

TABLE TALK

A Publication of the Vermont Bridge Association
Editor: Frank Hacker

January 2014
frhac@charter.net



Alan and Susan Wertheimer in Sydney, Australia.
You can see the famous opera house in the background

I was raised in Larchmont, New York in Westchester County. My father, who was an expert bridge player, commuted by train to New York City and played “ghoulies” on the train from Grand Central to Larchmont every day. The idea was to get a lot of exciting bridge into 50 minutes. The cards are not shuffled; they are dealt 5-5-3, and undoubled part scores were conceded. He wrote a little book about it. He used to teach bridge and run duplicate games on a cruise once a year. My friends and I asked him to teach us when I was 15. We played a lot of low stakes rubber bridge and some duplicate, where I most remember one opponent who would say to his wife, “Elizabeth, you bonehead!” I played a lot of rubber

bridge through college, but played a little duplicate as well. My most vivid memory is of playing two boards at a New York regional against Oswald Jacoby and a client.

I stopped playing bridge when I was 22 when I got serious about my academic career and didn't play again until 1998 or 1999 (my memory ain't so good these days). Sometime around 1998, I saw a little flyer at UVM inviting people to play lunch time Chicago-style bridge at the College of Engineering. I went over and played a few times. One of the players, Jean Guy Beliveau, invited me to play with him at the club (then at the Howard Johnson's). The rest is history.

I started playing quite a bit and tried to learn 2/1 and some of the common conventions. I had grown up playing Goren, although my father was an early devotee of Kaplan/Sheinwold. Because I thought my academic career was in its final stages, I spent a lot of time reading bridge books, the benefit of which is not clear to my partners.

I received my B.A. from NYU in 1965 and my Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University in 1968. I came to Vermont in 1968 to teach political philosophy in the political science department at UVM. When I came for my interview, it was my first time in the state. I'd like to think I had a reasonably successful academic career as a teacher and a scholar. I've published 4 sole-authored books (*Coercion*, Princeton University Press, 1987; *Exploitation*, Princeton University Press, 1996, *Consent to Sexual Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, and *Rethinking the Ethics of Clinical Research*, Oxford University Press, 2011). I don't recommend that anyone go out and buy them!

I retired from UVM in 2005, mainly because I got tired of grading. Upon my retirement, I was offered a one year position as a visiting scholar in the Department of Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. I was enjoying it and they asked me to stay on. My work has focused on ethical issues in research with human subjects. I worked full time for NIH for about 5 years, going down each week for 3 days. Unfortunately, this cut into my bridge, as I was gone Tuesday night and Wednesday morning for several years. I'm now part-time and do most of my work from Vermont. If you're interested in what I do with your tax dollars and you have lots of spare time, you can watch an interview with me at <http://www.peopleandperspectives.org/story/interview-wertheimer-1>

I am the only bridge player in my family. That may explain why Susan and I are still married after 38 years. (The accompanying picture was taken on the Sydney Harbor Bridge in 2012; Susan had spent a year in Australia as an exchange student and she had wanted to go back). I have three children and 3 grandchildren. My oldest, from a previous marriage, is a lawyer. She recently moved to Portland ME from New York City with her (now) six year old son. My other daughter, a social worker, lives in Portland with her husband and two children. And my son is a lawyer who lives in Brooklyn. He is now clerking with the Southern District of New York Federal Court.

Although I love bridge, I also find it to be a tough game on the psyche. I don't always concentrate as much as I should. I worry about disappointing my partners, so you are right to assume that I must worry a lot. And team games are worse, because I can then disappoint 3 other people. I do try – sometimes unsuccessfully – to be a “nice” partner. This, too, is something I learned from my father. He was a very difficult man with a quick temper, but he was a sweetheart at the bridge table because he thought getting angry with a partner is more likely to cause one's partner to worry about the last hand than to concentrate on the current hand.

The BBA has become an important part of my life, although I worry about the sustainability of bridge in the area. I am very grateful to all those – you know who you are – who have been willing to play with me.

Winter Greetings from President Phil Sharpsteen

We are in the deep mid-winter in Vermont. A large percentage of our members head for warmer climes seeking to shorten winter's effects. For those of us who remain, it is even more important that we get out and support our local bridge clubs! Invite a friend who hasn't been to a game for a while (or ever) to join your local club. Try to plan some festive games – e.g. teams or individuals. If a particular game has only 8 to 11 participants, I recommend trying an individual movement (can be found on ACBL Score – movements). This is a legitimate masterpoint game that allows 3 winners (it can be stratified for even more places). Don't let winter keep you home! Come out and enjoy some bridge with your friends!

Vermonters On The Way Up

Many Vermonters have recently achieved new ranks in the ACBL masterpoint hierarchy. Well done! Here is a list. My apologies to anyone I inadvertently omitted.

