



THE BRIDGE TEACHER

Spring Edition • April 2011

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For Your Information...

Spring is here and summer is just around the corner!

Here are some of the highlights to look forward to this summer:



◆ Toronto Summer NABC

Check out the Toronto NABC page of the ACBL website for information on the educational and marketing seminars and special events to be held during the tournament. Join us for the ACBL Club & Teacher reception on the first Friday — it's our way of saying “thank you” for all you do to help keep the game of bridge alive. Don't forget — U.S. citizens will need their passports!

◆ 4th Annual Youth NABC

The Youth NABC will be held again this year during the Summer NABC in Toronto. It will be conducted over the last weekend of the NABC, beginning Thursday, July 28 and ending on Saturday, July 30. If you have young bridge students or know of any young bridge players 19 years of age and under, please encourage them to attend this exciting event. Details are available on the youth4bridge.org website.

◆ ABTA – Summer Convention in Toronto

Remember to make your reservations for the annual American Bridge Teachers Association (ABTA) Conference (July 19 – July 22, 2011). Details are in this newsletter.

◆ Marketing Matters Live! Workshop

If you were unable to attend the “Marketing Matters Live!” workshop conducted at the 2011 Spring NABC in Louisville – no worries! The workshop was videotaped and is now available for viewing on the ACBL website. Watch the video and learn more about the marketing resources that are available to you. The video, as well as the Power Point presentation slides, are at the following location on the ACBL website: <http://www.acbl.org/marketing/index.html>

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Vicki Campbell

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Bored, burned out, bummed out — doesn't matter what you call it, it's a condition we all suffer from on occasion. The material is just too familiar — and maybe so are the students? Time to spring-clean your mind, and make some new plans.

When you're bored it can be hard to make plans for more of the same, so start with some new experiences for yourself. You won't be able to do a good job for your classes if you really don't want to be there.

Go to class yourself. At the NABC's and at many regionals, there are free classes usually directed toward the newer players. Often there are handouts—which you can use if you give proper credit. If a nearby club has a visiting lecturer or workshop, attend. It doesn't matter if you have 5000 points, pay to attend and try to see the class through the eyes of the 199er. If you have a friend teaching, ask to sit in. There are lots of classes online these days, try one. Whatever you choose, look at the class as a toolbox not just of bridge ideas (after all, you have plenty of those) but of teaching techniques and ways to interact with the participants. I've never forgotten watching Audrey Grant get eighty-odd people to raise their hands and wiggle their fingers as she talked

about locating the top honors in a suit. It was a funny and effective moment.

One of the worst things about teaching is that we are so often isolated by the experience. You should take steps to end isolation. Go to an ABTA meeting. If there isn't a teacher's group in your area, start one. Just the chance to talk to other teachers can be refreshing.

Talk to your students. Maybe there's a topic or series you haven't offered which they would like. Compose and send out a questionnaire if your students are scattered. If you don't have an effective data base, you need one. Take time to organize and list your student contacts so that it's easy to poll them and also to advertise. Send out a questionnaire listing several possible topics and make it like "Viewer's Choice". The follow-up mailing will show what topics won and set a schedule.

Try a little "retail therapy." That might mean new shoes, but I really mean some new materials. If you haven't been to a TAP presentation in a while, you'll be pleased and surprised to see the variety of materials introduced. It's not just the old Club, Diamond, Heart, Spade approach. Get a Baron Barclay catalog and browse or see the bookseller's wares at a tournament.

Know thyself. Get an audio- or

video-tape made of your class and see what you're actually doing. Are you projecting the image you want? Does boredom show in hustling through the material or by poor body language? Believe me, your students will react to your attitude.

Try a new format. Get together with another teacher and team-teach. The planning and division of labor will give you a whole new look at your class. If you always teach series, plan some one-shot workshops. Go back and look at the wonderful Easybridge! Workshops if you need a reminder of how good that can be. Teach in the morning or at night instead of mid-afternoon. Teach your series class like summer camp, getting it all done in one week instead of six or eight. Plan a bridge festival with classes and games of all sorts (pairs, teams, KO).

