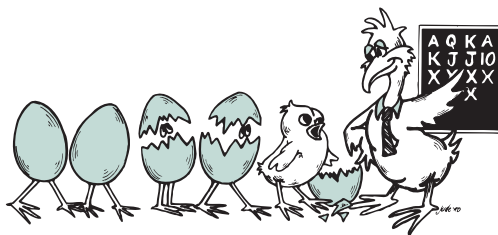


THE BRIDGE TEACHER



December
2003

VOL. 16 • ISSUE 3

The Official
Newsletter
of The
American
Contract
Bridge
League
Accredited
Teachers

From the Editor ...

We have a great issue this quarter. Don't miss a thing.

The ads for \$5 teacher manuals in January and increased Co-op Advertising Money for 2004 are specials you will want to take advantage of.

There's an international flavor this issue with Betty Starzec writing from Japan, Zia Mian in Jamaica and TAP Trainer Arlette Schutte checking in on teaching bridge in China.

If you're involved in cruise bridge, you might want to absorb Lynn Berg's column on Acol, and don't miss the Kitty Cooper articles — in this newsletter you'll find school bridge tips and in the January *Bridge Bulletin* you can read a more extensive article on Kitty.

2004 figures to be an exciting year with three prime locations for our NABCs — Reno in the Spring, New York City in

the Summer and Orlando in the Fall. It's not too early to make your plans to attend the exciting ABTA Teacher Convention prior to the Summer tournament. We'll post the seminar schedules for each of our three NABCs as soon as they are set.

If you haven't applied for an online listing, go to ACBL's "Find a Teacher" site (www.acbl.org, Quick Links, Teachers, Go, Application for Online Teacher Listing). If you have your own web site, you can list the details of your lessons there and we'll link your URL to your teacher listing. Try Marti Ronemus' article if you need help developing a web site.

There's plenty more for you to enjoy in "The Bridge Teacher."

Best wishes for a great new year.

Julie

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING

You'll ♥ Our Money

The All NEW 2004
Cooperative Advertising Program

You do the advertising.
We'll pay more money!

Now offering 75% reimbursement for expenses up to \$1,000 for public media advertising of:

- ♣ Beginner lessons
- ♦ Newcomer programs
- ♠ ACBL membership recruitment

For details of the new program, visit www.acbl.org
(Information/Cooperative Advertising Program)
or call 901-332-5586, ext. 1368

American Contract Bridge League

2990 Airways Blvd. • Memphis TN 38116
901-332-5586 phone • 901-398-7754 fax



ACBL Bridge Series Teacher Manual Special

\$5

Happy New Year
from the
ACBL!

During the month of January,
the ACBL is offering the
ACBL Bridge Series
Teacher Manuals
for only \$5 each!

(Plus shipping and handling.)

\$5

CALL
TOLL FREE

800-264-2743

and order your teacher manuals today.
(Available only by telephone and not at the online catalog.)

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Editor	1
Co-Op Advertising ..	1
\$5 Teacher Manuals	1
ACBL Media Efforts ..	2
IN Success	2
Tips for Teaching	3
Plan for Summer	3
Business of Bridge ...	4
Beginners in China	5
Teaching — Fact or Fiction	6
Building a Web Site	7
Easybridge!	
Accreditation	7
Presenting Bridge	8

THE BRIDGE TEACHER

AMERICAN CONTRACT
BRIDGE LEAGUE
2990 Airways Blvd.
Memphis, TN 38116-3847

EDITOR

Julie T. Greenberg

PRODUCTION

Dana Norton
Latrescia Goss

Fall
2003

ACBL INCREASES MEDIA EFFORTS

by Tawni Fite

If you see more stories about bridge in major national media, credit Robin Monsky of Round Robin Sports Inc., the ACBL's new media relations consultant. A 20-year veteran of the public relations industry, Monsky will work with the ACBL Marketing Department to increase the amount of coverage for the game and the organization.



Monsky

Monsky lives in Chicago and holds an undergraduate degree from St. Lawrence University and a graduate degree from Ohio University. Her former clients include ESPN and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. She also has worked at the

1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta as press chief at Centennial Olympic Park, at seven Super Bowls for the NFL, four World Series, four NCAA regional basketball tournaments, a Davis Cup match and five Chicago marathons.

