

THE BRIDGE TEACHER



Summer Edition • August 2005

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To: All Bridge Teachers

The Atlanta NABC was great fun. You can catch up on the teacher news from the NABC in this issue. Here are some items of interest.



◆ **Preserving Our History**

ACBL has undertaken an exciting new project. We are working with a professional archivist, Greg Howell, to preserve ACBL's history and the history of the game. ACBL has collected many treasures over the years and we are eager to make certain they will be available for future generations to enjoy. More about this in upcoming issues of the Bridge Bulletin.

◆ **Calling All Juniors**

The ACBL's new Junior web site www.bridgeiscool.com goes on the Internet this month. ACBL has hired Simpson Communications to help create more interest in bridge among the younger generation. The web site will aim at building a bridge community among them. The web site is only part of the effort. The Simpson Company will be building alliances with 14 national organizations, including the YMCA and the Girl Scouts, to get them to help introduce bridge to young people. Take a look at the web site this month and help us spread the word to students, children and grandchildren.

◆ **Online Lesson Plans**

There are four sets of lesson plans available for free download at ACBL's teacher web site. The Kitty Cooper lesson plans are geared toward teaching middle school students, there is a set of lesson plans for Pre-K to 1st grade and 2nd through 4th grade students written by Donna Compton and a new teacher manual written by Pat Harrington designed to go with the "Modern Notrump Bidding Play" course (see *The Bridge Teacher*, April 2005). Take advantage of these materials and download a copy to look over. If you need assistance, contact us at Education@acbl.org.

◆ **ACBL Handbooks**

If you are a club manager, club director, unit official, liaison, IN coordinator, tournament chair or in charge of a special unit committee (New Player Services, Mentoring, Volunteers, Caddies), you may be surprised to learn that there are many handbooks available to help you do your job. Check these links to see what's available, <http://www.acbl.org/units/units.html> and <http://www.acbl.org/units/tournamentManagement.html>.

◆ **Denver Fall NABC**

Check out the Denver web site for information on the education seminars and special events scheduled for the tournament. Don't forget to pre-register if you plan to attend any of the seminars. Join us for the ACBL "Thank You" party for teachers on the first Friday.

◆ **ACBL Google Search**

You soon will be able to search the ACBL site with our own mini-Google system. Watch for its debut. It's fantastic.

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The Business of Bridge

Guidelines for Using a Non-textbook to Teach

by Lynn Berg

Choosing a Book

I am a great admirer of Eddie Kantar's defense books: He won the ABTA Book of the Year award

for his *Basic Defense* book. I decided to use that book to teach one of my courses, although it is not intended as an "academic" text book.

Tip: Read the whole book and make sure you basically agree with its premises before choosing it as the basis for your course. You don't want to spend the course saying, "yes, but ...," which is confusing to your students.

This book has seven chapters, so I planned on a 14-week class. It has turned out that Chapter Four, Signaling in Suit Contracts, took three weeks to cover. But Chapter Five, Notrump Signaling, was much more straightforward, so we got back on schedule by spending only one week on it.

Tip: Don't be too rigid about your time. Even if you end up giving an extra class for the money, you shouldn't move on if the majority of the students aren't ready.

Pricing

This course was intended for intermediate-level players, those who know most of the basics and are trying to improve their games. Summer is our down time in Florida, and I worried that there would be enough players to make the class viable. When several prospective class members were concerned that they wouldn't be in town for all of the lessons, I decided to offer a by-the-class price which was somewhat higher than the amount paid by those who would pay in advance for the whole series. I actually charged \$120 for 14 lessons, or \$10 per lesson — enough difference to encourage players to sign up in advance.

Tip: Don't include the price of the book; then you won't have to adjust the price for those who already have it. I bought the books in quantity and only marked them up a little: they were still below list price, so the students were happy and so was I. It's my custom to always allow inexpensive repeats of any class. Students can repeat the class for only \$5 per session if they paid full price the first time.

Tip: Order more books than you think you'll need.

