



THE BRIDGE TEACHER

For Your Information —

News from ACBL. The headquarters building here in Memphis has been sold. The ACBL Board of Directors has requested that management explore the Memphis area, Atlanta, Dallas and Orlando as possible places for relocation. A decision is expected to be made at the Board meetings held prior to the 2008 Spring NABC in Detroit.



Julie T. Greenberg

News on the New TAP. The updated program which introduces material written by outstanding teachers (Helms, Seagram, Harrington, Kantar, Grant), covers the techniques used by successful bridge teachers and discusses the changes made in the *ACBL Bridge Series* texts and teacher manuals, which has been well received. We are very proud of the revised program and urge all teachers to try to retake the TAP (no charge) in 2008. We plan to offer the TAP following the ABTA Summer Convention (Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings) again this year to accommodate the ABTA teachers.

NABC Seminars and Teacher Programs. If you will be attending an NABC in 2008 and are interested in any of the many seminars we have offered over the years, please e-mail me and let me know (Julie.Greenberg@acbl.org). At this time we plan to offer the TAP at all three NABCs and the Bridge Teachers and Bridge Cruises program only in the summer. Fred Gitelman is expected to present a one-hour introduction to Bridge Base Online at all three tournaments.

Junior Bridge is Alive and Well. If you are teaching young people or have children and grandchildren interested in the game, check out this new web site, www.youthnabc.org. The first Youth NABC will be held in Atlanta on July 3-6, 2008. It is designed for all levels of young players and should be an exciting event for Junior bridge enthusiasts. Perhaps you have a young person your unit would like to sponsor to participate in the Youth NABC. Make your plans now. Contact Patty Tucker (wimsey@mindspring.com) for more information.

Getting Friends Interested in Party Bridge. Tully Liddell created a bridge manual for his dance partner, a potential social-bridge-game partner. If any of you have friends that you would like to introduce to party bridge, you might want to check out Tully's material. Contact him by e-mail at tullyliddell@comcast.net, or check out his web site at www.bridgewithtully.pbwiki.com.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



What are your plans, dreams and aspirations as a teacher for the New Year? It's always a good idea to set some goals, so you can take stock at the end of the year. Here are some thoughts to help you decide on your own goals for 2008:

- Retake the TAP, earn a continuing education credit and find out what's new.
- Attend the summer ABTA Convention and network with fellow teachers.
- Explore new venues for lessons: community centers, schools, churches, libraries.
- Take a cruise as a bridge host.
- Teach more classes than in 2007.
- Make classes more fun – add jokes, visuals, social activities.

You get the idea. See what you can come up with and have fun pursuing your goals!

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How I Hosted a Book Signing for Edward McPherson and *The Backwash Squeeze*.

by Amy Nellissen

In November, my bridge club had the great pleasure of hosting Edward McPherson for a reading and signing of his new book, *The Backwash Squeeze*. Here's how it happened:

Last August, I was listening to the radio when I heard about an upcoming interview with one Edward McPherson. It seems this McPherson fellow had just written a book about bridge and was to be interviewed on National Public radio the next day. I'd never heard of McPherson, but was thrilled that bridge was getting mentioned on mainstream radio.

I immediately drove to my local Borders, bought their only copy, and read the whole thing in a day and a half. (I probably shouldn't admit this in a national bridge publication, but, most bridge books put me to sleep after the first chapter. It only takes one hand to count the number of bridge books I've actually finished – much to my partner's chagrin.)

The Backwash Squeeze was different, though, because it wasn't a boring text. Rather, the story followed the author as he learned the game (he played no bridge at all before writing the book.)

The reader meets the cast of characters from the Manhattan Bridge Club beginner class, including Edward's 85-year-old partner Tina. The book follows him as he travels around the world interviewing social players and experts alike.

Edward worked as a caddy in Gatlinburg, traveled to London to meet Zia and Dallas to interview Hamman. His accounts of small

social games in Gettysburg, PA are as interesting as those of the Chicago NABC where he dragged Tina to play in the novice games.

I immediately saw the potential: Could this book do for bridge what "Dancing with the Stars" did for ballroom? I envisioned the book becoming a best seller and bringing new students to my bridge classes in droves.

