



# THE BRIDGE TEACHER

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## For Your Information —

**Get Ready for 2010** — Marti Ronemus offers a new twist on New Year's Resolutions below. Be sure to set some goals for yourself. Use the guidelines in the teacher section of the ACBL web site to help you focus (<http://www.acbl.org/teachers/index.html>).

**ABTA Teacher of the Year** — There are plans in the works to announce a Teacher of the Year at the 2010 ABTA Convention in New Orleans next summer. Details can be found in Barbara Seagram's column in the October Bulletin. You can e-mail her with questions at [bseagram@ca.inter.net](mailto:bseagram@ca.inter.net)

**Another Great Idea from Kathie Macnab** — This issue feature's Kathie's annual Anniversary Week Celebration. I'm sure that you enterprising teachers who don't run a bridge club can find a way to work these ideas into your regular classes. I'd love to hear what you come up with.

*Enjoy this issue and Have a Fabulous New Year!*



Julie Greenberg

# New Year's Resolutions

*By Marti Ronemus*



Yes, it's time again. Will I be able to keep them all this year? Maybe for just a week? I've got dozens ... some for being a better wife, some to be a better person, well ... you get the picture. I thought we might enjoy sharing our "Resolutions for Being a Better Bridge Teacher," though. Let's see how many we have in common. (I bet these aren't what you expect.)

**Drink less coffee.** I find that I'm a bit high-strung and wired for my morning classes. That 4th cup of espresso double shots seems to be the one that puts me over the top. My students would have a better time if I weren't vibrating at warp speed, hurrying them to their next round. I need to keep their pleasure in focus at all times. I need to slow my lesson down a little, giving them time to wrap their minds around the new concepts. I need to bring my voice down out of the dogs-only range to that of human hearing. They learn better when I'm relaxed.

**Drink MORE coffee.** At 3 p.m., my biorhythms are at their lowest. I need a nap, and here they come ... two dozen people ready to hang on my every word. They're all perky and bright, I'm all droopy and looking for a pillow. I need to be on top of it, every minute. If it takes chemicals to do it, so be it. (Now, Faithful Readers, I am not suggesting a trip to your nearest illegal corner pharmacist. Natural chemicals only!) My students are loyal and faithful and deserve my best, all the time, every time. Knowledge of my own rhythms, my own timing, can make a difference. As I get older (it had to happen sooner or later), being on top all the time takes more effort and knowledge of my limitations. I need to pay attention to my low spots and find a way to get around them.

**Know when I'm beaten.** I have some students who have been taking lessons from me twice a week for over four years. They still don't understand you need 10+ points to name a new suit at the two-level. Stayman comes as a surprise each time it comes up. Bids showing point count a complete mystery. Each class I meet them with determination that this time I'll find a way to get through to them. I feel that if a student doesn't grasp the lesson, it's my failing, that I need to find a new way to explain the

*continued on page 6*

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# TEN STEPS TO STARTING A YOUTH PROGRAM

You've got the bug — you want to give back to bridge and recruit some new young players. How to start? Here are Patty Tucker's top ten ideas which were the basis for establishing the very successful Atlanta Junior Bridge (AJB) Program.

## 1. DON'T WALK ALONE

You need help: one person cannot do the job effectively. Start by recruiting interested teachers who can support each other and sub for each other. Get your club, unit and/or district vested in your success. You will find that many of your local bridge members have skills they can offer to help you advertise, promote the program, take pictures, provide snacks, offer legal advice, car pool, make posters, etc.

## 2. EXPAND AND CONQUER

The more kids involved in your program, the better it will work. You and your team of teachers need to offer classes in different areas of your home town. The large class base will provide a large group to draw from for partners and games — kids want to play with other kids, not adults.