Players who can't or don't want to take the class will want to buy the book anyway.

Hands

One of the nightmares of teaching with a non-academic book is that you may have trouble finding or constructing pertinent hands. Kantar actually provides four practice hands at the end of each chapter in *Basic Defense*, as well as full deals sprinkled throughout his text.

Tip: I went online and downloaded 70 deals from Kantar's web site. I use these for in-class practice and hand out copies to everyone. Of course, Kantar gets full credit for these deals, too.

Planning Class Activities

Planning to use "cards on the table," I set up the examples I wanted the class to consider. The deals are selected from the textbook. Don't forget, many students will not even glance at the material before class. If they know that the examples are in the book, they won't waste time trying to write down the materials as they go. Next I try to create a dialogue with numerous participants commenting and answering my questions about the examples.

Tip: Set up the room before the students arrive. I use duplicate tablecards and boards. If you get your students in the habit of sorting cards into suits as soon as they sit down at the table, you won't have to wait to call out the first example. I vary things a bit by putting some examples on the whiteboard — usually in response to questions for which I don't have examples set up in advance.

Tip: Make South declarer on every hand and then rotate the tablecards after each hand. This format should allow everyone to be declarer at least one time during the class session. Ideally, each person should help with setting up the deals, discussing the hands and quiz questions and playing and defending in each session.

Setting Up and Summing Up

Remember the "Mickey Mouse" approach to writing an essay? Say what you plan to say, say it, and then say what you said ... That's not a bad idea for classes.

continued on page 7

THE BRIDGE TEACHER'S BOOKSHELF

by Pat Harrington

Each year ABTA selects a bridge book that has merit to teachers, bridge students, or players wishing to improve their game. This year's winner was *Declarer Play the Bergen Way* by the prolific author and many-time national champion Marty Bergen. Bridge teachers will find more than 35 complete deals to add to their arsenal of lesson hands. Each deal is discussed in Marty's readable and easy-to-understand style with topics including counting, finessing (and not), holding up, drawing trumps (and not), timing, endplays, setting up long suits and the squeeze. Most of our students need work on declarer play, so I suggest you add this winner to your bookshelf. The book retails for \$18.95 and is available at the ACBL Product Store with a 10% discount.

Placing second in the Book of the Year race was the *ACBL's new Modern Notrump Bidding Play Course* (created by yours truly). The newly completed teacher manual can be yours for free by going to www.acbl.org, clicking on teachers, and then clicking teaching materials to download the manual. In addition to complete lesson plans to use as a companion to the *Modern Notrump Bidding Play Course* booklet, you will find three additional lesson plans complete with eight hands each and handouts that you can copy for your students. All lessons deal with notrump bidding, Stayman and Jacoby transfers. The Play Course booklets for your students can be ordered from the ACBL Product Store.

Taking third place in the award competition was *Audrey Grant's Bridge Basics 2 – Competitive Bidding*. Meant as a follow-up to her *Bridge Basics 1*, this is another great source of hands – 32 deals covering preempts, overcalls, doubles and even the negative double. But don't let the fact that this is the second book in a lesson series that starts with beginners stop you from using the material for your more advanced students – they are sure to learn something. If you find yourself teaching a mixed level group, this material has something for everyone, as Audrey so aptly demonstrated during her talk at the ABTA Convention. Published by Baron Barclay, the textbook retails at \$11.95 but is available at the 10% member discount from the ACBL Product Store. Teachers using the text in classes can download the teacher manual for free at www.betterbridge.com.

The 2005 ABTA Software Award went to Larry Cohen's *My Favorite 52*, which was ranked A+ in a recent ACBL Bridge Bulletin review. Not only does Larry offer interactive discussion on the bidding, play and defense on these deals, he offers many other tidbits that you might put to use in your classes.