Junior Master:

Barbara Little

Marsha Norman

Christina Rhoads

Club Master:

Jean Godnick

Hugh Lebaron

Regional Master:

Harold Leitenberg

Richard Tracy

NABC Master:

Arthur Aiken

Silver Life Master:

Louise Acker

Director (Please)

By Jim Thomas

Committees and Appeals

There are two types of committees. The Appeals Committee deals with questions of bridge judgment and facts arising from bidding, play or defense. For example, its members might have to decide whether a particular action could be based on unauthorized information. Members may need to analyze a player's bidding system and skill level plus whatever else the committee may think is relevant. The other type of committee is the Disciplinary Committee. A sponsoring organization appoints this committee as its disciplinary body. It focuses on player conduct. Members decide whether to discipline a player for

conduct ranging from simple rudeness to deliberate cheating. Bridge judgment is usually a side issue during its hearings and deliberations. The differences between these committees are important. An Appeals Committee lets the actual result stand or adjusts it as permitted by the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. Sometimes it assesses a procedural penalty against some or all of the parties (IMPS, matchpoints or some other non-score sanction). A Disciplinary Committee decides if it should discipline a player for his or her conduct. Its options include anything from imposing a reprimand to expulsion from the ACBL. Regulations permit a scoring adjustment in the interest of equity, but this is a secondary consideration.

I will deal only with the Appeals Committee in this article. Appeals are available when the director makes a ruling based on judgment. The most common are unauthorized information situations (damage after hesitations or misinformation, failure to alert, etc.) and when the two sides cannot agree on the facts. Rulings based on law may not be appealed. The appeal of a director's ruling is relatively rare, but is an integral part of tournament bridge. Some of the most notable rulings have even made the newspapers. Some of the rulings have been very controversial and have made interesting reading in the international bridge press. There are also regional differences. In one instance, had the tournament location been Europe instead of North America, the ruling would probably have been different.

The Appeals Committee is composed of three or five members. The Nationals have standing committees. Regionals and sectionals usually appoint the committee at the time it is needed. The members are selected by the tournament chairman and/or the director in charge. Committee members should have no conflict of interest with the parties involved.

The committee procedure format is prescribed by written guidelines. The committee usually meets after the final session of the day. If the results determine who continues (such as knockouts), it may meet between sessions. If you are appealing, you must attend. If you are the opposing pair or team, you are not required to attend.

The committee chairman is in control of the meeting. The director is considered a neutral party. He summarizes the relevant facts and issues along with the pertinent law. Next, he presents a list of available rulings and actions and informs the Appeals Committee of the full range of its authority. All parties involved may testify in turn. All testimony is directed toward the chair. There should be no interactions between the parties involved. Interruptions are not tolerated. When a witness is finished, opposing parties and committee members will have an opportunity to ask questions (always directed toward the chair). Each party will have an opportunity to present rebuttal testimony and make whatever final arguments they feel are appropriate. After all testimony and questions, the committee deliberates privately. When it reaches a decision, it calls the parties back for the announcement of the decision. Once the committee announces its decision, there is no further argument or discussion.

The committee may poll players of different playing levels to determine findings consistent with Law 16 B1b (Logical alternative action among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership).

Other considerations:

In a pairs game, partner must agree with the appeal. In a team game the captain must concur with the appeal.

The National Laws Commission has stated that a club may establish an appeals committee, but it is not obligated to do so.

No committee is permitted to overrule the tournament director on a point of law or regulation. It can only recommend that the tournament director reconsider his decision.

The Appeals Committee may remove a procedural penalty given under Law 90.

Disciplinary penalties given under Law 91 cannot be appealed.

Laws 92 and 93 deal with appeals.

Committees do have the authority to assess penalties for appeals without merit.

There is a new source of information available to players about laws and rulings. Go to the ACBL web site, to PLAY, then Charts, Rules and Regulations. The last bullet under Basic Laws and Regulations is Rulings FAQ. That has more detail than can be given in Table Talk.

Stimulating the Play

By Frank Hacker

Here is a hand from a recent duplicate. The bidding calls to mind the ballad of Sanborn Brown who bid aggressively to stimulate the play. If you like, I'll sing it for you. Two bars of my croaking and I'm sure you'll regret your folly. I held the North hand. Partner opened 1H, I responded 1S and the next hand overcalled 2D. A few more rounds of insane bidding and I became declarer at 6S, not that bad a contract in spite of the hyperaggression. East led the A of diamonds and followed with the 3 of spades. I ducked in dummy and won West's 8 with my Q. What now?