Inject some fun into your classroom. That could be as corny as bridge bingo or as classy as a buffet at the country club. A social aspect to your classes could make them more appealing and more fun. Are the surroundings in which you teach conducive to learning and to pleasure? What could make them more so? Enlist the help of the students for this element. How about a party to end your class schedule, one to which all participants and their friends and spouses are invited? Add a member-guest to your roster, where your current students introduce you and your classes to friends (a freebie, of course, but great advertising).

Been there and done that? Same-old same-old? What sad expressions of ennui. You are entitled to have some fun with your work and to enjoy what you do. So shake off the boredom and get to it.



SUMMER

FUN IN 2011 FOR TEACHERS



By Joyce Penn

The Toronto NABC is just around the corner, preceded by the American Bridge Teachers Association (ABTA) Conference (July 19–July 22, 2011). Whether you are a bridge teacher or someone interested in teaching bridge, I hope that you'll consider registering for these excellent meetings.

They are designed to strengthen teacher skills through member presentations, as well as, in-depth lectures by noted authors and professional bridge players. It will be hard to best last July's star-studded agenda that included Larry Cohen, Fred Gitelman, Audrey Grant, Michael Huston, Jerry Helms, and Julian Laderman. Amy and Steve Nellissen, dedicated volunteers, are working hard to ensure an equally outstanding program.

Barbara Seagram, our Toronto hostess, has planned visits to several outstanding venues for your enjoyment: Niagara on the Lake and Shaw Festival, lunch at the top of the CN Tower, plus an amphibious bus tour of Toronto. Enjoy Wednesday lunch at an elegant Toronto private club, courtesy of Audrey Grant and David Lindop, Baron Barclay, Great Game Products, and Better Bridge.

Yet another meal event, Wednesday evening's dinner at Joe Badali's Ristorante will honor new attendees at our meetings and introduce them to our officers and members. You won't find a better

venue for "helping those who teach bridge to do it better — more effectively, knowledgeably and professionally"* than the ABTA Annual Conference. Nowhere else will you learn as much while having such a delightful time!

Our second annual Teacher of the Year contest is ending its nomination process (March 31, 2011). Marilyn Kalbfleisch, emkalb@gmail.com, Chairman, will be happy to send you information re: award requirements. See candidate information on www.masteringbridge.com or www.facebook.com (search ABTA Master Point Press Teacher of the Year). The winner, announced at our meetings, will receive a cash prize plus a commemorative plaque. Teaching excellence, service to the bridge community and the candidate's community, plus innovation in teaching are evaluated in choosing the winner.

At the beginning of our meetings, the ABTA Membership Credentials Committee holds personal interviews and testing for master teacher accreditation. Professional

ABTA teachers with 100 hours of teaching experience who are interested in becoming candidates may read the requirements on www.abtathome.com and/or contact Betty Starzec, lstarzec@comcast.net. Letters of intent are due by June 1, 2011.

Each year our teachers sponsor an award for the best timely tip or unique idea in bridge teaching. Registrants are invited to participate and/or enjoy reading and judging submitted ideas. Brenda Montague (bestbridgeteacher@yahoo.com) will be accepting submissions through June 20, 2011.

Lastly, you are invited to submit your registration for the ABTA Annual Conference now by scrolling to the bottom of our opening webpage at www.abtathome.com. Print out the form to complete and submit. Any questions, please contact either Kathy Rolfe, Business Secretary-Treasurer, krolfe5@comcast.net or Joyce Penn, jpenn@columbus.rr.com.

* *ABTA Bylaws*



THE BRIDGE TEACHER'S BOOKSHELF

By Pat Harrington



It's spring and the time for weddings. In keeping with the season, I offer you

something old and something new.

First the new: Audrey Grant and Great Game Products have teamed up to create a CD to accompany Grant's *Bridge Basics 1* textbook. Both take a beginning student through four chapters starting with the mechanics of the game and continuing with opening bids and how to respond to each one-level opening. The CD follows the material presented in the text and allows the students to play the same 32 lesson deals and answer numerous 10-question quizzes, which are similar to the text exercises. Incorrect bids and quiz answers are acknowledged with a suggestion to try again or request the correct action. A progress record is included to allow two distinct users to keep track of their scores and successes on quizzes and lesson deals.

Auditory learners can turn on the sound to hear Audrey's discussion of the bidding and play concepts – including several verses of “Bid, Bid, Bid Your Hand.” The soundtrack matches the written text.

