triselmann and Duane Woodman – Dave Ochroch.

Over in Claremont, there was two of the four game winners topped the magic 65%. Olivia Esquibel – Tod Shimoda rang up 68.25%, and Steve Mancni – Dave Ochroch scored 65.28%. The other two winners were Yours Truly – Peter Kavounas, and Steve Mancini – Patrick Finley.

For our hand-of-the-month, I thank Jordon Chodorow (our D23 President), partnering Ewan McNay, for this defensive gem.

North (Jordan)			
♠ A J 7 6 3			
♥ A Q 8 5			
♦ 6 4			
♣ 9 3			
West		East	
♠ 9 5 4		♠ K Q 8	
♥ J 9		♥ K 6 2	
♦ K 9 8		♦ A Q 7 3 2	
♣ K Q J 4 2		♣ 7 5	
South (Ewan)			
♠ 10 2			
♥ 10 7 4 3			
♦ J 10 5			
♣ A 10 8 6			
West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	1NT	pass
3NT	all pass		

Ewan dutifully led the ♠10 and most defenders followed with an encouraging ♠3. I saw there was no future in spades. There was room for Ewan to have one key card. If it was in hearts, we needed to cash out now. If it was in a minor, I had to hope he had ten-long in hearts.

So I won the ♠A, cashed the ♥A to get a signal, and Ewan followed with the Goldilocks ♥4,

showing not the ♥K but length, in case the layout was as it was.

I followed with the ♥Q, pinning dummy's jack, and a third heart to declarer's bare king.

Now declarer could cash five diamonds and KQ of spades, but when he led a club up to dummy, Ewan had the ♣A and the ♥10 ready to cash.

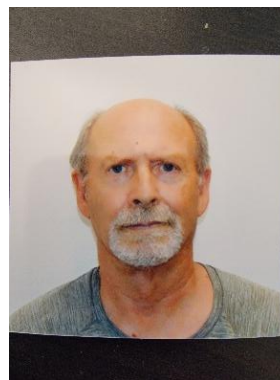
Two other defenders won the ♠A and switched to hearts.

One switched to a low heart, which declarer simply rode around to the jack while still holding the protected Kx in hand.

The other switched to the ♥Q, but partner wasn't up to the task, ducking declarer's club toward dummy rather than winning to continue hearts. Ewan would never have failed there.

All other declarers took nine or ten tricks in notrump. We set it for 8.8 IMPs.

Quote for the month: "Thoughts, like fleas, jump from man to man. But they don't bite everybody." (Stanislaw Lec)



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Don Dachner

The Santa Clarita Bridge Club has games at the Newhall Community Center on

Saturdays during the summer at 10 AM which is a free open game with around 12 tables preceded by a half hour lesson on various subjects.

The Wednesday game is closed during the summer.

Saturday Game results:

June 5	
N Saime and Barry Parikh	62%
S May Abagi - Hani Abraham	64%

June 13	
N Donna Davidson - Bill Langlois	65%
S John Langer - Margie Pinkers	66%

June 20

N Doug Noble - Pierre Yemenidjian 58%
 S Mark Brifman - Susan Strassner 58%

June 27

John Langer - Margie Pinkers 67%
 Alan Nueman - Harry Randhawa 67%



Long Beach by Leo Dittemore

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, nothing from Long Beach this month.

San Fernando Valley by Toni Hansen

Editor's note: last month, your esteemed editor must have been out to lunch. We noted that the Valley didn't report in. Sadly – for us that is – not only DID they report in, they were FIRST to come in! We're just not used to that, I guess. We can only offer abject stupidity as the reason for the omission (it's not an excuse of course). At any rate, here it the complete column, a bit late.

We regret to inform you of the passing of a dear friend of the bridge community, Freddie Strauss. She was one of the owners and a director of the Bridge academy. As a travel agent, she organized bridge cruises. She was a former board member of Unit 561, actively helping organize Sectional tournaments. We will miss her.