The ACBL welcomed Monsky at the North American Bridge Championships in New Orleans, where she spent most of her time learning the ins and outs of an NABC.

"Since I'm not a bridge player, I was fascinated by the fact that the ACBL even existed, let alone drew so many keenly competitive participants to the major tournaments where there's not even prize money at stake!" Monsky said. "If it surprised me, it's apt to surprise many media readers and viewers across the country, too. As a group, the ACBL has done a great job of getting to its market, and I'm looking forward to helping them spread the word to a larger audience that bridge is alive and well."



by Susan Scholer

The Nassau-Suffolk Bridge Association held its first IN Sectional Tournament in September. It was a great experience.

We had more than 170 tables for the three-day tournament, exceeding our expectations. The tournament made a profit and we received only positive feedback from our players. Many I/N players

reached new levels because of the silver they earned.

Here's how we publicized this Tournament:

- ♣ The mailing of our unit bulletin, *The Islander*, was set up so that our players would receive it a few weeks before the tournament.

- ♣ Letters and flyers were sent to all of our local bridge teachers asking them to enthusiastically talk up this event to their students.

- ♣ Flyers were distributed to the clubs in our unit.

- ♣ The tournament schedule was advertised on our unit web site.

- ♣ Tournament information even made it to *The New York Times*, thanks to Alan Truscott.

Here are some of our planning ideas:

- ♣ I asked the women in my club to donate baked goods for our hospitality (since I was nervous about expenditures for an untried event). Many of our players (even those who were ineligible to play) and board members were eager to contribute. This meant a significant reduction in our hospitality costs.

- ♣ The unit provided coffee and tea at no charge to our players.

- ♣ Board members who were not playing in the tournament were asked to come and act as advisors, troubleshooters, mentors and such. This helped to provide a comfortable atmosphere for our players who were participating in a tournament for the first time.

We had such great support from our unit members that it was a must to send personal "thank you" notes after the tournament to the people who contributed their time and efforts.

All in all, it was a wonderful event. Our IN players are already asking when the next IN Sectional is scheduled. Many suggested that we not wait until next fall to have another.

We knew there was a need for such an event and our unit is delighted with the results.

NOTE: Units can run an unlimited number of IN Sectional tournaments (with the approval of the District Tournament Coordinator). Units may delegate these events to clubs. Work with your unit to offer your students this great opportunity to ease into the wonderful world of duplicate bridge.

Tips for teaching young students

During the New Orleans NABC, Kitty Cooper demonstrated the newly reformatted lesson plans for school classes. The teachers attending were very impressed with the new material. It can be used with any type of classes, so take a look by downloading the 16 lesson plans at ACBL's school pages at:

www.kittycooper.com/ABSmanual.htm - HTML Version;
www.kitty-cooper.com/ABSmanual.doc - MS WORD version.
You may discover a treasure!

Kitty had lots of ideas and tips for teachers. Here are a few:

♣ Many young people don't have cards at home. Collect used decks from your club or tournaments to distribute to students. If you can send each of them home with a deck of cards, they are more likely to practice.

♣ Give the kids the URLs of Internet sites where they can play after the lessons. **Bridge Base** is probably the best (www.BridgeBase.com/online/bbo.shtml) — it's free and there are lots of learning features available — but try these as well:

MSN — The Zone (zone.msn.com/en/bridge/default)

ACBL Online (www.ACBL.com)

Pogo Games (play26.pogo.com/login/login.jsp?site=pogo&parsid=857752)

Bridge Club Live (www.bridgeclublive.com/information/links.asp)

OKBridge (www.okbridge.com)

Swan Games (www.swangames.com/main/index.html)

Yahoo! Games (games.yahoo.com/games/login2?page=br)

♣ If the students aren't having fun, SLOW DOWN. They MUST have fun.

♣ Call your class, the Bridge Club, not Bridge Lessons. It will give them a sense of belonging. Many of your school students will be kids who have never been successful at a team sport, so make it a team sport. Make it cool.

♣ Bring in a bridge column and tell them that soon they will be able to read it.