One of my favorite tips was a comment made on a deal where controls were bid on the way to slam. Larry mentioned that Jeff Rubens in the *Bridge World* magazine suggests the use of the term control bid for such bids, leaving the term cuebid for bids like Michaels. I think this terminology might lessen confusion on my students' part. Most think that a person who cuebids at any time must have the ace or strength in that suit. This makes it difficult to discuss advancer's cuebids, Michaels or the use of a cuebid as Stayman in competition. Differentiating between control bids for slam and cuebids in other auctions may make life easier for our improving students.

The auction on one deal begins:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♦	1♥	2♣
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

Does 2♥ ask for a heart stopper? Larry says, "Maybe, maybe not. Bidding the opponents' suit on the two- or three-level should be thought of as forcing. Think of it as a good hand. If you have the opponents' suit stopped and want to bid notrump, do so. If you don't have their suit stopped, then don't bid notrump."

Hours of great bridge advice from Larry Cohen are a real bargain at only \$20. Great for intermediate players, it is also great for teachers to see Larry's gentle, humorous teaching style in action. Order your CD from the ACBL Product Store. A demo version can be downloaded from www.larryco.com, but don't let the highly distributional sample deals mislead you into expecting an entire set of wildly distributional hands.

ABTA Atlanta



Harriet Smith Sandy Stevens Brenda Simpson

Overview *(Comments in italics are by Julie.)*

Once again the American Bridge Teachers Convention (held annually prior to the Summer NABCs) was a highlight of my summer.

The convention is always rich in experiences: seeing old friends, meeting new ones, thinking seriously about teaching bridge and learning how various teachers spice up their lessons. I love the banquet: dressing up, welcoming the new master teachers, hearing the panel and finding out who won the Apple Basket award and the book/software of the year awards. And don't forget the outings. Going on a tour or out to dinner with a group of your friends who have gathered from all over the country (and even the world) is a treat. Let's get started.

Tuesday, July 19

This was a busy morning for the ABTA Membership Credentials Committee. Master Teacher interviews were held for applicants who have been ABTA members for at least three years and have at least 100 hours of professional teaching experience. The final step is the personal verbal test/interview. (See photo of the five new ABTA Master Teachers.)

The Seminar segment of the convention runs this afternoon through noon tomorrow. Members giving presentations today included Bruce Greenspan, Dennis Scott, Pat Harrington, Leslie Shafer, Donna Bowser and Dennis Dawson. Dennis Scott's presentation was a lot of fun and gave many in attendance an unexpected chance to participate. (See the "99-second Bridge Teacher" on page 7.) Of course, true bridge players that we are, everyone enjoyed playing hands under the guidance of Dennis Dawson. As an added bonus, we have some new lesson deals.

Sandra Enciu,
Leslie Shafer,
Kris Motoyoshi,
Deborah
Murphy, Pat
Harrington and
Judi Shulman at
Pitty Pats Porch.



At the conclusion of the program, it was off to Pitty Pat's Porch. Carole Budnick was our Atlanta hostess and she started us off with a fun dinner in downtown Atlanta. Pitty Pat's Porch is a wonderful restaurant that is filled with memorabilia from "Gone With the Wind" and serves delicious Southern-style food. We had a great time.

Wednesday, July 20

The Seminar program concluded with A Morning with Jerry Helms. Expert player, expert teacher, sexy voice (oops), more lesson deals for us to use in our classes complete with Jerryisms and ending with an "Ask Jerry" session. I loved the morning but left knowing that I have a lot of room to improve – especially after Jerry criticized the guidecards I so generously lent for use during his session. And he was right. Do your students constantly remove the guidecard from the table? Mine do it all the time. Jerry suggests using very small laminated table cards. Since they don't intrude on table space, the students are more likely to leave them where you want them.