It occurred to me that I could invite McPherson to my club for a book signing. Instead, I got busy planning my fall courses. I recommended the book to my students via email, but the idea about a book signing drifted to the bottom of my brilliant ideas list.

Fast forward to October: It was the second week of my Absolute Beginner class when I walked past a table and overheard one student say he's taking the class because of a book he read.

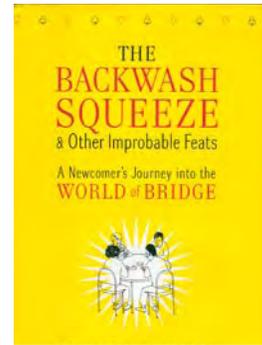
I made a quick U-turn and got the details: Phil, a young-looking retired math teacher, had seen *The Backwash Squeeze* on a table at Barnes and Noble and picked it up on a whim. It piqued his interest in bridge, and he found me through google.

Wow.

Now I had to act. I resurrected my idea of a signing and tried to find Edward.

I began recommending the book to every bridge player I could think of – all the while explaining how good this book could be for bridge.

I phoned Julie Greenberg who put me in touch with Jay Baum. I learned that national tournament director Rick Beye also found the



book by chance in his local bookstore. ACBL was making plans to host Edward at the San Francisco

NABC. I contacted HarperCollins and learned the book's publicist had resigned, and the company had no plans to replace her. That sounded grim.

Finally I located Edward and invited him to Franklin Lakes. We agreed on a date, I ordered two cases of books and did my best to publicize the event. Taking no chances, I scheduled an upgraded club championship for the same afternoon.

Thursday, Nov. 15 arrived. Rain. "Well, at least we'll get the golfers," I thought. Edward read before our afternoon game, and he was as entertaining as I'd hoped. His account of his beginner bridge class and the 1929 Bennett bridge murder had the room in stitches. We played together in the game, and he read again before the evening session.

When all was done, we'd sold out our 70 books. Not bad for a church-basement bridge club with only five sanctioned sessions a week.

The Backwash Squeeze & Other Improbably Feats: A Newcomer's Journey into the World of Bridge is available from Baron Barclay or any bookstore. The paperback will be out next summer. You can contact Amy Nellissen at Amy@TheBridgeTable.com.



The Business of Bridge

The Blessings of Bridge

By Lynn Berg



In this column I am diverging from my usual discussion of some part of the Business of Bridge. 2007 was a dreadful year for me: I watched my darling David slip deeper into the illness which took his life in November; this while I fought breast cancer with a double mastectomy in May and six months of chemotherapy.

In December I went with friends to see *White Christmas*, and I was struck especially by one of the wonderful Irving Berlin songs — Counting your Blessings. Maybe you won't think I have many blessings to count—a bald new widow whose life has been turned upside down. But I would disagree, and bridge is a great part of my argument.

I was able to teach and direct during much of the time because the oncologist let me have my treatments on Tuesdays (my free lesson and 199er game are on

Mondays). My fellow directors at the DeLand Bridge Club conspired to help by having a back-up scheduled for every session I was supposed to teach and direct, so if my white blood count was abysmal and I was grounded, I was covered. The 199ers emptied the dishwasher, handed out boards, fixed snacks, anything to help. All of my regular partners played with me when I could hardly think straight, taking me out for meals and ferrying me to and from the games as well.

Nancy Hays, a 199er, brought me over-sized T-shirts, so I could dress easily without lifting my arms when I first got home from the surgery. Her partner and friend, Lois Haskins, took me to many an appointment when I shouldn't drive. Lee Roberts, my fellow director, brought chicken soup and casseroles, walked my dog, and always had sensible good cheer to offer. I received hats and scarves galore to protect my newly

bald head from the intense Florida summer sunshine. I could name a lot of other bridge players who brought food, offered rides, even said they'd be glad to play with me when I needed a partner (this from Spike Lay, a nationally-known player).

I think all teachers are optimists. We believe that we have something to offer to others, and we believe that others can learn from us. I love teaching and working in our local bridge club, and I have scheduled classes for basic bidding and a five week "upgrade" to two-over-one for late January. I also look forward to resuming my work as a tournament director in the New Year. The love and support I've received from the bridge community are a huge payback for the time and effort I've put into our favorite game, and I know 2008 will be a better year.