North

S KQ74
H 103
D 1098
C KQJ9

South

S AJ95
H AK965
D 2
C A84

The hand looks simple. Trump 2 diamonds in dummy, draw trump and claim. I trumped 1 of my losing diamonds with dummy's spade 9 and tried the jack of spades. Oh – oh! East showed out dumping a diamond. This hand now looks to be beyond hope. The rules say the hand ends after everyone plays 13 cards – best to soldier on. There is one miracle distribution that will let 6S make, so I decided to go for it. Why not! I led a club to my hand and trumped my last diamond with dummy's last trump. I continued with the ace and a club to my king. I now cashed my last good club. The miracle seems to be happening. West had to follow to all 4 clubs. By now everyone is down to 4 cards. I crossed my fingers and led a heart to dummy and tried dummy's second high heart. West followed. At trick 12 I led a heart from dummy and made the last 2 tricks with my K7 of spades which happily lay over West's 106 . I thought these things only occurred in bridge books. The complete hand was:

North

S KQ74
H 103
D 1098
C KQJ9

West

S 10862
H J4
D K74
C 10732

East

S 3
H Q872
D AQJ653
C 65

South

S AJ95
H AK965
D 2
C A84

Internet bridge

by Alan Wertheimer

In a previous article, I wrote about the pleasure and frustration in watching high level bridge on the internet. In this article, I'll describe other opportunities to learn and play bridge on the internet.

There are numerous bridge related sites. Here's a site that lists and categories dozens of sites. I have explored only a few.

<http://www.ny-bridge.com/allevy/worldofbridge.html>

I have about 5 bridge sites bookmarked on my browser. I look at Mike Lawrence's bridgeclues.com virtually every day. It has some "flash card" lesson hands and then a bidding problem and a play or defense problem each day. Click on the level 2 problems. The level 1 problems are for rank beginners.

I regularly look at bridgewinners.com It's a great site. It has bidding quizzes like those in the ACBL bulletin. It has interesting articles and discussion threads. Kit Woolsey usually writes an article each week about an interesting hand and the level of analysis is humbling to this poor soul.

Bridgeblogging.com also has interesting articles and links to newspaper articles by Bobby Wolff and Philip Alder.

Richard Pavlicek has a wonderful site with all kinds of stuff at Rpbbridge.net.

If you want to play on line, there are several possibilities but the most popular site is bridgebase.com which is the same site where you can watch bridge on vugraph.

I can't provide a "manual" for using it. There's no substitute for just creating an account and spending a good deal of time exploring. But I will describe some of the possibilities.

1. One can play a pick-up game with a randomly assigned partner by telling the system "Help me find a game" and then "take me to the first seat available." You will find that the level of skill is quite variable, as are the manners and friendliness of the players.
2. One can play with a chosen partner by logging on, clicking "Help me find a game" and then "I have a partner." You are then asked to enter the username of your partner.
3. You can create a table and play a game with 3 friends, where your scores are compared against others.
4. You can play with a random or chosen partner in ACBL sanctioned tournaments for masterpoints. You need to put some money into your account for these.
5. You can play an instant tournament of 8 boards for \$.25 I find these fun. You play with a robot partner against 2 robots (they play a bridge program called gib). One averages about 15 high card points

a hand. You compete against other individuals also playing with robots. A set usually takes me about 15 minutes. These games award BBO masterpoints, whatever that means, but they are not ACBL masterpoints. Regardless, I find these to be a lot of fun.

If you have questions about playing on bridgebase, you can write them or you can write me at alan.wertheimer@uvm.edu or call at 802-658-3032. I'd be happy to help if I can.

This is your editor horning in: Some time this fall I started to play in Bridgebase online ACBL tournaments. I had previously been reluctant to do so, because it's new (actually not so new any more) and I'm old. Also I had been worried about computer problems (my internet service provider somehow bumping me off line when I was in the middle of a tournament). There is not a lot of bridge available in Vermont. Finally, out of desperation and boredom, I decided to give it a shot.

I have discovered that I really enjoy playing in their individual IMP or match point tournaments where each table has one human player and three robots. For one thing, I can play pretty much whenever I want to without having to cope with a stranger or needing a social secretary to arrange times and partnerships. Tournaments are generally 12 boards long and cost \$1, so the price is generally right. The bidding and play is fairly quick, since each table has only one human participant. The robots play more or less instantly. BBO uses barometer scoring. All participants play the boards in the same order, so that you can get a good idea how you've done compared to other competitors.

The only other cost is \$1 per day for robot rental. The robots play fairly well, but they have many idiosyncrasies. At least these are the same for everybody. Here are just two examples of robot goofiness. The robot absolutely refuses to bid NT in a competitive auction, even when it has a double stopper in the opponent's suit. Instead it cue bids the suit and forces the human partner to bid NT with his/her singleton. If you resist doing so, you may wind up in some absurd contract. The robots love high level doubles. I was -910 on a board (4 diamonds doubled making 5). Sounds like a 0. Not to worry. I got 40% on the board. Same thing happened at nearly every table.

Robot mishaps are not the only problem. It's easy to click on the wrong thing by accident. I once inadvertently clicked pass with 16 points. This didn't work out well, as there is no going back or making corrections. I also clicked the queen from AQJ after right hand opponent played the king. After a while you learn to be very careful.

Competition can actually be fairly strong, since I have played in tournaments with Mark Lair, Les Bart, Larry Mori and a few other well-known players.