The main convention started this afternoon. In the old days, only a few teachers attended the seminar. Lately, the seminar has become very popular and most teachers come early and attend both the seminar and convention. This year only 10 teachers came just for the convention. At our annual business meeting new officers were elected. Dennis Scott will be our next president backed up by Kris Motoyoshi and Joyce Penn as first and second VPs. Current President Leslie Shafer rounded up lots of door prizes. At least half the people won something – not me, as usual. I didn't come home empty-handed though. There were lots of gifts for our conventioners. Baron Barclay donated copies of Audrey's Better Bridge Magazine, Audrey gave everyone a copy of her *Bridge Basics 2* book, Ray Lee of Masterpoint Press donated many door prizes and gave everyone the newly published Pocket Guide to 2/1. Jim Miller of ACBL gave us all lovely ACBL keychains. E-bridge donated clocks to all, Bridge Baron provided everyone a copy of its new Bridge Butler, Leslie Shafer gave us all a year's worth of her Bridge Students 'R Us newsletter and the

anta Diary

by Pat Harrington and Julie Greenberg



Maggie Sparrow Jerry Helms Pat Harrington

ACBL gave every teacher a hard copy of the *Modern Notrump Bidding Play Course* teacher manual (which I wrote for the ACBL and which is available for free download at the ACBL teacher web site).

After our afternoon speakers concluded, hostess Carole Budnick shuttled us all off for a fantastic bus tour. We started by going down Peachtree (of course) and stopped at the Botanic Gardens. The grounds were so spectacular, we really didn't have the heart to complain about the summer heat. The orchid gardens and the special summer exhibit of miniature trains that ran up, over, around and through a miniature city of Atlanta were amazing. The grandmother in me really hated not being able to show this mechanical wonderland to my fabulous four (Branch, Sutton, Satchel and Jiro).

The trip was an overwhelming success for me



Sandra Enciu and the Chihuly glass sculpture in the Gardens

when I found, much to my surprise, two magnificent glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly. I am a serious fan. I didn't know what beauty was until I stood under the Persian Ceiling in the OKC Museum of Art permanent exhibit. The two Atlanta pieces had been purchased by the gardens following last summer's Chihuly exhibit. See www.chihuly.com for the whole Atlanta exhibit and more.

After the gardens, a trip to Mary Mac's family-style restaurant was a Southern treat. Mary Mac's opened right after the Civil War and is still an Atlanta tradition. Everyone raved about the fried chicken. It was amazing.

Fortunately for us, the rest of the tour didn't require us to do anything but sit back (properly stuffed to the gills) and listen to our very knowledgeable and entertaining guide. It was very interesting – Martin Luther King's Atlanta, parks etc. built for the 1996 Olympics, the ever-growing skyline, Margaret Mitchell's house where she wrote *Gone With the*

Wind and the answer to the mystery of why you can't get a Pepsi in Atlanta – it's the home of Coke!

Thursday, July 21

The last day already! Today's speakers included some top names in bridge – Larry Cohen, Frank Stewart, Shawn Quinn, Fred Gitelman, Audrey Grant and Julie Greenberg. There was much to absorb and to enjoy.

This evening, we all dressed up for our banquet. The book and software awards were presented (see review in this issue), new Master Teachers honored, and Lynne Beisswenger was announced as winner of the annual Apple Basket Award for the best teaching tip. The evening ending with a humorous and informative session with our panel of experts: David and Lisa Berkowitz, Alan LeBendig, Jerry Helms and David Lindop. It was a great night.

Many teachers went on to compete in the tournament. Some headed back home to work. Those who stayed enjoyed the ACBL's NABC "Thank You" party for teachers and club officials on Friday, and quite a few teachers took advantage of the opportunity to take the "Bridge Teachers and Bridge Cruises" course that night.

Plan now to join us next summer in Chicago. The ABTA Convention starts on July 11, 2006 (more on this in our spring issue). This annual gathering is really the ultimate experience for a bridge teacher.

P.S. If you are interested in joining ABTA, contact Pat at abta@earthlink.net.