♣ Promote the idea that class is the place to experiment — "I'm glad you went down on that hand. Now we can learn the principle involved."

♣ Getting into a school —

♣ Ask to talk at the beginning of the year assembly. Promote the travel opportunities enjoyed by the Junior Team and the places they have gone.

♣ Ask a 6th grade math teacher if you can do a demo in the classroom.

♣ When there are classes at more than one school, set up a Bridge Meet at the end of the year with a traveling trophy.

For more information on teaching in schools, call the ACBL Education Dept. at 901-332-5586, ext. 1222. New school promo packets are available on request.



Charlotte Blaiss, Kitty Cooper and Julie Greenberg at the New Orleans NABC School Seminar.

PLAN FOR AN EXCITING SUMMER

What is the most exciting city in America? Why New York, of course. This summer New York City hosts not only the NABC but a wonderful educational and in-service gathering for America's bridge teachers — The ABTA (American Bridge Teachers' Association) Convention. This event precedes the Summer NABC and is sponsored by the American Bridge Teachers' Association. A seminar will begin Tuesday, July 6, and continue on Wednesday morning. The seminar will feature such renowned teachers as Dennis Dawson, Roberta Salob and Audrey Grant. There will also be information on making your bridge business profitable.

The ABTA Convention runs from Wednesday afternoon, July 7, through Friday noon, July 9. It always features outstanding players and teachers in addition to a business meeting and election of officers. Some of the speakers lined up for the convention are: Mike Passell, Mike Huston, Phillip Alder, Alan Mazer, Jerry Helms, Larry Cohen and Haig Tchamitch. Chairperson Liz Randall plans to include some outstanding outside activities. More information about the Convention program will be forthcoming when busy summer schedules are confirmed. Make your plans now. You do not want to be disappointed and be left out.

The Business of Bridge

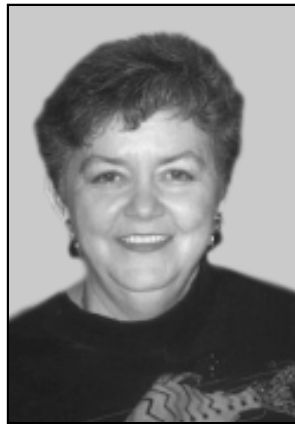
Acol, the History of Bridge and American Bridge Teachers

In the heyday of Goren, even in the days when I was learning to play bridge in the early 1960s, American and British bridge systems were not that different. All suit openings promised four cards. The big difference was that the Brits promised only 12 to 14 points for a 1NT opening, while Americans promised 16 to 18. Of course, there were those extremists, Edgar Kaplan and Alfred Sheinwold, who argued for the British approach to notrump. Ironically, today another feature important to K – S has become popular: with the development of 2/1 game force, the K – S forcing no trump response to one of a major is essential.

Why does any of this matter if you are teaching bridge?

In the first place, you may well get some students who are familiar with Acol or similar methods. Acol is very popular on the internet and in many countries where the British have had great cultural influence. If you plan to direct on a cruise ship, you will almost surely have some British clients, and they deserve good service just like the Americans. If you learned to play bridge after 1965 and you have older students in any of your classes, who learned in the Fifties or earlier, you can review basic Acol suit bidding to understand their bidding style.

Second, many bridge teachers have trouble when they sound like their bridge pronouncements are ready to be carved on stone tablets. No matter what you teach, you should be aware that you are just offering one approach, one stream of the many that make up Standard bidding. You may refer to Acol to help make the point that there is plenty of room for choices in modern bridge, and that many of the limits must be set not by universal practice but rather by partnership agreement. When I teach notrump, even in the Club Series, I like to say, “You may set the limits at 16 to 18, or the currently popular 15 to 17, or you may even use British methods and try 11 to 14 as



by Lynn Berg

your range.” Your students who were having trouble accepting 15 to 17 instead of 16 to 18 will be appalled by the Acol limits: they will be much more accepting of 15 to 17 in reaction! Or, if you want to use only 16-18 in the Club Series, you may make the point of diversity and go on to say, “But, for the sake of convenience in this class, we will stick to the traditional range of 16 to 18 points, or 15 points with a five-card suit.”