I referred above to worry about computer problems. It turns out this is actually a valid concern. I have a desktop and a laptop computer. For reasons I cannot fathom, my desktop likes to bump me off line for reasons like Windows updates. It's hard to get back to BBO, not because of BBO issues, but because my desktop's computer security hijacks the computer for a few minutes whenever I restart. BBO robot tournaments allow a maximum of 58 minutes. A few bump offs and I could be in trouble. I don't have these problems with my laptop. I just do not use my desktop for online bridge.

Vermont Bridge Association Top 100

Paid up Members on Roster as of January 12

1.	Allan Graves	17,924	51.	Carlos Galvan	827
2.	Frank Hacker	7,266	52.	John Conova	819
3.	Philip Sharpsteen	4,526	53.	Mitchell Kontoff	750
4.	Wayne Hersey	4,369	54.	Eileen Fleiter	720
5.	J Peter Tripp	4,080	55.	John Nelson	685
6.	Gerald DiVincenzo	3,961	56.	Patricia Earle	652
7.	Michael Farrell	3,808	57.	Kotze Toshev	651
8.	Kathleen Farrell	3,783	58.	Ronald Silverman	606
9.	Donald Sondergeld	3,697	59.	Edward Brass	599
10.	Fred Donald	3,660	60.	Robert Chiabrandy	590
11.	June Dorion	3,585	61.	Josephine Machera	584
12.	Courtney Nelson	3,333	62.	Rhoda Chickering	580
13.	Patricia DiVincenzo	2,973	63.	Joyce Stone	573
14.	Rudolph Polli	2,943	64.	Richard Clark	572
15.	Penny Lane	2,854	65.	June Silverman	571
16.	David Shaw	2,625	66.	Richard Gazley	566
17.	Judith Donald	2,590	67.	Martha Gazley	550
18.	Lynn Carew	2,552	68.	Lucy Morini	547
19.	Michael Engel	2,478	69.	Grant Pealer	531
20.	Jackie Kimel	2,445	70.	Layton Davis	531
21.	Robert Smith	2,382	71.	Virginia Christy	527
22.	Patricia Nestork	2,079	72.	George Malek	527
23.	Peter Bouyea	1,981	73.	Constance Beliveau	525
24.	Stanley Rosenthal	1,837	74.	Israel Perlman	518
25.	Andy Avery	1,813	75.	Marsha Anstey	493
26.	Marcia Wilkins	1,806	76.	Sally Newton	468
27.	Jay Friedenson	1,804	77.	John D.Newton	467
28.	Nicholas Ecker Racz	1,758	78.	Lois Mailloux	458
29.	Barbara Fitz-Gerald	1,630	79.	Judith Ward	440
30.	Linda Bouyea	1,527	80.	John A. Newton	438
31.	Gerow Carlson	1,523	81.	Robert Springer	437
32.	Ed Midgley	1,493	82.	Byron Quinn	428
33.	Paul Reardon	1,472	83.	Betty Stanley	412
34.	Norma Jakominich	1,357	84.	Michael Bell	399
35.	Rigmor Shawcross	1,290	85.	Jeannie Clermont	395
36.	Mary Tierney	1,271	86.	Linda Baker	387
37.	Donald Campbell	1,261	87.	Wendy Baurmeister	383
38.	Jim Daigle	1,259	88.	Bernice Warshaw	382
39.	Steve Dunham	1,197	89.	Sheila Long	363
40.	David Perrin	1,114	90.	Gloria Singer	355
41.	William Schiring	1,095	91.	Charles Van Royen	351
42.	C Kirk Osterland	1,017	92.	Kenneth Cestone	351
43.	Edward Schirmer	1,010	93.	Linda Nelson	347
44.	Louise Acker	1,001	94.	Sheila Barton	337
45.	Gary Feingold	980	95.	Dulany Bennett	324
46.	Alan Wertheimer	963	96.	Margie Wilbur	311
47.	Gene Kazlow	892	97.	Gordon Johnson	311
48.	Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder	858	98.	Eric Corbman	306
49.	Paul Cohen	851	99.	Mark Oettinger	298
50.	Irene Vignoe	839	100.	Drue Shea	294

Editorial Comment: When I produce the top 100 list, I use a list from a previous issue as a template and then type in the new names. This time I used the list from January 2012. What a trip down memory lane – a very sad trip! We have lost many of that year’s top 100 to death and departure. Also, I note that with a few exceptions, Vermonters don’t seem to care about masterpoints. At least very few players seem willing to put themselves out to win them. Individual players’ totals don’t seem to have gone up much in the last 2 years.

Also, I base the top 100 list on the unit 175 ACBL membership roster. If you want to be on the list, please pay your dues. We have a few potential top 100 members who haven’t paid their dues. I think that’s sad as well.

District 25 STAC

From January 6 – 12, District 25 held its annual January STAC (sectional tournament at clubs). Players all over New England competed for overall awards while playing at their local clubs. Many Vermonters did very well (as usual I might add).