The 750 Club continues a game for players with 99 or fewer ACBL master points on Saturday mornings. It is a sanctioned game, but is open to anyone who wants to play! Please join us at 20855 Ventura Blvd, Woodland Hills 818.805.3044 !

Congratulations to new rankers!

Club Master Mark Schaffer
 Junior Master Mark Pecheck

Congratulations to Noel Purkin and John Vacca for their 70% game on May 4!

Please join us on June 14 for our Longest Day fundraiser to benefit Alzheimer's Research. We'll have silent auctions for the opportunity to play with bridge celebrities Craig Kavin and Ifti Baqai, as well as other great stuff! Don't miss this opportunity to DO What You Love and raise money for a great cause. Please call the 750 Club at 818.805.3044 to let them know you are coming.

On that topic, this month, I am going beyond bridge. For the first time, simple blood tests can now screen for Alzheimer's, but a legal barrier prevents Medicare from covering them. Only Congress can change that. The bipartisan Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention (ASAP) Act tears down that wall and gives Medicare the authority to follow the science.

Think of it as the mammogram moment for Alzheimer's. When Congress cleared the way for Medicare to cover mammograms, screening rates soared and breast cancer deaths fell. The same opportunity exists right now for Alzheimer's. Congress just needs to act — and they will when they hear from people back home.

Today, I'm asking you to take two minutes to [call your member of Congress](#) and ask them to cosponsor the bipartisan ASAP Act. A script is provided. Read it to the staffer who answers, or leave it on voicemail. Voicemails count. Make your call today.

Then pass this link along to your networks. A simple message goes a long way: [“Click this link to make a quick, two-minute call to help advance progress on early detection for Alzheimer's.”](#)

This is a turning-point moment. The science is ready, and now the policy needs to catch up. I've made my call already, will you?

Downey-Whittier by Daniel F. Oakes

The May 6 Unit Game featured one of the best finishes we've seen in quite some time, with three pairs finishing within a single matchpoint. In first by a sliver were John Jones & Nancy Stebbins. Yas Takeda & Robert Yu were a fraction of a matchpoint behind them in second, and another fraction behind were John Dobson & Raj Ramchandani, capturing not only 3rd overall, but 1st B. Bob and Linda Krause finished less than half a board behind for 2nd B.

May 13 saw Avice Osmundson and Kiran Kumar setting the pace with a 62.69% game. Gabby Sill & Jon Yinger took 2nd. Toni Hoffman & Anita Frost were 3rd and also captured 1st B, while Terry Binns & Ivan Claman were 2nd B.

On May 20, this time playing with Steve Hough, Gabby Sill needed an even bigger score to take 1st, and they found it – 66.67%. That meant that the 65.10% game by Jones & Stebbins only took 2nd place this time, but still an impressive score! Yas Takeda & Jeff Strutzel were 3rd. Osmundson & Kumar took 4th. For the B prizes, it was Ramchandani & Dobson leading the way, ahead of the 2nd place tie of the Krauses and Forst & Hoffman.

On May 27, Tom Lill (SCBN's esteemed editor) and Stephen Anderson stopped by the club long enough to capture the gold with a 65.97%, just ahead of the Krauses, who broke 65% but not 65.97%. Steve Hough and Mike Ventri must have been at least a little disappointed to find that 63.19% was only good enough for 3rd that day. Frost & Hoffman were 4th (and 1st C), while Larry Lee & Nancy Stebbins took 2nd C.

On June 3, there were again three pairs breaking 60%. Lill & Anderson improved their score to 67.36%, good enough to win the Unit Game, though they had some strong challenges. Jones & Stebbins were half a board behind, with Yinger & Osmundson a half a board behind them. Ventri & Hough were 4th, with Frost & Hoffman capturing 2nd B.

Ventri & Hough made it to the winner's circle a week later, ahead of a strong showing by the Krauses, who took 1st B and 2nd overall. Jones & Stebbins tied for 3rd with Ramchandani & Dobson, who also got 2nd B.