Third, you should be aware that bridge has a history and that it continues to evolve more and more rapidly in this new century. I find it is easier to introduce Stayman and transfers if I tell the students about Sam Stayman and Oswald Jacoby, two of the great popularizers of the game. I don’t just tell them the convention and ask them to memorize it. Instead, I try to place the bid in its historical context and to make it clear why it is so useful. For Stayman, I might ask them to consider the hand

♠ K J 8 4
♥ A 9 7 2
♦ K 8
♣ 9 4 3

If partner had opened 1♣ or 1♦, it would be quite easy to investigate for a 4–4 major suit fit. Instead, partner has used up the one level entirely with his very efficient and descriptive opening of 1NT. 70 years ago, Stayman realized the utility of 2♣ being used to ask for partner’s major-suit holdings. (Actually George Rapeé invented the concept but Stayman wrote about it and popularized it.) The reasoning went that we rarely abandon 40- and 30-point tricks to choose 20-point tricks, so losing the ability to play 2♣ but gaining the major-suit information is a good trade. It’s an inexpensive solution to a common problem, and it bears the name of one of the most colorful practitioners of the game.

Bridge is a more wonderful and exciting game than we sometimes indicate. One of its best features is that we can play anywhere in the world, in person or on line. If we are going to serve our students well, we can enrich the game for them by placing American bridge in the world and by showing the rich history of the game. Along the way, we can use this information to be more responsive to the needs of students from all over.

Want to know more about Acol? Visit British bridge on line at www.ebu.co.uk.

BRIDGE FOR BEGINNERS (IN CHINA!)

by Arlette Schutte

Dalian, China is a medium size city, by Chinese standards, of five million people and is situated halfway between Beijing and Seoul, Korea. It is the largest seaport in the northeast and sits on the tip of a peninsula on the Yellow Sea. Dalian Maritime University has 14,000 students. The faculty includes 26 “foreign experts” or teachers whose mother tongue is English. That’s us!

Last year I started bridge lessons, which quickly screeched to a halt when the SARS infection began. Each morning, we all took our temperatures. Whew, no fever. As a precautionary measure, the theaters, Internet cafes and any place where people congregated were closed. The students were restricted to campus; they could only go to class. They no longer could come to my apartment for bridge lessons or American movies.

This year I teamed up with Judy Roach, a fellow American and bridge player. We asked for approval to teach bridge as an opportunity for the students to practice their English.

The Chinese are by their nature kind and very compatible; shy, but social and fun loving. They are also curious and hardworking. Seeing all these traits at work at the bridge table gives an insight into their personalities and characters that is not apparent in the academic classroom situation. This new perception alone was exciting to us.

In China, only the top 10 percent of the high school students enter college. These very bright young people will be excellent bridge players. It is a pleasure and fun to teach them. Sometimes it is even funny. For example, their names. Since the Chinese names are so difficult to pronounce, it is very “in vogue” to have an English name. However, they seem to choose the names for themselves. Therefore, we have Witch, Hooker, Zero, Apple, Bear, Prince, Lord, Jungle and so on. Jungle is in my bridge class and I asked him why he chose Jungle. He said it was because it sounded like his Chinese name. After

much discussion, I finally convinced him to change it to Jack. I have been working on Witch for a name change for over a year without success. Of all the hundreds of Chinese I now know with English names, only one has adopted a first and last English name. He chose his first name as Tom and his last name as Cruise. Don’t you just love it?

Having taught the *Club Series* from its inception in 1987, I am finding teaching bridge in China a

refreshing, new challenge. When you ask the question, “Does everyone know what a spade is?” the answer is a resounding and unanimous, “No.” So you start with the shapes of the clubs, diamonds, hearts and spades. The time you lose explaining these pips is quickly made up in the speed with which these college students grasp the concepts.

When you ask, “Who is the declarer?” and they answer, “Souise,” it’s time to stop for a pronunciation drill. The Chinese find the “th” sound, as in “south,” very difficult to say. At first, calling the cards took time because they were translating the numbers into Chinese. When a student would ask, “What were the hearts?” sometimes I would answer in Chinese. “Ba, wu, san, er,” (8, 5, 3, 2) always got a laugh. This time it was *my* pronunciation.