Backwash Squeeze Author Visits the Fall NABC



Fans of the recent hit book *The Backwash Squeeze and Other Improbable Feats* received a surprise treat at the San Francisco NABC: Author Edward McPherson was in town to promote his book and sign copies at the Baron Barclay Product Store.

McPherson, 30, who lives in Brooklyn NY, wrote about his experiences of learning to play bridge at his local club and of his travels to regionals (such as Kansas City and Gatlinburg), NABCs and a slew of other venues. He also interviews some of the best-known names in bridge to give an amazing portrait of the game. You won't find any hands but you will find a story that will hold your attention and keep you turning the pages. McPherson is a very talented writer who really captures the spirit of the game and the many personalities he has encountered in the world of Bridge.

The book has won critical acclaim in the Wall Street Journal, the New Yorker and other publications. Check out the excellent review in the November issue of *The Bridge Bulletin* (page 24) if you have missed this publication.

DETROIT BRIDGE WORKSHOPS

ATTRACTING NEW PLAYERS AND POTENTIAL STUDENTS

The 2008 Spring NABC Intermediate Newcomer Committee, led by seasoned teachers Beverly Gardner and Gail Hanson, are an energetic and enthusiastic group. Eager to give local players the “once in a lifetime” opportunity to play in an NABC, they set out almost a year in advance to start recruiting new players who had never tried duplicate.

They put together a promotional program to run in June 2007 for bridge enthusiasts who primarily play in country clubs, at local recreation facilities, at home, etc. and who had not played in sanctioned duplicate games. The goal was to get them excited about the upcoming NABC and to make them comfortable about participating.

The workshop was wildly successful. Hoping to attract 40 to 50 players, the organizers of the event were surprised when 230 non-duplicate players signed up. Event coordinator, Connie Dugger, had to turn away nearly 50 late registrants, because there was literally no space left in the building. The interest generated by this workshop resulted in a second workshop being scheduled three months later. With a limit

Promotion. Input was collected from a local director, a teacher, a member who still plays social bridge and a duplicate player who attends a lot of games. Publicity was mostly by word of mouth, (although some participants did see the unit’s flyer on the web site). Volunteers went to all local games, classes, civic centers and senior centers to talk to the bridge groups there, and they distributed flyers. Flyers also were given to friends who were teaching beginners and running non-sanctioned games, with a request to give their students a pep talk about attending the workshop. One of the “fifth member” volunteers went to some social clubs in the area and talked to their players. A sixth non-committee member was very helpful, since she was dedicated to getting the word out to every one she knew in any place she went. She even put posters up in beauty salons.

Without any specific plans, the committee and its supporters talked up the event as much as possible. It appears that their attitude and motto, a plagiaristic, “You can do it, we can help,” was indeed a factor.

First-time players were told that they did NOT have to join ACBL, that there would be a lot of novices who knew no more than they did and teachers would be at the workshop to help them. The experienced duplicate players who just hadn’t played in sanctioned games for points were told that this would be their chance to see what it was like.

Volunteers. You can’t have too many helpers. Detroit was blessed with a large number of volunteers, who were eager to make the workshop a success. But, they could have used more when they were rewarded with such an overwhelming turnout. Fifth chairs (one for every two tables) and a crew specifically for set up and one specifically for tear down would be helpful, in addition to the other positions outlined in this paper.

Registration Form. The participants filled out forms with information on their experience levels (1) those with zero (or little) playing experience, (2) those with no duplicate experience, but playing experience and (3) the others (played duplicate, etc.). They were asked to list a partner, if that person

was attending with them. They listed their choice of classes from 1 to 8, assured that the committee would try to honor their first three choices. It’s important to provide a place on the registration for “special needs.”

The Workshop. The workshop was conceived as an all-day effort, featuring lessons on technical topics, then lunch, followed by a sanctioned duplicate game with “fifth chairs” (experienced players – ideally seated at each table – to answer



Inside the scoring/supply room. (Left to Right: Bob Chekaluk, Beverly Gardner, Ken Savage, Mary Jo Chiesa and Ron Smith.)

of 240 participants, it was at capacity two weeks before the deadline with a waiting list. Those who were turned away from the first workshop signed up very early. The cost was twenty dollars.

Any newcomer program that is this successful deserves a closer look. Here are some details about the program and the efforts to organize it. All Districts are encouraged to give this program a try.

questions, help with scoring, etc.). The program's goal was to show the participants how much fun it was to play duplicate and win points and, of course, to entice them to play in the upcoming NABC.