## 3. GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT

Offering lessons won't work unless you get the kids to come. They want to have fun, make friends, compete and be recognized. Bridge has social aspects that we don't find in other sports. The game allows us to give kids friendships with people from all over the world. And the networking possibilities are big — contacts with influential people you can't make anywhere else. Check out the new handout "Benefits of Bridge" that you can download, distribute and use to recruit new young players and to familiarize yourself with some of the scholarship opportunities that currently exist — (<http://www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html>, right-hand column, Recruiting Students).

## 4. AGE MATTERS

Middle-school students are great. Focus on the 6th, 7th and 8th graders because they tend not to be as busy as high school students. Teach 4th graders or younger only if their math and concentration skills are good.

## 5. REMEMBER — KIDS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

Competition is the fun part of bridge. The kids are ready to play, so make it happen. Get them handling the cards right away. Go to [www.btfy.org](http://www.btfy.org) (Bridge Teachers for Youth) to check out lesson plans that help you teach kids effectively. Remember that kids love prizes, so visit the Dollar Store and be ready to reward your students.

## 6. TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Teaching one hour a week is tough. You barely get started before the class is over. The kids will forget everything they learned by the next week. Aim to start with greater frequency until you get them going. This is why the workshop idea

(two hours a day for five days, ideally 2 pm to 4 pm) works so well. Try this in the summer and then progress to classes at the schools your students attend.

## 7. GET THE PARENTS INVOLVED

Parents make sure their kids don't miss a class or a game. Help them understand the great things bridge can offer (social interaction, improved math, logic and problem solving skills, networking). And remember that bridge is a very inexpensive sport — no uniforms, fees or equipment, and only small fees to play in a game (generally less than the price of a movie ticket plus concession stand treats). There are some terrific newspaper articles you can download at the ACBL web site to pass around (<http://www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html>).

## 8. YEAR ROUND CLASSES AND PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

If you stop teaching and playing after three months, the kids will find a "new" hobby. So, in addition to having groups of kids playing, not just a handful, you need to establish weekly classes that run year round and ongoing playing opportunities. The classes need to be available in the areas where you started the initial workshops. Playing opportunities could be what Atlanta Junior Bridge offers: a monthly junior game at a local club, games at every local tournament, participation in the nationwide competitions for beginning players offered by the School Bridge League ([www.schoolbridgeleague.org](http://www.schoolbridgeleague.org)) and an introduction to online play.

## 9. MONEY, MONEY, WHO'S GOT THE MONEY?

First decide what you need: teacher fees (or volunteers), supplies (books, cards, bidding boxes, etc.), a free (hopefully) playing site, snacks (bridge players like to eat; kids like to eat more), advertising. Check out what the ACBL funded school program offers (<http://www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html>). Find out if your Unit/District has money set aside for education programs. See if your club will let you teach a class there and run a youth game alongside an existing game. Consider a charity game if your club will work with you to help raise funds. Get creative. You can ask for small things from lots of people — this will get more of them vested in your success.

## 10. DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

These steps outline briefly only one way to get youth bridge started in your area — in a big way. Many teachers have started programs with one school and one class or a myriad of variations. You can access a booklet of successful programs at the Bridge Teachers for Youth web site ([www.btfy.org](http://www.btfy.org)). Take a look at what others have done and see if you can create a plan for your area based on their experiences.

# THE BRIDGE TEACHER'S BOOKSHELF

## Teaching Cuebids

By Pat Harrington



They say good things come in small

packages and Dee Berry's *Cuebids in a Nutshell* (published in 2008) is no exception. This small (approximately 6" by 5") spiral bound book is chockfull of useful information and examples. It's the only book I've seen dedicated solely to cuebidding. If your players are clamoring for lessons on cuebids, you'll be happy to hear that a *Cuebids in a Nutshell* Teacher Manual has just been published. Now there's no need to write your own lessons or dig up example hands. Use lessons that were repeatedly taught and tested by Dee Berry, an ABTA Master Teacher and ACBL TAP Trainer with many years of experience both teaching and playing competitive bridge.