By lesson four, they were so sharp that a two-hour lesson was finished in 1-1/2 hours. We started a practice game of prearranged hands after lesson 5. They were leading face down and asking, “May I lead?”

We had a shuffle and play practice after lesson 6. They hadn’t learned overcalls or takeout doubles, but that did not keep them from making competitive bids. I was thrilled with the way they plunged right in.

In explaining about revoking, I pointed out that you should say to your partner, “No more clubs, partner?” To this question, all the Chinese answered, “Yes.” If the question were asked in Chinese, the answer would be, “Yes, I have no more clubs.” We all laughed at once when they realized that in English the



answer is, “No, I have no more clubs.”

The Chinese are poised and ingenuous on the outside, but very complicated on the inside. We are so very different in the way we think; for instance, answering the questions in the opposite way. But there is something so fascinating about them that we find teaching and interacting with them delightful. Perhaps their ancient heritage is an invisible thread to who they are today. In my opinion, we have more to learn from them than they do from us.

Living and teaching in China continues to be the most wonderful experience of my life. Judy feels the same way. My e-mail address is arletteinchina@hotmail.com. Come for a visit. We can always use a fourth.

Author Arlette Schutte went to China in 2002 to teach English as a second language and enjoyed the experience so much, she returned for a second year and continues bridge lessons as a sideline.

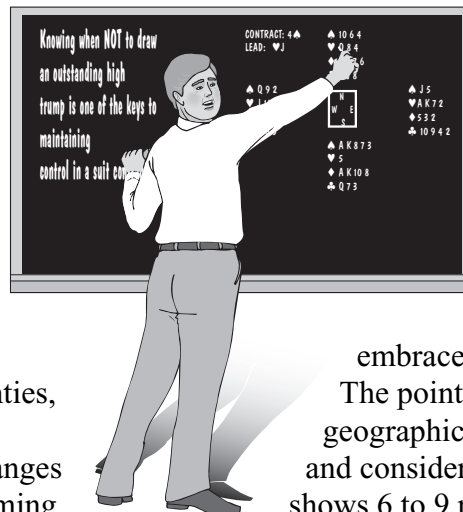
Teaching Bridge – Fact and Fiction

by Betty Starzec

After being a student of the game since the mid-Seventies and teaching the game since the mid-Eighties, I find that there is one true fact about bridge — it is a dynamic game. It changes all the time — someone is always coming up with a new convention or treatment to handle certain hands. Bridge itself has undergone changes in what is termed *standard*, but it is interesting to note that not all parts of the ACBL accepted these changes at the same speed. As ACBL teachers, we may sometimes find each other at cross purposes simply because our geographic area does not employ a certain treatment yet — or perhaps never will!

Before I continue, let me suggest to you that, in fact, it is not critical that you ever embrace some of these changes! I once won a trip to an NABC in an NAOP competition where my partner and I played little more than SAYC — Standard American Yellow Card. In fact, while watching the 2003 Bermuda Bowl on Bridge Base, I was gratified to watch Hamman and Soloway play four-card majors. They are, of course, on the same team with Meckstroth and Rodwell who were playing *Meckwell*, one of the most technically advanced systems in the world.

Here is a case in point. Again in the Bermuda Bowl, Tommy Sanders was part of the commentary team watching Wolff – Morse. Dan Morse opened the bidding 1NT and Bobby Wolff replied 2♥. Tommy had just stated that Wolff and Morse were playing a simple card — pretty much SAYC. When Dan passed the heart call, Tommy said, “They’re not even playing



transfers!” Mildred Breed then addressed the comment by saying, “They play two-way Stayman.” It’s clear that Tommy considered transfers pretty much standard, but in Texas, two-way Stayman is coming on strong and transfers are on the verge of becoming passé.

So, should the entire ACBL embrace two-way Stayman? Of course not! The point is to recognize that different geographic areas embrace different treatments and consider them standard. In Toronto 1♠ – 2♠ shows 6 to 9 points while in Houston it shows 6 to 10. Not much of a difference, but still a difference. Is one way right and one wrong — again, of course not. But, if I were teaching in Toronto, it would be silly for me to want to teach 6 to 10.