Registration. Upon arrival, each participant was given a folder with information about ACBL, local club games, area teachers, a pencil and a tri-fold convention card holder complete with three blank inserts. The folders, "stuffed" ahead of time, were put alphabetically using custom name tags clipped to the top, on long tables in the entrance and handed out to the participants as they walked in the door. Two helpers were assigned to each of two different tables, and the participants drifted in from about 8:15 to 9:00. (The "greeters" were asked to watch for players who needed a N/S and were assigned an E/W, so changes could be made early.) Early birds were treated to coffee in the social hall, late comers were routed immediately into the Pavilion for the Keynote speech.

A typical attendee schedule:

- 8:45 Check-in and coffee
- 9:15 Welcome and Introduction to Duplicate with a keynote speaker
- 9:50 Sanctuary – lesson "Two Level Openers"
- 10:40 Commons – lesson "Opening Leads"
- 11:30 Blue Room – lesson "Doubles"
- 12:20 Social Hall – lunch
- 1:00 Social Hall – game

Game Assignments. Each person received a section and table assignment for the afternoon game in their registration packets. All students were assigned WITH their partners to their classes (if a partner was included on the registration form). If no partner was listed, players were matched according to class choices. An attempt was made for "matched" partners to be in at least one class together, and they were told with a "sticky paper" in their packet in which class they should look for their partner.

Registration packets that weren't picked up indicated any "no shows," of which there were very few. There were 0 to 99er subs (friends or students of area members) on hand to fill in. The partner of the absentee was located and reassigned a game partner as early in the day as possible. (In the first workshop, a few went home after the classes and didn't let anyone know. The organizers just slipped in one of the 99er partners-in-waiting.

For the second workshop, no one was allowed to register if they could not stay for the entire day.)

Sections of the Game. Note that there were differing thoughts about mixing the players. For a first workshop, it was important not to discourage more experienced players by having them play with the very new, who would take longer bidding and playing. And obviously, the goal is not to make the newbies uncomfortable either. An attempt was made to have three different groups: (1) those with zero (or little) playing experience, (2) those with no duplicate experience, but playing experience and (3) the others (played duplicate, etc.). Some people on the committee thought that a mix was normal, and they should be mixed. Nevertheless, the two-

game format (repeats play in the morning; new players in the afternoon) for the second workshop automatically addresses this problem.

Classes and Teachers. The participants liked the idea of classes. A few people signed up just for the classes. The committee made sure that every teacher was a pleasant and experienced duplicate player. "Teacher" was not as important as "expert player," defined as well versed in modern techniques and able to answer any odd ball question that came his/her way, even if it was off topic of the class.

The goal of the teachers was to find out what the participants knew and to introduce them to what the 21st century bridge player was doing in competition, so they would not be surprised at the table. Teachers were advised to try to get one new thing across to the students, but to recognize that the students were not going to give up lifetime habits in a single 45 minute session.

The committee chair kept an e-mail discourse going with the teachers, to let them know the progress of the workshop, how many signed up for their classes, when to show up and where they would be once they were assigned a room. The teachers were asked to stay all day – a friendly face for those who took their classes. Some directed in the afternoon game; some were fifth chairs. (Check with your DIC before you ask the teachers to help direct. The DIC might prefer to pick his/her assistants.)

Lessons. The eight classes all ran concurrently at each of the three sessions and were 45 minutes long. Teachers were assigned a room and students came to them. Some of the classes were a bit crowded, and experience has taught how many people these classrooms actually hold. (Some



NABC Poster at registration desk with Mary Jo Chiesa.

rooms lacked air conditioning, and depending on your time of year, remember to check before the event.)

Lessons focused on very basic subjects, limited in scope. The topics were: Three- and Four-level Preempts, Two-Level Openers, The Convention Card (filling out and using), Mechanics and Ethics (how to use a bidding box, alert, call the director, etc.), Basic Conventions (Stayman and Gerber vs Blackwood), Doubles (primarily takeout), Opening bids and Opening Leads. Classes were slightly lopsided. Six had 25 to 30 per session. The other two had 40 or more in a few sessions. (Doubles and Opening Leads were the most popular picks.)

