

District 16 Newsletter for Future Life Masters

Volume 6 Number 1

From the Editor

I hope that you are off to a good start in 2020 with your bridge journey and that you find the articles helpful.

The Lone Star Regional is the largest in the district and well worth attending. It has excellent speakers and events for all levels. Come join the fun and excitement!

A reminder that the Teacher of the Year award ceremony will be Friday Feb. 7 at the Lone Star Regional. Please join us to celebrate!

I need your help! I'm in the planning stages of doing a newsletter for social bridge players that emphasizes the social aspects of the game as well as some tips. I need pictures in a social setting and recipes to share. Thanks for your help!!!

I'm interested in your feedback, so please send your comments to paulcuneo@sbcglobal.net.

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District 16 Director

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From Unit 174 - Susan Banks

This month's person of interest is Ronald Perkowski. We talked about Ronald's passion for bridge, his successes and how bridge has helped him recover from the effects of toxic mercury poisoning that affected his cognition. Notably, after leading the 0 to 5 Mini McKinney for Unit 174 all year, Jinna Hasini tied Ronald in November and overtook him for the lead in December – outscoring him 15 points to 5!! This put Jinna, Ronald and Linda Drake one two three for the Unit Mini McKinney 0 to 5 for the Unit. Well done all these new players, their teachers and mentors!

Ronald was born and raised in Los Angeles just South of Hollywood and Vine. Although born in the US, Ronald's father grew up in Poland after the family was deported in the Great Depression for supporting the IWW (Wobblies). When the Russians invaded in 1939, his father was able to get back to the USA with the help of the American counsel, in a dramatic escape that saw many of his older friends taken by the NKVD and slaughtered in Katyn Forest. He arrived in the US with \$17 and the clothes on his back. Ronald's mother arrived in 1945 by way of Canada, and was granted asylum as a stateless person. He has a long standing love of the game, because of the intensity of the competition when a hand is being played correctly against good competition.

Growing up, from the age of 8, playing bridge was the principal form of family entertainment, with friends neighbors over once a week. Ronald couldn't mix the drinks at that age, but he worked dummy and learned a little defense. Along the way, Ronald's mother joined the Ebell woman's club near to their home and played twice a week until she passed away at age 92.

Ronald has a AB from Princeton University where he spent most of his time playing late night party bridge. Despite that, he was able to enter law school, and in 1980 where he was awarded a JD from the University of Miami School of Law (Florida). Ronald's soon to be brother in law organized a bridge game for a bachelor party before his wedding night in August 1982, and that was the last time Ronald played until he picked it back up again in August 2018 after his Mother passed away. As he said, "If my ex had only played bridge, I'd still be married." He started at St Martins and Susan Kaplan got him interested in the duplicate games at Westside where he took Terry Currie's and Tom Janke's beginning classes, moved on to Gary King, but principally learned from the wonderful

mentors at the mentor mentee games, and Sam Khayatt's Thursday night game at BCOH, where Sally Wheeler reviews hands. In particular, Bob Vilyus and Buddy Hanaby dragged him from a talented newcomer to a competitive player through lots of patience and clear explanation. Sheryl Thomas, who, in Ronald's opinion, should run a small cotillion on duplicate play and tournament etiquette, has been invaluable in making bridge a safe environment as well – just working on breaking the bad habits like fingering cards and using the bid cards in tempo.

More importantly, for Ronald, bridge “has brought my brain back.” He said “I have some deep mental trauma and severe PTSD dating back to an encounter with the mob in 2001, and then in 2017 had an old filling replaced, revealing that I had been suffering from mercury poisoning which had generated some severe neurological damage, including parts of my brain.” He still suffers cognition issues during play, above and beyond the usual issues, but he has been amazed at how much it has improved his focus and concentration, and hopes for everyone's continued patience, since things seem to be improving day by day.

Ronald currently has a small law practice in Houston. He also likes to stay politically active.. His principal involvement in recent years has been with immigration advocacy: particularly women and children seeking asylum and incarcerated. Currently he is assisting with the victims of the institutionalized sex trafficking that's endemic in Houston, working to develop a tango historical and cultural center.

For newer players, Ronald said “Every single teacher I have worked with, has given me the same advice which boils down to Thomas Rush admonition to “Learn to think in base 13 until it becomes second nature.” Ronald went on “Sally Wheeler suggested that I write down and post the top ten Hand distributions all over the house, and currently I write them down every day like a kid in detention. After months this has finally begun paying off just in the past few days and it is becoming a totally different game for me, especially since I am taking Gary King's intermediate class where he teaches how to use this information”.

The other vital thing Ronald has been asked to do is to memorize the bidding sequences, which has been difficult for him because of the way he processes information. Jinna suggested that he look at the Learnbridge.nyc videos on

YouTube, and he has found that he can simply listen to those over and over, take notes and has improved his play substantially.

Ronald also thinks books are important to his learning and development, and is still working through the two that Buddy Hanaby recommended, Watson on Play of the Hand and Ewell on Opening Leads, because until those are mastered. There are many other good books out there, but his principal observation here, after playing with many wonderful and different partners is a direct steal from Sam Khayatt “whatever book you read, make sure your partner reads the same book.”

Better Bridge Habits

Thinking at Trick 1

Developing good habits at the table is an important part of learning bridge. Thinking at trick 1 is a very important habit to develop.