An optional recap of the bidding and play of each lesson deal is given in David Lindop's optional oral and written walkthrough. Those of you familiar with the *Bridge Basics* textbook are also familiar with declarer's checklist to help declarer make a plan. Before playing to the first trick on each lesson deal, declarer can opt to pull down and complete the checklist to plan the play. Incorrect choices are marked with a red x and can be corrected before play.

My experience with CDs for my beginner course has shown that students learn and retain the material when they can review the lesson and replay deals at home. Companion software is also a great way to keep a student who misses a lesson current. If you use *Bridge Basics 1* in your classes, be sure to tell your students about this program. List price is \$34.95 but Great Game Products offers teacher pricing at \$17.50. Runs on Windows XP/Vista/7. Contact sales@greatgameproducts.com or call 1-800-426-3748 to order.

You may remember that I suggested you explore the interesting audio interviews on Michael Nistler's bridgehands.com website. They include an informative 90-minute three-part interview with Gerry Fox, California bridge teacher and bridge cruise agent who has served as bridge director on well over 150 cruises himself. If you have a stint

as a cruise director in your future, you will find interview segment three of particular interest. To locate the interviews, just type in “interview” in the search bar on the BridgeHands website. (You'll also find discussions with Augie Boehm and Eddie Kantar.)

While Gerry's book, *Contract Bridge In 28 Lessons*, is not new – it was published in 2000, it is relatively new to me. This manual, which was written to serve as a teaching aid for bridge instructors on cruise ships, includes eight lessons for beginners and twenty lessons for intermediates. As I was looking over the intermediate lessons I realized I had found a kindred spirit. Gerry has pinpointed areas where many students need more work — topics that I find myself returning to over and over in my own classes. Here are some lesson titles: The Captaincy Principle; Evaluating a Bridge Hand; Forcing or Non-Forcing; Describing the Count; Describing the Distribution; Opening Leads Based on the Bidding; Planning the Play in Notrump; Managing the Trump Suit; and Holdup Plays and the Rule of Seven (which was Gerry's creation.) Each cruise lesson includes two practice deals for a total of 40 intermediate deals plus 16 beginner deals. I laughed at Fox's definition of an intermediate player as one who has played long enough to develop bad habits. Teachers are

always searching for good lesson deals. I found a number of deals that would work in my classes. Cruise lessons tend to be shorter than our classroom lessons. Teachers can supplement with additional practice deals to make a single lesson long enough for a regular class period. The manual can also give you ideas for mini-lessons to teach before a duplicate game.

Contract Bridge in 28 Lessons sells for \$28 plus sales tax where applicable. Email Gerry at gfoxbridge@aol.com to order. Payment can be made by check or by PayPal. Fox also offers three more books: *Partnership Bridge (Standard American Bidding)*, *Tricks for the Taking (Declarer Play)*, and *Partnership Defense*. These books, which sell for \$14 each, were created as references for his students and contain no lesson deals. The final component in the series is *Bridge in Brief*, a convenient reference flipper on bidding and leads. I liked the approach to declarer's plan, which is presented as the ABC's of good planning: Analyze the opening lead; Bear in mind the bidding; Count the tricks; Develop a plan for each suit; Examine the entries; Figure out the timing. All are important steps in declarer's plan of attack and each step is gone through in detail in *Tricks for the Taking*.

Even though we advertise our classes at a specific level, we all find ourselves dealing with varying levels of players in our classes. I found Gerry's advice on dealing with cruise bridge players to be applicable to my classroom teaching as well. I'm always eager to hear advice from successful teachers and want to share the following thoughts from Gerry

Fox. They are paraphrased from the BridgeHands interviews and my own correspondence with him.

I am a firm believer in teaching the basics first and letting nature take its course later. I advise basic bidding donewell as the desired approach. "Done well" means taking simple ideas (evaluation, basic rules, etc.) and making them fascinating for players at every skill level. That is hard for the casual teacher to do, and it is a challenge for the professional teacher. Still, I prefer that students learn to reevaluate what they are actually doing by showing them what I think is right or wrong and letting them decide. Teaching conventions might be more fun for the instructor, but that's not the object. Will students use the conventions when they get home? Probably not. Will they understand the convention and what it gains for them? Probably not. There is so little time on a cruise to make an impact.