When you are trying to put together your classes, please keep in mind what is *standard* in your area, especially when dealing with beginners. We want to make our classes as simple and as much fun as possible, but it is logical to follow the bidding treatments in your area. If we expect our students to eventually play duplicate, we do not do our beginners any favors by teaching them something different than what is being played in the area.

Also, don’t forget we have to address the needs of our students. When I am asked to give a beginner course at a retirement center, it is not the same beginner course I give at a bridge club. The former students are interested in playing with the other retired folk and want to fit in. Their game is 16 to 18-point notrumps, forcing raises and probably strong twos. But, the latter group I introduce to 15 to 17 notrumps, limit raises and weak twos.

So, when you put your own course together, keep in mind the needs of your students as well as the treatments used in your area. Your students will thank you for it!

How Hard Can it Be? Building Your Own Web Site

by Marti Ronemus

I wanted a web site for our club. I thought this would be a simple process. Any 10-year-old can do it, right? But, since all I know about the internet is how to order “stuff” online, I hired someone to do it for me.

After two horrid experiences with hiring people to do it for me, I was \$750 poorer and had nothing but a crashed site. I was darn good and mad and thought I needed a new approach. Why buy a fish when I could hire someone to TEACH me to fish!! I hired someone not to build me a web site, but to TRAIN me how to do it. After all, how hard can it be?

This turned out to be the winning strategy and I highly recommend it. I paid a computer professional (someone who works for a local company that builds web sites) \$50 an hour to come to my home office and teach me how to build and maintain my site. It took 10 hours (\$500), and this time I was in control and wasn't at the mercy of the elusive and expensive “webmaster.”


Planning your site in depth before tackling the job is the major first step. What are your goals? What is your purpose? What mood, image, BRAND do you want?

My goals were: To market upcoming special events; to keep my customers up-to-date with a calendar; to offer continuing bridge education through little “lessons” and to foster a feeling of “family” through pictures of shared events, new grandbabies, whatever. I wasn't as concerned with posting winners, as my customers get full printouts and hand records as they leave our club.

I figured out how many pages I wanted, what I wanted on them, how I wanted them to look, and he walked me through it. He's an excellent coach and never lost patience (he'd be great with Newcomers!). Now I'M in control and have a feeling of competence.

We use a program called Microsoft FrontPage which I like a lot. It is so similar to Microsoft Publisher which I've used for years, and Microsoft Word, that I've only had to refer to the manual once or twice. My teacher set up the relationship with the server because I really didn't want to deal with that — too much to learn to even speak the language.

One of the nicest things about my setup is that updating the site during maintenance is a single click of the mouse — just hit “save” and the site is instantly updated. You edit your page, change your material,



add more pictures or clip art, then click that mouse. Bingo ... an updated site!! Some servers require an extra program; you can't save directly to the web. When you are working with your server or professional, see if you can get this feature. It saves time and reduces possible effort.

So, all is well, I have a lovely web site which our players enjoy enormously, and everything is running smoothly. Until three weeks ago. Our server went down — their hard drive crashed. This can happen, but usually you're up and running again soon. But our server had committed the ultimate computer crime — our web site wasn't backed up.

I called Doug, he set me up with a new server, and thanks to my lessons, I'm rebuilding the site myself. It's almost finished, better than ever. By the time you read this, I'll probably be done, so go to www.bridgeboardroom.com and let me know what you think. If I can help in any way, encourage or advise, let me know at mronemus@suscom.net or 717-699-5222.

EASYBRIDGE! ACCREDITATION

It's easier than ever to create instant Newcomer Duplicate Games with Easybridge! You can become a presenter in two ways:

First, come to the Education Department's exciting roster of classes and attend the new streamlined Easybridge! Accreditation. Instead of an eight-hour program, you can now learn this exciting marketing/teaching program in just one morning. Cost, \$25 plus \$20 for materials packet, which includes \$26 worth of Easybridge! books. What a deal!!

And secondly, if you can't make the NABC for personal accreditation, we can accredit you through a home study course, followed by a phone accreditation. Contact Marti Ronemus at mronemus@suscom.net, and she'll see you receive your kit and schedule your accreditation. Cost: \$35 for home study course and accreditation, \$20 for materials packet.