Bob Smith and Jan Gisholt, Manchester and the Mountains DBC--- 1st overall on Monday afternoon -- 67.19%

C Kirk Osterland and Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder, Manchester DBC -- 5th overall on Wednesday afternoon – 65.28%

Linda Baker and Judith Ward, Marble Valley DBC--- 2nd overall on Thursday evening – 64.44%

June Dorion and Wayne Hersey, Manchester and the Mountains DBC --- 2nd overall on Friday afternoon – 64.58%

Sheila and Don Sharp, Apollo DBC --- 1st overall on Friday evening – 65.63%

Rick Clark and Wayne Hersey, Apollo DBC --- 3rd overall on Friday evening – 60.94%

Vivienne and Mark Adair, Apollo DBC --- 4th overall on Friday evening – 59.90%

Table Talk is privileged to have 2 articles from Don Sondergeld of Brandon. Don, a retired actuary, is a former president of the Society of Actuaries. Don is one of Vermont's top players who nowadays spends a significant part of the year in Florida (sounds familiar, doesn't it). Don's approach to bridge is somewhat scholarly, but anyone who is a "student of the game" needs to be familiar with the concepts he discusses. Don is currently number 9 in our top 100 list. See page 9.

PROBABILITIES & VACANT PLACES

By Don Sondergeld

www.phillipalderbridge.com/columns.html contains Phil Alder's excellent newspaper articles on bridge. However, one of my favorite bridge bloggers is Bob MacKinnon, a Canadian from Victoria B C. You can read his articles in <http://bobmackinnon.bridgeblogging.com/> Bob has a great sense of humor. Bob's partner: "We had a good result today because I did not bid on hand three." Bob: "You should do that more often!"

Bob emphasizes the difference between "**a priori**" probabilities and "**a posteriori**" probabilities. The terms "a priori" (from the earlier) and "[a posteriori](#)" (from the later) are used to distinguish between two types of knowledge: "a priori" knowledge is independent of experience, but "a posteriori" knowledge is dependent on extra information you learn.

A bureau contains 4 drawers. One drawer has a spade, one a heart, one a diamond, and one a club. The "a priori" probability of removing a drawer that contains a diamond is $1/4$. Assume you remove a drawer containing a club, and note that it contains a club. If you do not return the drawer to the bureau, the "a posteriori" probability of next removing a drawer containing a diamond is now $1/3$. It is not important whether the diamond is in the top, middle or bottom drawer. The only thing that is important is that there are now only 3 drawers in the bureau and only one contains a diamond. Similarly, probabilities are not affected by how cards are arranged in each hand. However, probabilities do change as the cards are removed from each hand.

It may seem simple, but this concept is important in bridge. You, as South, are Declarer and the opponents have not bid. You know with certainty the distribution of the four suits in your hand and can guess at the distribution of the suits in your partner's hand. At the end of the first trick, you know exactly your "26 card shape." If you were 3523 and your partner was 2344, your "26 card shape" is 5867 so the opponents must have been 8576. Hearts are trump, a trump was led, and everyone followed to the first trick. The remaining places in the opponents' hands are $8376 = 24$. That is, you know the opponents have 24 cards remaining and their "24 card shape," but you don't know which specific card of the 24 missing cards is held by the right or left hand opponent.

If West had overcalled a spade and was supported by East, it is almost certain the 16 non spades must be distributed $12-5 = 7$ in West's hand and $12-3 = 9$ in East's hand. Whenever the unknown places are reduced, the odds change. Certainty occurs when there are no unknown places.

Bob points out that many bridge players use "a priori" odds and probabilities all through the play of the hand instead of recalculating the "a posteriori" numbers as new information becomes available.

Vacant Places (also called Vacant Spaces)

You are South and Declarer. West had opened 2S and led a spade. After the first trick you believe East started with 2 spades. You now know that of the remaining cards, West has 7 spaces that hold non spades and East has 11 spaces that hold non spades. The theory of vacant places in bridge states that when the distribution of one or more suits is completely known, the probability that an opponent holds a particular card in any other suit is directly proportional to the number of vacant places remaining in their respective hands.

Example 1. Vacant places can be used in calculating the probability of any split, such as a 2-0 split. In the case where Declarer is missing the K and 3 of a suit, the “a priori” odds equal 52% of dropping the K. Why is it not 50:50? The K may be held by West with 1/2 probability: 13 ways out of the 26 ways that this card can be dealt to West. Now there are 25 vacant places remaining, and the 3 may go to West or East. But there are 12 ways that it can go to West, and 13 ways that it can go to East. The probability that the 3 goes to West is 12/25. So the probability that West gets both is $1/2 \times 12/25 = 6/25$ or 24%. The probability that East gets both is also 24%, and the probability of a 1-1 split is 52%.

The same probability can be determined by using mathematical combinations. The probability that West has both cards equals the combination of 24 cards taken 13 at a time divided by the combination of 26 cards taken 13 at a time.