Sill & Hough were 1st N/S and 1st overall on June 17, ahead of 2nd N/S Ventri & Dan Oakes. The Krauses were 1st B N/S, half a matchpoint ahead of Frost & Hoffman. 1st E/W and 2nd overall were Jones & Stebbins, ahead of Sankar Reddy & Subba Ravipudi, 3rd overall and 2nd E/W. Lill & Anderson were 1st B E/W.

Gabby "I Win With All Partners" Sill was 1st on June 24, this time with Bill Skupen. Jones & Yinger were 2nd, and Frost & Hoffman took 3rd.

West L.A. by Elisa Leonelli

[Editor's note: we have a correction for a serious omission in last month's West LA column. The congratulatory paragraph should have read as follows:]

Congratulations to Rick Turner (Gold Life Master) and his team (Alyssa Kennedy, Jim Brunet, Alex Wiles) for winning the District 23 Championship for ACBL Grand National Teams.

A Bridge Family

Alexander Kolesnik (Platinum Life Master) held a lecture at the Beverly Hills Bridge Club, on Thursday June 11, as part of our twice monthly speaker series. The topic was "What didn't happen-Negative inference at bridge."

He then played in the tournament with his wife, Sharon Benyon, who had twice lectured at our club about "The invisible rules of Duplicate Bridge."

In 2020 I had met their son Finn, when he was still a teenager, for the online class "Think Like an Expert," where he played with BHBC Manager John Ramos.

In February of this year it was exciting to read in the ACBL Bulletin that Finn Kolesnik had become the youngest Grand Life Master at the age of 21.

It was a treat for me to meet Finn's older sister Emma Kolesnik, who played with her husband Adam Grossack in our June 11 Open game, and came in first place with a 71.73% score.

Having grown up in a bridge family myself, I was interested in interviewing these parents, who shared with their children their love of the game. Alex and Sharon graciously agreed to answer my questions.

Elisa: When did you start playing bridge?

Alex: At the University of Texas in Austin in 1984, when I saw students playing bridge, but I was more addicted to Barbu.

Sharon: My grandmother and all her friends played bridge, but I didn't learn until Alex taught me at 19. He dealt out hands on the kitchen table and showed me the basics. Then he took me to the novice game in Austin. So, the first time I played with 4 people was at a duplicate game. People were mean and I was intimidated. I cried the entire way home.

Elisa: At what age did you introduce your children to the game?

Alex: Emma learned bridge at 6 as a little kid, but did not play much until years later. Finn learned at 13. They initially learned most of everything from us, primarily Sharon, but I played quite a bit more with them.

Sharon: As a kid, Emma was a reader, an athlete, and had so many interests! We played lots of games, but we also liked to cook, do art projects, go to museums, watch movies, hike, swim, etc. Emma really got serious about bridge at Claremont College, then she had the chance to represent the USA on the junior women's team.

How do you feel about playing online as opposed to in person?

Alex: I play online most days, and there are some advantages to practicing this way. But real events are in person for me. Bridge is meant to be played with cards at the table. You can substitute for this, but it's not quite the same. I love the social aspect of it.

Elisa: Does playing bridge help to keep your mind sharp?

Sharon: Yes. Playing bridge is a fabulous way to use your brain. You think about a hand, try your theories out in real time, then afterwards you go over the hand and see what you might have done. I love the challenge, especially when my family wants to weigh in with their opinions.

Elisa: How can we encourage more young people to come and learn bridge at our club?

Alex: Teach them and support them. They will get hooked.

District 23 Unit Presidents

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 Dittmore
559 – Pasadena – San Gabriel	Lisa Walker
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	John Dobson
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

Hey, Unit Presidents, Secretaries, Reporters: help us keep our "Unit President" listing up to date! When you hold a new election, please report the results to us!

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

\$100 – Who are Helen Sobel and Charles Goren?

\$200 – Who are Eli and Josephine Culbertson?

\$300 – Who are Dorothy Hayden Truscott and Alan Truscott?

\$400 – What is Florida?

\$500 – What is Australia?