This month, I’m going to focus on Declarer’s thinking. Mike Lawrence writes in his Private Lessons CD: “I have stated throughout this program and many of my books and classes that proper play to trick one is more important than anyone can imagine. It takes years of seeing big and little errors for you to realize the truth of this.”

The following steps will help with the thinking process:

- Think about each bid as it is made. What is indicated:
 - Strength as defined by High Card Points
 - Distribution
 - Fit with bidders partner
- Memorize the auction prior to the last pass.
- While waiting for the opening lead, mentally review what you’ve learned thus far.
- Once the opening lead has been made and dummy is faced:

- Count the high card points for each side. Were there clues from the bidding about their possible distribution? Any clues from the opening lead?
- Count your winners and losers.
- Look at the distribution of each suit. How are the missing cards most likely to be distributed?
- Make a plan to play the hand including entry management, finesses, ruffs, when to draw trump, when to take losers, etc.
- Ask “What can go wrong and how can I modify the plan to cope with that possibility?”
- Determine what is critical to count during the play to know if your plan will succeed.

At this point, you are prepared to call the card from dummy. Do not allow the opponents to rush your thinking process. Over time you'll find that the process gets easier and you will make better plans.

Eddie Kantar's Bridge Tips

When responding to a takeout double in a suit, jump with 9-11 'revalued' points. A five-card suit is worth one extra, a six-card suit, three extra. A side unbid four-card suit is worth one extra. Jacks and queen in suits the opponents are bidding are not counted.

You hold: S. AQ10x, H. Kxx D. xx C. 10xxx

If partner doubles a 1D opening bid and next hand passes, jump to 2S. You have 10 points including 1 point for the four-card club suit. Your jump is not forcing. A 1S response shows 0-8 revalued points and is a decided underbid. Partner usually plays you for 4-5 points and a game could easily be missed. www.kantarbridge.com

Improved Declarer Play

Card Combinations

As declarer, many times the ability to make our contract depends on playing one of the suits in a way that maximizes our chance to take tricks. The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge by ACBL has a section on playing card combinations. Here is a combination from the Encyclopedia that seems to occur frequently:

K 10 9 x

x x

We can maximize our chances of 2 tricks by leading a small card towards the 10. If that wins, repeat the finesse. If your left hand opponent rises with the Queen or Jack, play the King. If the 10 loses to the Queen or Jack, then lead another small card and finesse the 9. The probability of taking 2 tricks is 50%, and the probability of getting one is nearly 80%. Overall much better than leading to finesse the king.

Demon Defense

Auction:

N	E	S	W
		1D	P
2D	P	2S	P
3D	P	3S	P
4S	all pass		

You are West and hold:

S – A
H - J9432
D – 832
C – A942

What do you lead? In his book on Modern Bridge Defense, Eddie Kantar writes, “It’s easy enough to try for a ruff when you are looking at a singleton or doubleton, but a clever defender might be able to tell from the bidding that partner has a singleton or void in a suit. South’s bidding indicates 6 diamonds and 5 spades. Surely dummy has 4 diamonds. Lead a low diamond asking for a club return. If partner ruffs as expected and you’re Ace of clubs holds, you can give partner a second ruff. When you win the Ace of spades, you can give partner a 3rd ruff for down 1.” www.kantarbridge.com

Better Bidding

You hold:

S – AQ63

H – 763

D – K763

C – 63

Your partner opens 1S. Your right hand opponent makes a takeout double. What is your bid?

In his CD on Conventions, Mike Lawrence writes, “Bid 2NT. This is the Jordan 2NT convention which requires 4 or more trump and 10 or more support points (HCP plus distribution), when partner opens a major suit and your right hand opponent doubles. Do not bid 2NT with only 3 card support, but re-double instead and support spades on a later round of bidding. Never re-double with 4 trumps.” www.michaelslawrence.com

This bidding style informs partner of the total trump holding for your side and partner can make better evaluations about whether game or slam will make

Its the Law

Law 45 talks about when a card is played. This is a very frequent cause for Director calls. The following is from Duplicate Decisions which is published by ACBL:

“Declarer’s card is played when it is held face up, touching or nearly touching the table, or maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played. It is irrelevant whether either or both of the defenders see the card. If the card is held in a manner to indicate declarer has determined to play it, the card is played.

A defender’s card is played when it is held in a position where it could be possible for his partner to see its face.

Declarer may correct the call of a card from dummy if it is inadvertent (i.e., a slip of the tongue) and if there was no pause for thought in indicating a desire to change the card called. An opponent, however, may change a legal play made in turn prior to the correction.”

Duplicate Decisions gives the Directors guidelines for determining the correct ruling in the event the play of a card is contested. The guidelines basically boil down to NOT allowing the change unless there is overwhelming evidence that it should be changed. Here is one example of the guidelines:

“Example: It frequently occurs that declarer leads and his play from dummy is intended to be conditional on the play of LHO. He then prematurely calls a card from dummy and, observing that LHO’s card makes his choice unpalatable, endeavors to change it. The change must not be allowed regardless of the tempo, for his first designation was not inadvertent. Declarer leads a club, intending to ruff in dummy. As he says “ruff,” he notices that LHO has ruffed with a trump higher than any in dummy. Regardless of how quickly he says “pitch a diamond,” such a change may not be allowed, because “ruff ” was not inadvertent.”