Dee is an advocate of using the table as your blackboard as taught in our TAP course. She has her students lay out the cards to illustrate examples and uses bidding boxes to discuss specific auctions. As Dee points out, even experienced players have difficulty visualizing letters and "x's" scrawled on a board.

The manual provides four sample deals for most lessons. Topics covered (in the order presented) are: cuebids by advancer to an overcall; notrump searches by opener; cuebid advances to takeout doubles; cuebids by responder; cuebids as Stayman; cuebidding toward slam (with eight deals); jump overcall cuebids: conventional cuebids (mainly Michaels cuebids); and bids that sound like cuebids but aren't. The student book also mentions alternative methods of cuebidding

(including last train and serious 3NT). The author points out that teachers need not cover all the topics presented and can design a course to fit their students' needs in terms of difficulty and course length.

When I heard the manual was ready, I finally gave in to my students' requests to teach cuebids. The main focus of my 6-week series was on using a bid of the opponent's suit to help you communicate more accurately and bid more aggressively. Dee's book and manual were my main resources.

I chose to cover the most common uses of the cuebid: overcalls, takeout doubles, cuebids as Stayman, responder's cuebid, Michaels, and looking for notrump (including the Western cuebid.) Each of these is covered in a separate section in the book and manual, which made it easy to prepare my course. Because I've seen how easily students confuse the various cuebids, I omitted discussion of cuebids for slam because I prefer to call them control bids. We restricted our discussion to cuebids that use a bid of an opponent's suit to convey a specific message. I also added a lesson on preemptive raises in competition, which are made possible by the use of a cuebid to show stronger raises. The author points out that you could easily take two lessons to cover Michaels. After presenting the lesson, I wish I had allowed the time to do that. When expanding a single lesson into two, you want each student to have the chance to bid and declare at least one lesson deal in each lesson so you need at least four illustrative deals per class, but

I prefer having more. If necessary, you can find supplemental deals in other sources. Many additional deals appear in the body of the *Cuebids in a Nutshell* student text. ACBL's *More Commonly Used Conventions* is also a good source of extra Michaels deals.

The *Cuebids in a Nutshell* book and manual are valuable resources that belong on your bookshelf. The student book is priced at \$13, but substantial quantity discounts (up to 45% off for 50 books) are offered by the publisher, PDI Bridge Supplies. PDI also offers the teacher manual at \$15. You can also get good prices on Dee's *Two Over One In A Nutshell* book and teacher manual. Contact PDI at:

In the US :  
1-800-854-4660  
In Canada:  
1-888-852-5187  
PDI@wavecable.com  
PDI@telus.net

In addition, PDI will soon have a web site [pdibridgesupplies.com](http://pdibridgesupplies.com).



# HAVING FUN AND EVERYONE AT YOUR B



*Twins day — most just wore the same color shirts, but not these two*

running full time, so I wanted that Anniversary Week to be “Extra special.” As I usually do when I need a “brilliancy,” I hit the internet and scooped out other bridge clubs for ideas. I found a club that held a year long team game. They divided the membership into one of four teams and amassed points all year, awarding prizes at the end of the year. This got everyone involved.

I thought about this and came up with a plan. Lucky for me the first Harry Potter movie had just come out, and most people were aware of Hogwarts and the School of Witches and Wizardry. What a great theme I thought. We had a witch’s hat and every player and student had to reach into the hat to draw for their “house” (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw), making the house selection totally random. These were the instructions for the week: (1) for every game they played in, team members would earn points for their house; (2) if they wore their team colors, they would receive bonus points; (3) if they dressed up – more house points, or as it became later known, “team spirit points;” (4) masterpoints achieved by each team would be multiplied by 10 and added to each house.