Example 2. South is the Declarer in 4 Spades missing the K and the 3. If South won the opening lead of the K of hearts, the opponents now have 24 cards remaining. The odds have now improved slightly of a 1-1 split. The probability that West has both the K and the 2 of spades has dropped from 24% to $1/2 \times 11/23$ to about 23.9%. So the 1-1 split is now 52.2%. The K can be in the 11 remaining vacant places in the West or in the 12 vacant places in the East. In the absence of any helpful information, South should still play for the split.

The same probability can be determined by using mathematical combinations. The probability that West has both equals the combination of 22 cards taken 12 at a time divided by the combination of 24 cards taken 12 at a time.

Example 3. South is the Declarer in 4 Spades missing the K and the 3. East had preempted 3 Hearts and South had won the opening lead of the K of hearts in his hand with his singleton Ace. North also had a singleton heart. Think of East and West as two parking garages. Three of the 12 parking places in West’s hand and 6 of the 12 parking places in East’s hand contain hearts. There are 9 parking places vacant in West’s garage to park the two missing spades. There are only 6 parking places vacant in East’s garage to park the two missing spades. The odds are 9-6 the K is in the West. It would appear the 1-1 split is about 52%. But the 9-6 vacant place relationship suggests a finesse.

Example 4. We have all heard about “8 ever, 9 never.” Never say never. (One bridge player was asked why he did not lead his singleton 9 in his partner’s bid suit against a slam, replied: “8 ever, 9 never!”) But, seriously, consider the case where Declarer and Dummy have 9 spades, missing the 2 3 4 Q. There are times when Declarer should finesse for the Q through the hand with the greater number of vacant places rather than playing for the drop.

If you want to learn more, read Robert F. MacKinnon’s 2010 book titled Bridge, Probability, & Information. You don’t need to understand Bayes Theorem to be a good bridge player. In watching TV you only need to know which buttons to push and in what sequence. So when you play bridge keep an open mind and think about vacant places.

Shape. People know what 38 24 34 means in describing a woman’s shape. Bridge players know what x is in the following sequences: 334x 820x 640x 887x 599x 986x. x =3. The first three sets equal a “13 card shape” in one hand and the next three equal the known “26 card shape” in two hands (Declarer + Board or either Defender + Board).

A beginner often pulls trump. As Declarer, he or she looks at the combined number of trump contained in his or her hand and in the Dummy and subtracts that from 13 to learn how many trump cards are outstanding. But it is also important to determine how many cards are outstanding in each of the other three suits.

One Hand Patterns. There are 635,013,559,600 hands a person can be dealt in bridge. The 39 hand patterns can be classified into four hand types: [balanced hands](#), [three suiters](#), [two suiters](#) and [single suiters](#). The table below gives the “a priori” likelihoods of being dealt a certain hand-type. 4432 and 4423 have similar “13 card shape”.

Similar Shape	%		Similar Shape	%
4432	21.6		5521	3.2
5332	15.5		4441	3.0
5431	12.9		7321	1.9
5422	10.6		6430	1.3
4333	10.5		5440	1.2
6322	5.6		5530	0.9
6421	4.7		Other 25	3.7
6331	3.4		Total	100.0

Two Hand Patterns. There are 495,918,532,948,104 hands that can be dealt to one person and his partner. There are 104 hand patterns for these two hands combined. If you are Declarer and your shape is 5422 and Dummy is 3442, you are holding an 8864 hand pattern. Defenders therefore have a 5579 distribution. The thrust of this article is to point out that Declarer can recalculate certain odds as play continues. Declarer knows his side’s “26 card shape,” so he also knows the “26 card shape” of the opponents.

Our Side	Opponents	%		Our Side	Opponents	%
8765	5678	23.6		7775	6668	5.2
7766	6677	10.5		9755	4688	4.9
9764	4679	7.3		8864	5579	4.9
9665	4778	6.6		9854	4589	4.1
8774	5669	6.6		8855	5588	3.3
8666	5777	5.2		Other 93		17.8

The one hand patterns contain 13 cards: i) three suits each with an odd number of cards and one suit with an even number of cards or ii) three suits each with an even number of cards and one suit with an odd number of cards.

The two hand patterns total 26 cards. The opponents' combined holdings contain: i) all even numbers of cards in each suit, ii) all odd number of cards in each suit, or iii) an even number of cards in two suits and an odd number of cards in two suits. Declarer can determine exactly which pattern is held by the opponents. That knowledge, coupled with any bidding by the opponents and subsequent play, can then be used to help determine how the individual suits are split.

Bill Butler. The probabilities of getting the 39 hand patterns for one hand and the 104 hand patterns for two hands are shown in Bill Butler's web page: <http://www.durangobill.com/BrSuitStats.html> Bill is from Durango, Colorado. Also, details on the calculations involving "Combinatorics" are contained in his web pages.