Left to right: New ABTA Master Teachers are Joyce Penn (OH), Deborah Murphy (CA), Judy McDonald (NV), Marilyn Kalbfleisch (ON), Michelle Golden (FL), Chair Master Teachers Examination Committee, Ed Gentino (CT)

STAR TEACHERS



ROBERT PREVOIR (Randolph MA) — discovered bridge one day long ago at the YMCA and became an avid player. During Bob's career in banking as an operations manager in the real estate group, he used the basics he learned in bridge to help operate the center (i.e., structure and discipline). Married with two children, Bob's wife understood his passion for bridge and, during the 1970s and 1980s, she ran a game at his bank. When Bob retired early in 1997, he wanted to give back to the game and became an ACBL Accredited Teacher. He's been giving lessons ever since. Bob has said frequently that he never knew there were so many people that wanted to learn to play or refresh their knowledge of the game.

TIP: Structure and discipline are the foundations of the game. If you and your partner communicate and agree on a system and on the conventions you want to play, your partnership will do well.



ERMA M. THOMPSON (Warren IL) — was raised on a farm. When she graduated from high school she passed the U.S. Civil Service test and worked for the U.S. government in Chicago IL. Erma married and raised six children, two girls and four boys. While raising her family, she started to play contract bridge and soon discovered duplicate. Erma became an ACBL Accredited Teacher in 1987 and is a two-star teacher. She has taught more than 300 students in communities all around her home. Erma has also taught seventh and eighth grade students as part of the School Bridge Lesson Series program. She is Better Bridge Accredited, a member of the ABTA (American Bridge Teachers Association) and an ACBL certified club director. Erma currently serves as a Rockford bridge club mentor and teaches at the Galena Territories.

TIP: Erma advises teachers to "be prepared" and "know your lesson!"



JANET HARRISON-SMITH (Concord CA) — started playing bridge when she was in college at UC Berkeley. After college she became a school teacher and started playing duplicate with the parents of one of her students and the vice-principal.

She and her husband, Don Harrison, started a bridge club later in her bridge career. They both directed the games and Janet taught for 40-odd years. She is a four-star ACBL Accredited teacher and, at the time of his death, Don was a two-star teacher.

The Harrisons also started a bridge club at Rossmoor, a local retirement community, and Janet has taught classes there ever since. After Don's death, she continued her teaching career and her bridge club with help from other teachers and directors.

TIP: We have always had a place for "Rookies" to play after they finish lessons. At the club we had "Rookie" games where students were free to ask questions. At Rossmoor we have Rookie duplicate and supervised rubber bridge play. Instructors are available at both of these games.



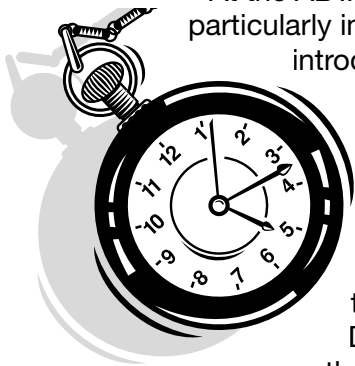
CATHERINE LINDHOLM (Indianapolis IN) — Graduated from Northwestern University with a bachelor's and a master's degree in music. She taught high school vocal music until retirement and started playing bridge in the 60s.

Cathy took time off to raise two children and returned to bridge in 1987. That's when she became the manager of the Indianapolis Bridge Center, a very successful bridge club.

Cathy is a two-star ACBL Accredited Teacher and Easybridge! Presenter and Better Bridge accredited. She has become a tournament assistant, a certified club director and has taught the School Bridge Lesson Series in schools in Indianapolis.

TIP: I have mainly just two words of wisdom for my students. 1. Make a plan whether playing the hand or defending. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. And 2. PAY ATTENTION.

The 99-second Bridge Teacher



At the ABTA Convention this year, I was particularly impressed with an exercise introduced by Dennis Scott. He invited teachers to “wake up their students.” He proposed teaching a topic in a very short period of time (99 seconds) and making just one point that the students would retain.