Handouts. Teachers were required to provide handouts for their classes and were asked to print double the amount of handouts than the students they expected – for friends and others who didn't take their class, but wanted to see what they missed. The extras were placed on a table in the entry where those who wanted them could pick them up.

Class Assignments. Class assignments were made based on the requests submitted on the registration forms. The participants listed their class choices from one to eight on the registration form. An effort was made to give each person their top three class choices. Note that as the registrations come in, they should be sent in order as they are submitted to the person making the assignments. Don't alphabetize. It was discovered that the partnerships tend to come in grouped. Some groups of four to eight people would sign up at the same time, and they would all want their classes together.

Location. The committee was very lucky to have an "in" with what turned out to be an excellent location for the Workshop – a church with a large social hall and a few other areas that local directors had been using for club games. When the pre-registration got so much larger than anticipated, they were able to use the sanctuary for the keynote speech and rent five separate classrooms to handle the expansion. With the bright idea to use the sanctuary for a classroom, they freed up a nice sized social hall, set it up for a double session game, for the lunch room and coffee center and never had to use it for a class. One of the larger classrooms was used as a lounge for the volunteers and computer central. So it turned out to be a brilliant location.

Lunch. The catered lunch was well received. There were three lines and lots of helpers. Only 30 - 40 minutes had been allowed for lunch, but it went smoothly.

The Game. This was well organized ahead of time. Each partnership was pre-assigned a section and table. (Their assignment was given to them in the registration packet.) The participants played twelve pre-duplicated (to speed up the game) boards. They were divided into three club games.



Ron Horwitz delivering the Keynote talk.

The players were very excited with a win of 1/3 of a point.

For each section, there were experienced helpers – “fifth chairs.” The goal was a fifth for every two tables, but as the crowd numbers grew, that approach was lost. Fifth chairs were to help with mechanics, scoring, the movement, and they were to check the pick-up slips to see if the scores were properly entered and reflected what actually happened. The plan was to make the game as much like real competition as possible. Teachers were to answer questions later if they came up.

There was a need for more “fifth chairs.” (One “fifth chair” for every two tables is a good guideline.) Many people needed help with individual scoring and the bidding boxes. North-South used travelers and East-West pickups, so that everyone could practice scoring. Shortly after the game, section winners, overall winners and masterpoints won were posted.

Memberships. Nine ACBL memberships were sold at the first workshop. Twenty-eight new ACBL memberships were sold at the second. The new members received a sheet with free plays good for one year, offered by five clubs in different areas of Detroit. The value was \$35. The coupons were good only for newcomer games. This was a very good deal for the players and an excellent way to provide prospective clients for each of these clubs. (Note that free plays were not offered at the first workshop.)

How Did We Do? Don't forget to hand out evaluation sheets to find out what you did right (or wrong). You can learn a lot from them. Many of the sheets were filled out. Teachers were almost unanimously rated high, and other than the few rooms being too warm, the day was touted as terrific.

Follow up. The IN Committee and the unit volunteers hope to follow up with a once a month seminar of a lesson, lunch and game to keep their new players enthused about the game until the main event – The Detroit Spring 2008 IN Program.

**Contact Gail Harson for more information
at GAKH@comcast.net.**

BUILD YOUR CLUB WITH NEW PRODUCTS

By Marti & Gary Ronemus & Ed Scanlon

Each year we try to introduce a new product for our customers...our players. The goal is to help our club grow and to offer more choices for our customers. In 2005 we introduced Bridge Boardroom University, a once-a-month all-day event, including a workshop and a triple-masterpoint game. We slipped in 2006—nothing new! So in 2007 we started two new products. Each has turned out to be a winner, and one seems perfect to share with teachers.

Hour of Power!! We usually have two workshops for beginners a week, but we needed something for our more advanced and intermediate players. We wanted something different, something that would appeal to those not attending our other classes.

Here's what we came up with after some staff brainstorming: We chose an hour-long format at 11 a.m. on a day where we serve lunch at noon, before a 12:30 Open Strat game. That way, the players can attend **Hour of Power**, have a free lunch and stay to play. We offer a discount for the afternoon game for lesson attendees.

The lesson goals for HOP are a little different: We want to help players enhance their ability to count hands and visualize where opponent cards are. And we want to refresh playing skills and focus on creative defense.