PROBABILITIES OF HOW A SUIT MAY SPLIT CALCULATED USING VACANT PLACE MATHEMATICS

By Don Sondergeld

You are South missing three specific cards in a suit: 4, 7, K.

Vacant Place Math can be used to calculate the probability the 4 and 7 only are with West.

The chance that West is dealt the 4 is 13/26.

West has 12 out of 25 spaces for the 7 and East has 13 out of the 24 remaining spaces to hold the K.

The probability is then $13/26 \times 12/25 \times 13/24 = .13$

However, for West to hold any two of the three cards, multiply .13 by the combination of 3 cards taken 2 at a time (a factor of 3), which yields .39.

Vacant Place Math Formulas to calculate probabilities of various splits (e.g. missing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. cards):

N is the number of missing cards in a suit (i.e. that Declarer cannot see that are held by East and West)

W is the number of missing cards held by West

N - W is the number of missing cards held by East

A is the probability of W cards held by West

B is the Probability of N-W cards held by East

C is the number of combinations, or possible ways, that West can hold W cards

N	W	N-W	A	B	C	AxBxC
1	1	0	13/26	1	1	.5000
1	0	1	1	13/26	1	.5000
2	2	0	$13/26 \times 12/25$	1	1	.2400
2	1	1	13/26	13/25	2	.5200
2	0	2	1	$13/26 \times 12/25$	1	.2400
3	3	0	$13/26 \times 12/25 \times 11/24$	1	1	.1100
3	2	1	$13/26 \times 12/25$	13/24	3	.3900
3	1	2	13/26	$13/25 \times 12/24$	3	.3900

3	0	3	1	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24	1	.1100
4	4	0	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24 x 10/23	1	1	.0478
4	3	1	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24	13/23	4	.2487
4	2	2	13/26 x 12/25	13/24 x 12/23	6	.4070
4	1	3	13/26	13/25 x 12/24 x 11/23	4	.2487
4	0	4	1	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24 x 10/23	1	.0478
5	5	0	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24 x 10/23 x 9/22	1	1	.0196
5	4	1	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24 x 10/23	13/22	5	.1413
5	3	2	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24	13/23 x 12/22	10	.3391
5	2	3	13/26 x 12/25	13/24 x 12/23 x 11/22	10	.3391
5	1	4	13/26	13/25 x 12/24 x 11/23 x 10/22	5	.1413
5	0	5	1	13/26 x 12/25 x 11/24 x 10/23 x 9/22	1	.0196

See www.durangobill.com/BrSplitHowTo.html for the same results using Combinatorial Formulas.

Congratulations Dick Tracy (again)

In the last issue of Table Talk, we congratulated Dick Tracy for his outstanding performance in the District 25 North American Pairs. We congratulate him again. He has won his category (5-20MP) for winning the most master points in the New England District during 2013. Dick amassed 92.06. While the results won't be final until February, Dick has a substantial lead over 2nd place. Thanks for bringing a little bit of glory to Vermont.

Bridge Trivia

Most bridge players are senior citizens and should remember the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine, a very popular magazine when most of us were growing up. The magazine was published on a weekly basis from 1897 until its demise in 1969. The magazine folded, because it lost a defamation law suit when it hinted that Bear Bryant (famous Alabama football coach) and another coach conspired to fix a football game. The *Saturday Evening Post* covers were legendary and many of them came from artist Norman Rockwell. The *Saturday Evening Post* devoted six covers to bridge. I know because I have prints of the six covers on the walls of my Florida condominium. Only one of the covers came from Norman Rockwell. Here are the six covers:

March 15, 1947
 May 15, 1948 (Norman Rockwell cover)
 October 14, 1950
 November 28, 1953
 November 24, 1956
 December 1, 1962

Vermont Fall Sectional

Holiday Inn, Rutland VT

October 25 – 27, 2013

Friday Afternoon Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
3.83	1			Tony Melucci – Neill Currie	69.45
2.87	2			Wayne Hersey – June Dorion	64.30
2.15	3			Phil Sharpsteen – Frank Hacker	62.92
2.77	4	1	1	Kenneth Kaleita – Linda Kaleita	55.34
2.08	5	2		Lynn Carew – Patricia Nestork	54.78
1.56	6	3	2	Sally Newton – John Newton	53.56
1.17		4	3	Kenneth Cestone – Douglas Cestone	52.49
0.88		5	4	Nancy Zapletal – Wendy Baurmeister	50.46
0.66			5	Claire Lyons – Jane Wall	49.02

Friday Evening Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
3.00	1			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	63.42
2.25	2			Fred Donald Jr – Judith Donald	62.71
2.19	3	1		Peter Allen – Michael Rogers	61.12
1.27	4			Tony Melucci – Neill Currie	55.10
0.95	5			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	53.30
1.64		2	1	John Newton – Sally Newton	52.09
1.23		3	2	Kenneth Kaleita – Linda Kaleita	48.90
0.92		4		Reid Fleming – Albert Muggia	48.26