Little did I know what a hit this would be. The Slytherin house came with snakes and all wore green and silver. Gryffindor members were a bunch of Harry

The Anniversary of our MCG Bridge Studio in Halifax NS was approaching, and we enjoy having a theme along with special games. Our anniversary is always an anticipated week-long event with extra masterpoint games, lots of food and prizes.

In 2002 the Bridge Studio moved into our permanent location and was

Potter’s sporting their yellow and red. One of the students made a life size Harry Potter doll with cape, glasses and the scar. Our classes that week were on “The Defense against The Dark Arts” and “Divinations – Seeing Through the Defenders Cards.” The experts were doing battle for the most masterpoints won for the week, and we had no trouble coming up with themes for our games. We had a Potions Night, Lucky Charms game and our team event was, of course, a Quiddich Tournament, where each team had to include at least two Rookie players.

The week turned out to be a lot of fun, and in the end, the winning team was Slytherin. I had a plaque made on foam-core and all the players’ names in the Slytherin house were listed. The only question left was, “What is next year’s theme?”

Each successive year we have come up with a new theme, and some of them were: Astrology (Earth, Wind, Fire and Water); Sports; Music; James Bond (that would have been for 2007) and Pirates. And each year we place every player and student in our club on one of the four teams. They have team colors and all are encouraged to get involved as much or as little they want. Some love the fun and games, and some just want the extra masterpoints and food. I have a serious retired judge in the Studio and I was certain he would not want to “dress-up.” However, when I would go around checking on team colors and giving out spirit points, he would point to the red stripe in his shirt, say that he was on the red team and ask for credit for his colors.

During Anniversary Week, we hold a



*Camp without S'mores — give me a break*

# GAMES WITH BRIDGE CLUB

by Kathie Macnab

Rookie/Master pairs game, a Pro/Am Team game, IN special games and Open stratified games. We have bridge quizzes and trivia from time to time, and all the games are club championships. I usually have special prizes for the week, and we have a special “snack” following each game. When we had our James Bond Theme, one night was entitled “To Russia with Love” and, of course, we had vodka and a little caviar (well, very little, cheap caviar).

Last year our theme was “Camp Finessealot.” We had four cabins: Vienna Coup; Backwash Squeeze; Trump Echoes; and Kamikaze Notrump. A pair came from out of town to play on a Saturday afternoon. On that day to earn extra points, each Cabin had to sing a camp song. So when Bill and Phil finished playing their 3rd round, you can imagine their surprise when the Backwash Squeeze Cabin all stood up and sang “Little Rabbit Fru-Fru” to win 100 bonus points!!

During our Sports Theme week, among the activities was a golf day. Some told (bad) golf jokes, and we had a putting tournament to win points for your team. Both activities earned spirit points for the participating members’ teams. Of course the highlight was when Evelyn (83) came to play wearing a hat that had a basketball hoop attached – she also won extra points for her team.

At the beginning of each game, I record player points for those wearing their team colors or costumes or if they bring something that fits the current theme. During our Pirate Theme celebration, one couple came with miniature treasure chests filled with their “booty,” and for “show your tattoos day,” one fellow put a skull and cross bone decal on his head. (Little did he know that it would not wash off so easily, and he ended up wearing a hat a lot that week!!)

Bill, my husband and webmaster, records all the



*Vienna Coup singing a campfire song.*

numbers, and each night we give an update on the web. You would be surprised how many of the players come in each day to see where their team stands and then strategize on how to catch up. Players will call other team members to get out for a game (players always get points for just coming and playing) and encourage them to earn Spirit Points as well. During Camp Finessealot on craft day, one team member

was up all night making clay ashtrays, so everyone in his cabin would have a craft to show me and they would all collect their coveted team spirit points. Winning team 2009 – Vienna Coup with 16,082 points.

Next year the Winter Olympics will be in Canada in February, so our theme is set. My sister is trying to find posters for us to use to decorate the Studio. I already have a GREAT idea for 2011, but that one is in the vault, and I am not telling until it is time to draw for teams.