Personally, I am not a convention monger. I start with Stayman and Blackwood for new players, but I do not give them transfers, negative doubles, or Jacoby 2NT until they show either an interest or sufficient skills to learn them. Mostly, I offer convention classes as all-day workshops rather than incorporate them into mainstream lessons. Most of my students are older and have memory problems. Carrying around several conventions that come up

seldom is counter-productive for most of them. Yes, they should have an awareness of them, especially if they are playing duplicate, but they can survive better by mastering good basics with their everyday partners.

Most cruisers who play bridge are social players. I like to keep it simple for them. My Teachers' Manual reflects this attitude. In it, I devote most time to basic topics and virtually none to conventions. The same principle carries over to play and defense. Teaching someone about basic trumping skills is much more important than showing them an endplay or two. Teaching them to make more effective leads is more important than explaining what a suit-preference signal is.

Teachers need to teach from the bottom up, starting with the lowest common denominator. Aim to make the weakest students understand what you are doing and to keep the interest of the stronger ones (that's the hard part). Far too many people teach from the top down and lose all the players at the bottom.

Be yourself when presenting a lesson.

I'll leave you with a final provocative thought. Fox says, "Many modern teachers do NOT understand bidding theory very well. They teach rules instead of logic." Could we be guilty of that?

ACBL President Set for Club Tours

Craig Robinson, 2011 ACBL President, has set a goal to visit 100 bridge clubs in 100 days. The club-visiting marathon will be broken into two parts — 50 clubs in 50 days east of the Mississippi, starting in May, then another 50 west of the Mississippi after the Summer NABC in Toronto.



Do you play UMJODOO?

By Betty Starzec

Is this a serious question? Well, yes it really is. But we'll discuss UMJODOO in just a few paragraphs. So, what's my point?

As you are organizing your teaching programs, planning your marketing strategies and working with your students, are you keeping abreast of what is happening in the bridge world? As you all know, bridge is a dynamic game – changing all the time. (With the advent of deal generators, professional players have the ability to test bidding theories with an unlimited number of hands.) Part of the responsibility of a good teacher is to know what is happening in the bridge world. You never know what question your students will ask! (Understand I'm not suggesting you know everything that is going on nor do I advocate that you teach these new things — just keep an ear to the ground!)

My students know the three steps that I feel is necessary for them to take to start to become successful

in the bridge world: They are to (1) *take bridge lessons*, (2) *read bridge books* including the ACBL Bridge Bulletin; and (3) *practice, practice, practice*.

As teachers, I believe in many ways we have the same three steps – perhaps in not the same order. We should definitely practice our skills. Especially beginning teachers need to practice – whether in front of a mirror or before friends. Practice does make you a better teacher. We should also be reading the latest bridge books as well as the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. There are great articles by top flight players that offer insights we can share with our students. (For example, see Zeke Jabbour's column in the February 2011 Bridge Bulletin for a great treatment for those intermediate/advanced students you are teaching four-suit transfers after an opening 1NT.) We should also not be afraid to advance ourselves as a player. If you are lucky enough to have some top players/world champions

in your area – see what classes they are offering and join in. Or perhaps ask them to play with you at your local club. It can only make you better and give you additional insight into what's going on in the bridge world.

If you are already doing the above, perhaps it is time to consider becoming an ABTA Master Teacher. (Hopefully, you already know that being a member of the ABTA itself can help you achieve many of your teaching goals.) The American Bridge Teacher Association's Master Teacher is the only designation we have in the ACBL bridge world that identifies exemplary teachers. To understand what it takes to become a Master Teacher please go to the ABTA website – www.abthome.com and click on the information regarding Master Teachers.

Back to **UMJODOO** – it stands for **U**nusual **M**ajor **J**ump **O**ver **O**ne **D**iamond **O**pening. So, 1♦ by partner and then 2♠ by you shows five spades and four hearts with an invitational hand. Most top players use this treatment because in 2/1 over a 2♦ rebid by opener, responder's rebid of 2♥'s is forcing to game. (Actually, it is forcing as well in Standard American.) If you want to know if I play **UMJODOO**, the answer is “yes” – I even play it over a 1♣ opening with some partners! Who taught it to me? Eddie Wold.

Publicity Tip

Your press release is more likely to be used if the editor doesn't have to spend a lot of time editing it for style. Like bridge players, reporters have their own language. Most papers and magazines use the Associated Press Stylebook as their guide for spelling and grammar. Read the newspaper to pick up on this style (or you can buy the book from amazon.com).