(On locating a missing Queen) Hungry players finesse toward the kitchen, romantic players finesse toward the bedroom, and practical players finesse toward the bathroom. (Edwin Kantar)

Southern California Bridge News

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Problem Solvers' Panel

This PSP is a reprint, originally have appeared in June 2024.

Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Wafik Abdou, Mark Bartusek, Paul Boudreau, Jordan Chodorow, Kitty Cooper, Ellis Feigenbaum, Alex Kolesnick, Mister Mealy-mouth, Margie Michelin, 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
None Vul

North	East	South	West
1♠	pass	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ Q865 ♥ J6 ♦ AJ10976 ♣ J

What call do you make?

Shuster: 2NT. I'll bid that if it is limit raise or better. Or if I have a bid for a super-limit raise (often 3NT) I'd do that. This is "A hand that evaluates to a limit raise, but I would be sick if partner passed." I won't bid anything non-forcing below 4♠.

The expert world is increasingly combining Jacoby 2NT with a limit raise. This technique accomplishes two objectives: 1) it makes it more difficult for the hand not on opening lead to throw in a lead directing bid. 2) by compressing two bids it opens up 1M 3M to be used as a mixed raise.

Chodorow: 3♣. Mini-splinter if available, else 2NT. Since the right ten count will make game, any passable call such as 3♠ must get an F. 4♠ passes that test, but since the right minimum may produce slam, it gets only a D. 4♣ is an overbid, besides which my splinters systemically deny two fast losers in any side suit. It gets a C. Jacoby2N is good and gets a B, but if you can start with a 3♣ mini-splinter to show shape and limit strength, that's perfect.

Feigenbaum: 3♣. This is a mini-splinter. I raise to game showing a maximum if partner signs off.

Michelin: 3♣. I play 3♣ is a mini-splinter showing

about 8 to 10 or possibly a good 7. If partner signs off, I will bid game anyway, but I don't want to make a full splinter 11-13. If partner cue bids I will cooperate.

Roeder: 3♠. (if that is our limit raise). Most experts now play that Jacoby 2NT response incorporates 4 card limit raises. I just do not think I have enough juice to splinter.

Wittes: 3♠. Partner could have some 10-point hands where 4♠ is cold or could have a 15-point hand where we have 4 losers. A limit raise seems reasonable, and has the additional bonus of making it difficult for the opponents to enter the auction at the 4 level with distribution at this vulnerability.

Boudreau: 3♠. Limit Raise. Anything more is very optimistic. I have mini-splinter relays available but that is not part of 2/1 GF.

Some of our panelists play that 3NT is a minimum GF splinter in an undisclosed suit. They opt to use that treatment here.

Cooper: 3NT. This is an unknown mini-splinter in our system.

Kolesnick: 3NT. I like to play 1♠-3NT as a mini-splinter (4+ spades, shortness somewhere, roughly 10-12 HCP). This hand seems perfect. If partner asks with 4♣, I'll bid 4♦ to show my stiff club.

Abdou: 4♣. This hand fits our 8-11 splinter criteria. With stronger hands I prefer bidding more slowly.

Some panelists get to 4♠ quickly, hoping that either we make, or we might shut them out of something.

Mealy-mouth: 4♠. A "weak freak" needn't be utterly weak, and a 4-6 hand is almost as appropriate as a 5-5 hand. Yes, it's easy enough to conjure up a hand opposite which I'd want to reach slam, but Bob Hamman (that's who North is, isn't he?) whispered in my ear many decades ago that he doesn't have that hand. I fear that if I try something exotic like some form of splinter or other forcing raise, the opponents may find a profitable club sacrifice or a heart lead that stops an overtrick. I keep my blueprints in a locked drawer and don't want to show them to my opponents.

Bartusek: 4♠. This hand is slightly too strong for a jump to 4♠, but I am vulnerable. I'll take the risk of missing a decent slam. The jump to 4♠ will hopefully stop the opponents from entering the auction and finding a good sacrifice at these conditions-of-contest.

I found this problem in an old Midwest bidding panel. 8 of their 16 expert panelists voted for a GF 2♦. Their moderator objected strenuously, thinking that 4♠ was the best bid.