You can have a look at all of our Anniversary Week celebrations at the Bridge Studio web page. Go to: [http://www.bridgestudio.org/Static/Anniversary\\_Week/A\\_W.htm](http://www.bridgestudio.org/Static/Anniversary_Week/A_W.htm) Let me know if you have any questions ([www.bridgestudio.org](http://www.bridgestudio.org)).



*Cabin 2 - Backwash squeeze decorates their ‘cabin’*

concept. Well, this year, I have to know when to admit defeat. I have to know when I'm beaten and stop feeling that I've failed. No one has failed. They are having fun, I'm getting paid. This is a mutual exchange that should make everyone happy.

**Find a new way to feel stupid.** I need to be able to empathize with them as they struggle to understand. The best way for me to "get it" is to put myself in a situation where I am the novice. I need to take a course in something I know nothing about (this certainly allows for many choices). I need to try something brand new that is beyond my ken (again, limitless opportunities). I need to be embarrassed by my lack of knowledge. Empathy

comes from mutual experience. Besides, it'll be fun to learn something new.

**Start wasting time.** All my life, I've tried to avoid wasting time. I'm scheduled in 15-minute increments. My daytimer weighs more than the family dog. I will be a better teacher if I am not always feeling rushed. I will waste time. (As I read this, I'm thinking, "How can I best use the time I'll be wasting?" I have a feeling this resolution is going to be a toughie.)

So there you have it, my top 5 to be a better teacher. Can I do it? What are yours? Can YOU do it? The most important, though, is the simplest: **Keep having more fun than anyone in the room.** If I can do that, the rest will fall in line.

## ABTA Offers a Wonderful Opportunity

*A Message from the New ABTA President, Joyce Penn*

Looking at all of the free services that the American Bridge Teacher Association (ABTA) provides to bridge teachers, I hope more teachers will become members of the group in 2010. Whether it's sharing creative ideas, taking advantage of our online discussion group, learning how to become a better teacher, or testing product lines available in teaching, the \$35 annual membership fee brings many rewards to those in bridge education.

For three exciting days, proceeding each summer's NABC, the teachers hone their skills at annual meetings designed to strengthen teacher skills. They hear lectures by noted teachers, authors and professional

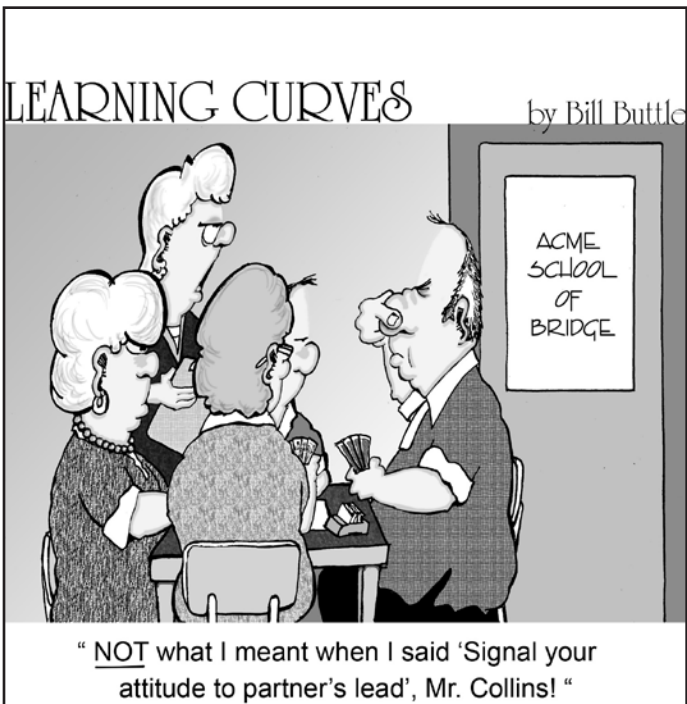
bridge players. Next summer, in New Orleans (8/20-23/10), ABTA invites you to attend.