Don't forget to include your contact information. You can find sample press releases under the marketing section of the ACBL website.

Pupil Games

One of the best things you can do for your students is to add a celebration party at the completion of the *Bidding in the 21st Century* course. The party would be enhanced by including a pupil game. Your students can practice playing in a nonthreatening environment, and you get to award masterpoints to the winners! This will make your students even more excited about the game and prepare them for your next course — the four-week *Bidding "Play" Course* that follows in The ACBL Bridge Series program. Here's how you can offer a pupil game to your students.

- ❖ Any bridge teacher can apply to the ACBL Club and Member Services Department for a free sanction for a pupil game.
- ❖ A minimum of six boards must be played.
- ❖ A minimum of eight students are required. If there are only two tables, the game must be run as a team event, individual event or Swiss pair game.
- ❖ The teacher who runs the game need not be an ACBL club director.



KING/QUEEN OF BRIDGE

Do you have a student that is a graduating high school senior and ACBL member who plays and promotes bridge? They just might become the 2011 King or Queen of Bridge if you send in their qualifications. Recent winners have been cited for outstanding tournament performances plus administrative, recreational and promotional activities related to bridge. The ACBL Educational Foundation will present a \$1000 scholarship to the winner.

This competition was established in 1973 by Homer Shoop, an Indiana banker, and is administered today by the ACBL Educational Foundation.

To enter the contest, email the the graduating seniors personal information and qualifications, along with the name of the school, school principal, the school address and phone number to education@acbl.org no later than May 16.

ACBL's Find a Teacher site

The Find a Teacher web site continues to grow in popularity. To be listed in the online directory, you must fill out an application for an online listing which can be found at <http://www.acbl.org/teachers/index.html>. Teachers at this site should be ready, willing and able to offer bridge lessons when contacted. Once you have applied, you do not need to reapply to make changes. If your information is current in the ACBL database, it will be reflected in your online listing. If you look online and don't see your name listed, it is probably due to one of three things:

1. You haven't sent in an application for a listing.
2. Your dues may have lapsed.
3. You don't have a valid e-mail address on file.

Recruitment Incentives

The ACBL recognizes that bridge teachers and club officials are its primary source of new members. The ACBL shows its appreciation to teachers and club officials with a monetary reward for the recruitment of new members. A \$100 gift certificate to Baron Barclay Bridge Supplies is issued every time a teacher or a club official recruits 25 new members during a calendar year and a bonus check of \$500 is awarded for 100 members recruited over time. In addition, all teachers and club officials are invited to attend ACBL's Thank You reception held on the first Friday of each NABC. Thank you, teachers, for all you do!

Toronto Youth NABC

Youth NABC events are open to any player 19 years of age or younger with fewer than 5000 masterpoints (or the equivalent) as of July 1, 2011.

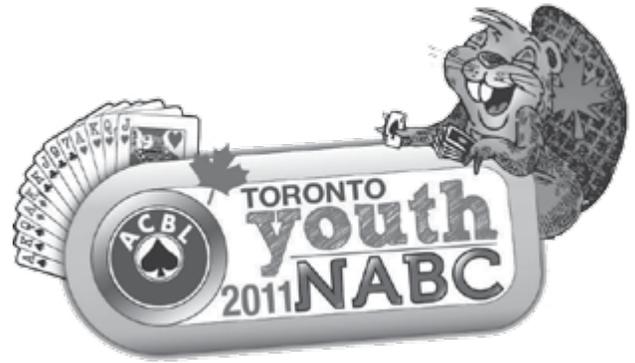
The Youth events are played on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, July 28–30. All events will be played at the Sheraton Centre Toronto. Make your reservations by calling MegaHousing Management at 877–350–2479 or online at www.megahousing.com/acbl.

Registration

Gifts are guaranteed for those who pre-register by July 1. Pre-register online at www.youth4bridge.org or contact Dana Norton at 662–253–3161 or dana.norton@acbl.org.

Entry fees

The entry fees for the 2011 Youth NABC are \$10 per session. (Complimentary access to the Youth Lounge, opportunities to compete for prizes and scholarships and admission to the Winners' Reception on Saturday.)



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