Dennis put several topics on the board (e.g., opening 2♣, upside down signals, reverses, ethics) and asked for volunteers. It was really fun to watch each teacher discover either how long 99 seconds was or how short it was or how hard it is to focus on just one special point. This whirlwind of activity was exciting and challenging. Prizes were awarded by popular vote with an automatic prize for anyone choosing reverses (won by Bruce Greenspan). First Place went to Amy Nellissen for her presentation on opening 2♣. “If you can make game opposite a king in partner’s hand, open 2♣.”

Most of the teachers did a great job. The one point that struck home with me, however, came from Judi Shulman who taught “Third Hand High – Do or Die.” This was, she said, for her students who think of defense as a spectator sport. Judy teaches third hand to watch partner’s opening lead and to remember that they are working as a team.

You can try this exercise at home. Pick a topic, get a timer and see how successful you are in focusing on the winning point.

The Business of Bridge

continued from page 2

Tip: Move from the known to the unknown. For instance, the high-low signal to show a doubleton is the one action all of your students probably already know. So I started there. In each class, I began with a hands-on example which I hoped they would find easy and familiar. The class was comfortable talking about this “softball” situation, so they were confident and relaxed as we went on to less familiar situations.

Tip: Tell a joke at some point if you possibly can. Steal from Easybridge!, Reader’s Digest, Internet jokes — whatever source you might have. If you don’t tell jokes easily, get students to instead. A joke is a good way to end the first segment of a two-part class.

Tip: Take a break. It’s good for you and for the students.

At the end of the class, give verbal cues that you are finishing. Sum up. Finish with a quiz so they know the last question is also the end of class. Thank them for coming and forecast the next class. Bridge classes don’t lend themselves to cliffhangers, but you can offer a teaser to entice students back.

Tip: Surely, you started class on time. Finish on time, too.

Getting Them Back

Your class is a captive audience for advertising upcoming classes. I’ve started offering two- or three-hour, single-session workshops on very limited topics, always on another day from the class. If the students like your on-going class, they’re likely to attend the workshops, too.

Tip: Know the minimum number required for you to schedule a class.

When someone asks you why you haven’t offered a class on — whatever — you can reply, “Get me eight (or 12 or 20) and we’ll get started.” You should be open to the idea of a class that you didn’t think of yourself. When I announced this defense class, someone asked for a class on “Two over One.” I responded that “Two over One” would be a workshop topic and not a series. I suggested that they get me at least 12 students and I’d do it. She got me 32. All I had to do was show up.



From left: Julie Greenberg, Janie Hodge, Sandy Stevens, Pat Harrington, Cyndy Craddick, Amy Nellissen and Jean Walter at the Botanic Gardens in Atlanta.

ABTA CONVENTION GEMS – ATLANTA 2005

Pat Harrington — Teaches CRAP (not the PLAN) in her Play and Learn classes:

C = Count your losers

R = Review the opening lead

A = Analyze the alternatives

P = Put it all together

Dennis Scott — Gave us a great quote: “Teaching is the fine art of imparting knowledge without possessing it.”

Donna Bowser — Told us to give our lectures catchy titles, such as “Four-Letter Words Your Mother Wouldn’t Teach You.”

Leslie Shafer — Showed us how she and husband Charlie use tag team teaching. One of them is the straight guy and the other is the fall guy. Leslie also reminded us of one of Edith McMullin’s favorite sayings, “You can’t win with more than two opponents at the table.”

Jerry Helms — Encouraged us to use lesson hands that only have one point. He also gave us some Jerryisms. I like “a good bid is one that resembles the cards you hold.”

Carole Budnick — Described the six components of a successful bridge business:

1. How You Make the Students Feel — put a positive spin on everything.
2. Variety in Types of Courses and When They Are Offered — try to meet as many needs as possible.
3. Strong Organizational Skills — be a stickler for time: start and stop on time; stay on topic.
4. Incentives — reward students who give referrals.
5. Environment — teaching site needs to be pleasant and comfortable.
6. Be Flexible — meet student needs.

Editor’s Note: *My apologies to the speakers I didn’t get to hear. My time was split between the convention and the ACBL Board of Directors meetings.*

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