I began learning bridge in 1987, remembering a smattering of bridge learned from a college roommate. I called a local bridge teacher, said that I knew how to play but wanted to learn some fine points. Although she didn't laugh, she probably was used to hearing what Marti Ronemus so aptly calls, the "unconscious incompetent" express enthusiasm for the game. What a revelation to be introduced to modern bridge!

After attending graduate school in Nursing Education, I taught at a local Columbus OH hospital. Forgetting bridge for 20 years was not a problem, because I always knew that I'd love it when I returned. After taking the TAP in 1994, it was an enjoyable transition to begin teaching bridge, while furthering my own knowledge of the game. Owning and managing the Columbus Bridge Center from 1996 to 2004, gave me a vast knowledge of the issues confronting bridge and the frustrations new players experience.

Helping students learn bridge and improve their games increases my love of the game. There is an added depth to my teaching, thanks to the ABTA, as I help students understand the logic behind a bid or card play. If you teach bridge and would like to join nearly 500 other teachers in the ABTA, you can download an application from our website: [www.abtahome.com](http://www.abtahome.com). Feel free to email me ([jpenn@columbus.rr.com](mailto:jpenn@columbus.rr.com)) or Marsha Reall, business secretary-treasurer, ([mdreall@columbus.rr.com](mailto:mdreall@columbus.rr.com)) for more information.

Hope to see you at the convention next summer!





# Is Cruise Bridge in Your Future? *By Lynn Berg*

A friend of mine recently took a cruise which offered, among other amenities, a bridge program: Lessons in the morning at sea and a game in the afternoon. A 299 player, he was so excited to learn that he'd be able to play some bridge and maybe learn a new thing or two while on this trip. Was he disappointed! Telling me about the bridge teacher on his ship, he complained about tardiness, lack of organization, sloppy personal anecdotes, and out-of-date information. He wasn't sure that the program offered wasn't worse than no bridge at all.

Luckily this man was already a dedicated player who wouldn't let one bad bridge experience stop him from going on. Unfortunately the only taste of duplicate bridge some social players ever get is on a cruise ship, and I shudder to think what an impression of bridge teachers and duplicate games was taken away in this case. To make matters worse, passengers are asked to evaluate the programs they try aboard ship, and I imagine that the Cruise Director had a grim picture of bridge, too, after reading about this presenter.

If you are interested in teaching on cruise ships, start with the ACBL's excellent "Bridge Teachers and Bridge Cruises" seminar, if you can. It's the most efficient introduction available. If getting to an NABC is not possible, here are some tips that could help.

**1. Who's Your Audience.** In your audience will be social bridge players who have no intention of trying duplicate. If your presentation is attractive, they may decide to give duplicate a try. But your lessons should be designed to appeal to a variety of bridge players. I often choose defense topics — leads, signals, take-out doubles, preempts, especially if you might have British players aboard. You need to be mindful of the great differences between North American and UK bridge.

**2. Time is Limited, Be Prepared.** I usually use a "cards on the table" approach. The first example can be laid out on the tables, with the remainder of the cards in suits and in discrete stacks at each seat. Even if they've never seen this method before, people catch on quickly if the first example is already set up. Be sure to always get to the lesson venue early — what if there are no tables or chairs because they've been used elsewhere and not brought back in time? It happens!

**3. Suit Your Lessons to Your Audience.** A cruise ship bridge lesson is rarely more than 45 minutes. That leaves a little time for questions as well as the chance for you to publicize the afternoon game, if one is scheduled, and to announce the topic for the next session. Judge the reaction of those who attend the first session to plan the rest. Even if the Cruise Director has had you provide titles for your lectures in advance, you have wiggle room to vary the content or difficulty of the remaining presentations.