2 Matchpoints Both Vul	South	West	North	East
	1♦	1♠	2♣	X*
	???			
	* Penalty			
	You, South, hold: ♠ AJ106 ♥ Q106 ♦ KQ642 ♣ 6			
	What call do you make?			

This hand is more difficult than it might have been a few years ago because few pairs have agreements dealing with a penalty double of a low-level bid in a GF auction. What does redouble mean? Is it SOS or are we making 2♣?

Chodorow: Pass. This is the hardest problem of the set if you haven't discussed the situation with partner in explicit detail. Does pass show club tolerance, such that you have to make an SOS redouble with a small stiff? Or does pass just say you have nothing else to show? And if so, do you in fact have nothing else to show, or do you need to show the fifth diamond with 2♦? Or indicate the spade stack with 2NT? (Normally we don't treat notrump as an escape hatch.) Could redouble be construed as business? (Probably not the percentage use for it.) For now, it's probably safest to pass the buck (partner can always make an SOS redouble of her own); after the hand, you'll talk.

Abdou: 2♦. Who plays that as penalty? In that case, I believe them 2♦.

Wittes: 2♦. Who would play a penalty double of 2♣ on this auction? If they truly have that hand, I can't see bidding more than 2♦ at this point. I don't want to bid 2NT from my side freely on a minimum, and have them lead a club through partner's hand and a spade back through mine. If partner does bid 2♠, I would then bid 2NT.

Feigenbaum: Redouble. If redouble is do something intelligent denying club support, then I do that. If not then I make a mundane Pass.

Cooper: Redouble. Prefer to play elsewhere and happy to defend if they run.

Boudreau: 2♦. Ugh. My spade length and no negative double hopes to buy at least ♦Jx from partner. Believing the penalty double of 2♣ is certainly a factor.

Kolesnick: 2♦. The bid I was going to bid without the double.

Mealymouth: 2♦. But first I call the Director. As I understand it, under the latest classification of treatments and conventions by the ACBL, penalty doubles under the level of 7NT are now illegal. Is it possible that East flunked Botany and can't tell Snapdragon from Foxglove? That's no excuse for violating the regulations. Without the double, I'd have rebid 2♦. The double gives me an alternative: to pass. That's what I'd do with a balanced minimum, e.g. only four diamonds and a second club. But I dare not do so with a nice five-card diamond suit and only one club.

Roeder: 2NT. Lacking a third diamond spot to suggest playing in diamonds. Also, a competent soul who has doubled in this unusual situation will have a diamond holding that suggests that diamonds will not play well (adopting the theory that one does not double the only contract they can beat, especially at a low level). Only one thing for sure: one of the other 3 has done something bizarre – hopefully not my partner.

2♠ showing a spade stopper might allow partner to declare NT and protect the club position.

And there are panelists who think that there is a party they don't want to attend.

Shuster: Pass. I wasn't invited to this party.

Bartusek: Pass. I wasn't invited to this party. Additionally, LHO might not sit. Partner can take care of herself?!?!

Michelin: Pass. Partner has another call if he chooses.

What?!?! There is a party and Margie's not going? Say it ain't so!

3

Matchpoints
N-S Vul

North	East	South	West
1NT	3♠	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ QJ6 ♥ AJ62 ♦ AKQ62 ♣ J

What call do you make?

After partner's strong NT we can tell the opponents have between five and seven HCP. Could those points be the ♠AK? Can we find out?

Shuster: Double. For now... I won't pass 3NT should partner bid it. If partner bids 4♣ or 4♦, then we're off the ♠AK. If partner advances 4♥, I guess I raise to 5♥ to ask about the spade control.

Abdou: Double. Slam may be down on a spade ruff unless partner has a spade honor and we belong in NT. Starting with double is most flexible unless partner passes (unlikely).

Boudreau: Double. If partner bids 4♥, I get to bid 5♥ to learn if we are actually off the ♠AK. If he bids 5♠, I will settle for 6♥. If he bids 5NT (♠K) we will play 6NT. Over anything other than 4♥, 6NT and hope not to hear double by RHO.