Note: Reno and NYC NABC schedules will be posted at the ACBL web site when they are set.

Presenting Bridge!

by Zia Mian

At present I live in Kingston, Jamaica where I occasionally play bridge (if and when I can find a partner) at the local club. The Jamaica Bridge Association (JBA) runs a members-only club. JBA holds games on Monday and Wednesday evenings at the space provided free of cost by the local Police Officers' Club (POC).

JBA has 40-odd members and the attendance at the games is on a free fall. During the past two years, I have not seen new members join the JBA, while a couple of old ones have migrated to the heavens above. The games always start late. That may not appear to be odd to the local observers as everything in Jamaica starts at legendary "Jamaica time," meaning 'always late.' In Jamaica if I say 'Come early!' expect to see me when we accidentally run in to each other in the shopping mall or at a super market.

Kidding aside, on game nights, we struggle to make up four even tables to get the game going. At times when desperation takes hold, we rush to the adjoining 'Domino Bar' and drag Johnnie out of his progressing five-love domino game. As dominos is a national passion in Jamaica, we may have to bribe Johnnie with a couple of beers and pay his entry fee.

I volunteered to teach bridge so that we could increase the membership and make the games at the club more fun. But beyond lip service to the idea, it got nowhere (lack of books, teaching material, as well as enthusiasm).

I seized the opportunity to come to the New Orleans NABC. My goal was to learn to teach bridge so that I could go back to Jamaica and on my own start teaching bridge to the youth, housewives (mostly expatriates) with time on their hand and seniors.

Since I wrote a Sunday column about teaching bridge and my experiences in New Orleans for the local daily (*Jamaica Sunday Gleaner* – November 30, 2003), queries to learn bridge have been astonishing. JBA has posted the column on its club bulletin board.

Learning to teach bridge at the ACBL's Fall North American Bridge Championship (NABC) was a unique experience. It exposed me to the dynamic nature and human aspect of the game. Along with the game techniques, the teaching methods are changing and have entered into the globalization era of the 21st century. To keep clubs afloat, owners and teachers must pay heed to this inevitable change, lest they perish!

I enrolled in all the teaching courses that were available at the Fall NABC. It provided me with an opportunity to interact with teachers from all over the USA, Canada and Mexico. It was highly rewarding to learn first hand from their experiences and the success stories they shared

regarding the different methods of teaching.

In the course of the tournament, I attended the TAP, Easybridge!, Bridge Basics and the Bridge in School courses. I am glad to say that I am accredited to use all of these methods in teaching bridge.

Every course emphasized that the biggest problem with teaching bridge has been that beginners are either daunted by the amount of information they receive up front or may be intimidated by the experienced players who tell them that bridge is too complex a game for the uninitiated to learn.

I found the new approach to teaching bridge revolutionary. The fundamental theme that ran through all of the courses was to make the students comfortable and emotionally secure (alleviating their fear of complexity). Unless students are made comfortable during their first lesson, it is unlikely that they will return for the second lesson. This point was re-enforced by the real life experiences of many teachers from all over North America and Mexico.

Audrey Grant in her celebrity presentations as well as two Better Bridge morning sessions amply illustrated the importance of student safety and making the learning of the game a fun experience.

The classes on Easybridge! emphasized the importance of 'presenting' rather than teaching bridge and making it a fun experience for the beginners through active participation in learning (learning from each other). In the new millennium, we must make bridge the social and fun game that it should be.

I have become a firm believer that enhanced "Student Safety" and emotional security are the keys to improving the retention rate of new learners. I am sure that by deploying new techniques, clubs with inverted pyramids could change their shapes by enrolling and retaining new players.

Club teaching programs must also benefit from the enhanced emphasis that ACBL is placing on supporting schools programs and cost sharing.

Come January next, I intend to start testing my newly learned skills by offering four free lessons to new learners. If I have two classes, I will use Easybridge! for one and Bridge Basics for the other.

I shall share my experiences and the progress that I make in Jamaica with you.

Zia Mian, a retired senior World Bank official, is an international consultant on IT and Energy. He writes on issues of regional and international interest. Send your comments to mian_zia@hotmail.com.