**4. Handle Different Skill Levels.** If you have someone who's clearly way above or below the group, you have to be tactful and try to meet that person's needs without jeopardizing the interest of the group. By speaking to an advanced player after the session, you can acknowledge his skills and may keep him from being too unhappy if the bulk of your players are at the elementary level. If you have folks who've never played, you might offer to have a few separate sessions just for absolute beginners. There are two wonderful resources: the first session of Easybridge and the terrific non-bidding bridge game called MiniBridge. (You can't really do more than get them started. Try to give them a basic bridge vocabulary, an idea of how the game is played physically, and a hand-out with on-line resources like the ACBL's Learn to Play Bridge programs.) Tell them how to find a teacher at home through the ACBL's Find-A-Teacher site and the ABTA ([www.abtahome.com](http://www.abtahome.com)).

My friend's cruise bridge experience was almost a "how not to" for introducing social players to duplicate. The lessons were muddled, too complicated, and not planned. The teacher was disorganized and more interested in boasting about his playing experiences than in helping the players learn something. The room was not ready at lesson time or game time. Supplies were inadequate (not even enough decks of cards for all of the boards). The one unjustified complaint my friend stated was the length of the game — he wanted a game longer than 120 minutes, and that rarely happens. You'll find that your players want to leave for everything from hair appointments to Bingo towards the end of the session.

Robert Burns wrote about the need to "see ourselves as others see us." That's especially important when your potential clientele have many other activities they could select instead of bridge.

# How Do You Make the Most Out of Mistakes?

No one likes to make a mistake. But, using mistakes as a teaching tool can be a very positive thing.

At an NABC seminar (Fall 2009, San Diego), a group of teachers were talking about how they incorporate the idea of making mistakes in their classes. It was an interesting twist and many of you are probably doing similar things.

Send an e-mail to [education@acbl.org](mailto:education@acbl.org) about your approach to handling mistakes in class, and let's put something on the web site for everyone to enjoy.

Bob Locke got things started with: "Don't be afraid to make mistakes, it's the best way to learn. And the

only alternative to making mistakes is not to play, which is the biggest mistake of all."

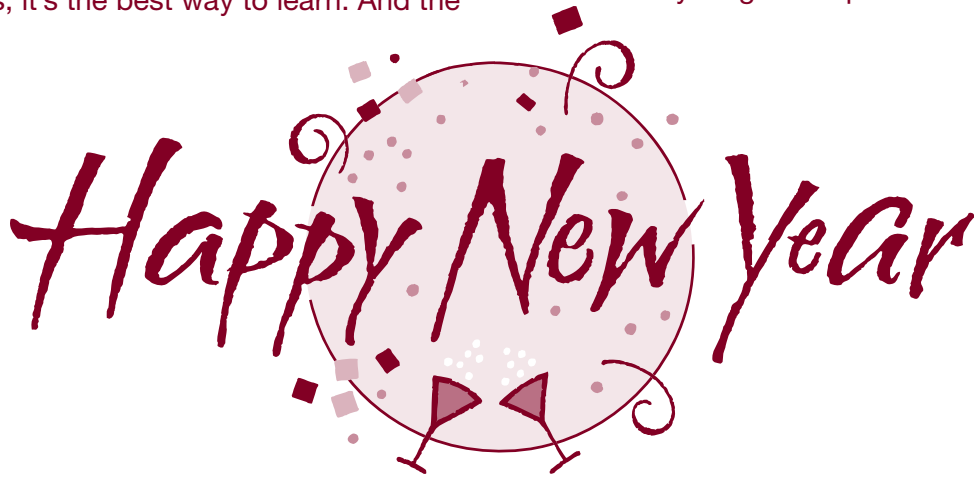
This was followed with some rapid fire retorts:

Bridge is a game of mistakes.

Mistakes are experience; you learn by making them.

He who makes the next to the last mistake tends to be the winner.

There's no test at the end – so mistakes aren't counted as anything but experience – a way to learn.



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