Chodorow: Double. There's just room for partner to have a 1NT opener with two fast spade losers. Three of your continuations are easy: 6NT over 3NT; 5♥ over 4♥ showing two fast spade losers (or should 5♠ perhaps show the same hand with ♠Qxx, forcing 5NT if partner has no spade control and thus not risking AK and a ruff?); and a forcing 4♦ over 4♣. Strangely, it's trickier over 4♦, as 5♦ doesn't carry the same connotation as 5♥ over 4♥, and either 4♥ or 5♣ might be misconstrued. A 4♣ cuebid at any point is misguided.

Cooper: Double. Let's learn more about partner's hand!

Michelin: Double. I don't like my ♠QJx for a negative double. And I don't like bidding 4NT. If partner accepts, we might be off the AK of spades. If I make a negative double and partner bids 4♥, I can bid 5♥, which asks for first or second round control of spades for partner to bid 6♥. I can still go down on a ruff but I think I'll choose double.

Feigenbaum: Double. Bid a slam and hope it makes? I'll start with a negative double, and covert clubs to

diamonds. Partner should know I have hearts and diamonds with longer diamonds.

Roeder: 6NT. Only a suicidal pessimist would think you are off the two high spades. But I guess that is why fences were built on the top of the Coronado Bridge railings. A spade ruff is too much of a possibility to consider suit play.

Wittes: 6NT. It's hardly possible for partner to have neither the A nor K of spades at this vulnerability looking at my hand. If I were to make a negative double, we are in danger of getting to 6♥ with trumps breaking badly and then leading ace and a spade for a ruff on the go. 12 tricks at no trump seems likely.

Bartusek: 6NT. The danger of a spade ruff makes me avoid a suit contract. Additionally, this stops a spade lead through the spade ace in partner's hand if I declared a diamond slam. A negative double which found a heart fit would suffer from both the previous concerns (in addition to a bad trump split).

Kolesnick: 6NT. I could be cold for a grand slam, but I no longer have the room. I'll just bid a practical 6NT. If they have the AK of spades and we have the rest of the deck, so be it.

Mealy-mouth: 4NT. Normally I would look at the opponents' convention card to see how they play this 3♠ jump overcall. Might it be strong? Or might it be two-suited, showing spades and clubs. But looking at my own hand, I can pretty well tell it's a good old newfangled Weak Single-Jump Overcall. I can almost picture partner's hand: ♠109 ♥KQ75 ♦JT3 ♣AKQ8. Opposite that hand, despite the 4-4 heart fit, I want to reach game, not slam, and to avoid playing in a suit, even with an 8- or 9-card fit. But in case I'm mistaken and partner has more, I'll bid 4NT to invite slam.

I got this problem from a player who suggested 5♠ asked for a spade control. That treatment is standard if trumps are known, but here?

4

Matchpoints
None Vul

East	South	West	North
3♣*	pass	3♠	X**
pass	???		

* = creative expert, but not a junior and not known to psych

** = takeout

You, South, hold: ♠ void ♥ AQ963 ♦ 64 ♣ A106543

What call do you make?

Bartusek: 6♥. Let the opponents make the final guess. Thank you for the footnote, because I've played this double as penalties for decades with some partners (stops the opponents from psyching our suit). *Good point, I've played doubles in this auction as penalties too!*

Shuster: 6♥. There might be too much work in 7♥. I don't want to do anything that could cause partner to bid hearts first, lest we lose a club ruff. I would have overcalled 3♥.

Cooper: 6♥. This could have handling problems but my vulnerable partner made a takeout double at the 3-level.

Kolesnick: 6♥. I'll make another practical jump to slam, 6♥. I have no clue, but the room to explore has been taken away.

Michelin: 6♥.

Abdou: 5♥ (general slam try). I have both of their suits controlled but need lots to get rid of my clubs or set partner's hand up! ♠Kxx ♥KJxx ♦AQxxxx ♣void would be nice, but not a great hand opposite three hearts.