Here's how it works: We pick four hands with a common theme, usually hands from Eddie Kantar or from the many books of expert hand analysis in our library. Before looking at the

hands, the instructor calls out the bids. "South opens 1♥. What do we know about that hand?" "Next, West overcalls 3♣. What does West hold?" By the end of the bidding, the students have figured out as closely as possible what is held in each hand. Then the instructor tells the opening leader what card to lead and we discuss what story the opening lead tells. Still, no one has seen a hand! Now the dummy comes down and we discuss if it has what we expect from the bidding.

If the hand is meant to be a declarer puzzle, the declarer now reveals his hand, and we discuss if it is what we pictured. We then develop a line of play with a backup (if one is likely to be needed), based on what we expect defenders to hold, based on the lead and the bidding. Only then are all hands revealed. We discuss if the plan will work.

If it is a Defender hand, after the dummy comes down, one of the defender's hands comes down (is it a third hand puzzle? A signal puzzle?) and a similar discussion is held. Is the hand what was expected? What should the defense plan be based on the bidding and the opening lead? Then all four hands are faced and a discussion about whether the plan was workable or not.

We do a hand every 15 minutes. It's a challenge to keep to the time, as discussions can get very long. The instructor has to remember that it's not



so much a class about bidding, but rather what inferences can be gained to enable players to count hands. The hands aren't played, so it is possible to keep it to 15 minutes a hand. We start exactly on time and end on time...very high energy!

Feedback from players has been very gratifying. They tell us that they are benefiting from visualizing what the hands are from the bidding rather than deciding what to bid with the hand. The emphasis is just different enough that it makes them think in a slightly different way.

At the end of class each person gets a handout of the four hands, with the complete analysis. If anyone would like help implementing this idea, we welcome you to contact us at mronemus@comcast.net or by using the contact links at our web site, www.bridgeboardroom.com.

Ed Scanlon is Marti's new secret weapon. He joined her staff in March of '06 with no bridge knowledge or experience. He has become a good player, a terrific director and a super cook. Ed does all of the cooking – roughly 200 meals a week – and his soups

Teachers' Bookshelf by Pat Harrington

HANDS ON – Weak Two Bids, written by ABTA Master Teacher Joan Anderson, debuted at the 2007 ABTA Convention. I expect it will be a contender for the 2008 book of the year award.

This book contains everything

our students need to know about weak-two opening-bids, including 36 practice deals and exercises. Joan's *HANDS ON* concept is very clever. If you are familiar with those large facing-out hand records that Dealmaster creates so your

students can deal lesson hands in class, you have an idea of the format Joan uses in this attractive 8½ by 5½ spiral bound book. Each deal takes up two pages with one page devoted to an attractive

(continued on page 8)

Hands on – Weak Two Bids (continued from page 7)

facing-out hand record in red and black, and the second page offers a normal printout of the deal with an analysis. This eliminates the need for EZ Deal cards and makes the product comparable to one of the ACBL Play Course booklets. I just wish I had thought of this formatting; I might have published several books by now!

You might think that 36 deals on a single topic is too much, but I have had great success with thoroughly teaching a bid/convention to my students and giving them practice using it in a variety of situations. We're kidding ourselves if we think that giving a student one weak two to open makes him ready to go out and use weak twos.

The book starts with examples of what is and what is not a weak two. I really like the fact that some of the lesson hands are designed to make the point NOT to open a weak two with the hand. Students who do are likely to achieve a poor result. You haven't really learned a convention unless you've also learned when not to use it. The author then moves on to responding to a weak two, including new suit forcing, 2NT for a feature and furthering the preempt. The last sections

cover competing over a weak two in both direct and balancing seats.

Your students will really enjoy owning this book to practice weak two bids and they can get a lot more than 36 hands to play from it just by sitting N-S the first time through and then changing to E-W the next time. Teachers also will find great fodder for lesson hands. The only flaws I saw were that the author is extremely disciplined in the use of weak twos, sticking to the requirement of two of the top three honors and at least one quick trick but not more than two. The analysis of the hands focuses on bidding and sometimes does not give enough discussion on the play (some play could get interesting).

The book is self-published and should be ordered from the author (jla224@mchsi.com). One copy is \$15 with a 20% discount for 10 or more copies. Shipping extra.



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