Mealy-mouth: 5♥. I'll resist the temptation to make what seems to be the value bid, 6♥, for fear that 6♥ will crash on the rocks of distribution unless partner has the moderate extras he needs to accept my slam invitation.

Feigenbaum: 4♥.

Roeder: 4♥. There are old pilots and bold pilots but few old, bold pilots.

Wittes: 4♣. With any cooperation from partner, I'm on my way to 6♥.

Boudreau: 4♣. If he responds 4♥, 4♠ is easy. Over 4♦, a more reluctant 4♠.

Chodorow: 4♣. You're on your way to slam in hearts, but a grand may be child's play. Start with a 4♣ cuebid, intending thereafter, if partner has bid hearts, to cuebid twice in spades. You're hoping eventually to hear 5NT GSF.

5

Matchpoints
N-S Vul.

East	South	West	North
pass	1♠	pass	1NT*
pass	2♥	pass	4♦**
pass	???		

* = Forcing

** = Splinter

You, South, hold: ♠ AK642 ♥ AQ43 ♦ A742 ♣ void

What call do you make?

2♣ is Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF). It is played as game forcing by almost all expert partnerships. Over FSF, expert partnerships use the jump to 3NT to show about a king extra. Experts generally do not play Fast Arrival with NT bids. Thus, South has shown about 15–17 HCP already. The 4♦ bid is forcing and slamish.

I'll start with those that cooperate.

Chodorow: 4♥. Seems obvious to cooperate with a control bid. I would have preferred for one of my kings to be an ace for the jump to 3NT. I agree, this aceless hand has marginal values for jumping! I would have preferred 2NT to see how partner reacted.

Cooper: 4♥. RKC in Diamonds. I don't like the 3NT bid; why use up so much room in a game-forcing auction? What does it show anyway? Does it show extras with no fit? Is it Fast Arrival? If I already have shown extras then maybe Blackwood is an overbid and I should just bid 5♦.

Korbel: 4♥. RKC in diamonds. Obvious keycard bid if you ask me.

Now for the panelists who think they have shown enough and want off this train. Notice that the 4NT bids are negative, not a form of RKC.

Bartusek: 5♦. I have already shown extra values with a jump to 3NT (instead of bidding only 2NT). Thus, my weakest bid of 5♦ is indicated. I don't even have any first-round controls.

Mealymouth: 4NT. To deny the ability to “cue-bid” an ace and offer a choice of games if partner can't bid slam. I don't have anything extra for my jump to 3NT. I trust partner to read my shape from my failure to open 1NT as dealer.

Wittes: 4NT. I already showed extra values with my 3NT bid. I have no aces. I'm not sure whether 4NT is signoff or keycard for diamonds. If partner has all the aces, hopefully they'll bid again. With only 2 aces, hopefully they'll pass.

And finally, the last word goes to the man who advertises for playing Rangewood in this auction. Read his description.

Roeder: 4NT. 4NT would be the mainstream bid. Whatever my slam negative is, I am there with this aceless wonder. It is best to play the 4♦ bid is “optional RKC” in this auction. The first responding step is slam negative in context and second responding step starts your RKC responses. Thus, in my preferred methods, I would chirp 4♥ (indicating a slam negative). This is a vast improvement over Minorwood as you may need partner's input on slam prospects in addition to knowing the number of keycards he holds. If partner then bids 4♠, he is saying: “I do not care that you are slam negative: answer the number of Key Cards, please. Bill Haley rocked around the clock and so does “Rangewood!”

Count me as one who has had enough in this auction. I'm signing off, whether it is a natural 4NT, 5♦, or a Rangewood negative 4♥ bid (I'm not answering RKC, at least not yet).

Editor's note: last month, the hand for Problem 5 seems to have been garbled. Here is a reprint of the problem and comments, complete with the CORRECT cards.

5

IMPS
None Vul.

South	West	North	East
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1♠	pass	2♣	pass
3NT	pass	4♦	pass
???			

You, South, hold: ♠K654 ♥K ♦KQ976 ♣KJ6

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