Saturday Morning Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
4.00	1	1		George Onni – Michael Rogers	64.61
3.00	2			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	64.27
2.25	3			Philip Sharpsteen – Frank Hacker	62.83
2.30	4	2	1	John Conova – Karen Kristiansen	59.38
1.72	5	3	2	John Newton – Sally Newton	57.78
0.95	6			Fred Donald Jr – Judith Donald	57.54
1.29		4	3	Josephine Machera – Wendy Baurmeister	55.97

0.97	5	4	Kenneth Kaleita – Linda Kaleita	55.85
0.73	6		Lynn Carew – Patricia Nestork	52.16
0.67		5	Dulany Bennett – Deirde Ellerson	51.47

Saturday Afternoon Open Pairs

<u>MP</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>		<u>Pct</u>
3.50	1	1		Lynn Carew – Patricia Nestork	60.19
2.63	2			Kathleen Farrell – Patricia DiVincenzo	58.50
1.97	3			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	57.41
1.48	4			Philip Sharpsteen – Frank Hacker	57.18
1.97	5	2	1	John Newton – Sally Newton	54.17
1.47	6	3		Reid Fleming – Judie Muggia	53.24
1.41		4	2	Israel Perlman – Shirley Perlman	53.01
1.06		5	3	John Conova – Karen Kristiansen	51.16
0.79			4	B L “Tink” Tysor – Richard Tracy	50.93

Sunday Swiss Teams

<u>MP</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>		<u>Score</u>
5.00	1			Gerald DiVincenzo– Patricia DiVincenzo Michael Farrell – Kathleen Farrell	84
3.75	2			J Peter Tripp – Penny Lane June Dorion – Wayne Hersey	82
3.72	3	1	1	John Conova – John Newton Sally Newton – Karen Kristiansen	77
2.79	4	2		Michael Rogers – George Onni Robert Dickson – Peter Mitchell	69
2.12		3	2	John Nelson – Linda Nelson Shirley Perlman – Israel Perlman	65

Perrin Pairs

The annual Perrin Pairs took place on December 7 at the Burlington Bridge Academy in Williston, VT. The format was the usual 2 sessions of bridge with a meal in the middle. This year's bridge winners were Phil Sharpsteen and John Kimel. There were 8.5 tables for bridge. Special congratulations to Phil Sharpsteen who added this victory to his previous victories in the Marilyn Hacker Memorial Pairs and the President's Pairs (only fair, since he is the VBA president). Here are the overall standings.

MP	A	B	C		Score
3.83	1			Philip Sharpsteen – John Kimel	228.04
3.33	2	1	1	Gary Feingold – Kotze Toshev	227.79
2.30	3			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	218.50
2.23	4	2	2	Ken Kaleita – Linda Kaleita	193.50
1.67	5	3	3	“Tink” Tysor – Richard Tracy	192.91
1.12		4/5	4	Richard Clark – Barbara Fitz-Gerald	184.71
1.12		4/5		Alan Wertheimer – Jay Friedenson	184.71

Oldie, but Goodie

Here is a hand from an international match over 40 years ago. Let's see if you can do better than the British declarer.

N-S vulnerable

Dealer East

North

S KQ4
 H AK65
 D 962
 C Q54

South

S 752
 H Q3
 D AK8
 C KJ1093

East	South	West	North
P	1C	P	1H
P	1N	P	3N
All pass			

The opening lead is the jack of spades. You call for the king from dummy. East wins the ace and returns a low spade to West's 8. How do you play to make 3N?

Actually, you don't. You've already made the critical mistake (just like the British declarer). West started with 5 spades and the ace of clubs. You had to duck the opening lead. East had a doubleton ace of spades. Ducking would have prevented the establishment of the suit for 4 winners. You don't care what happens if spades are 4-3, since the defense can take at most 4 tricks. Of course, one might argue that West might have held AJ109x(x) of spades and the ace of clubs. Then, but only then, the duck would have been a mistake. This holding was very unlikely, since West passed the 1C opening bid. Most Wests would have overcalled 1S at favorable vulnerability.

Here is the entire hand

	<u>North</u>		
	S	KQ4	
	H	AK65	
	D	962	
	C	Q54	
			<u>East</u>
			S
			A3
			H
			J10982
			D
			QJ43
			C
			87
			<u>South</u>
			S
			752
			H
			Q3
			D
			AK8
			C
			KJ1093

2013 Tiernan Trophy Race

Every year the Vermont Bridge Association awards the Tiernan Trophy to the Vermont player who wins the most masterpoints in the 4 Vermont Sectional Tournaments. Here are the final standings for 2013. Congratulations to joint winners, Mike Farrell and Jerry DiVincenzo. As usual, I apologize for any errors or inadvertent omissions.

1.	Mike Farrell	43.28	5.	John Newton	35.68
1.	Jerry DiVincenzo	43.28	7.	Frank Hacker	29.27
3.	Patty DiVincenzo	37.00	7.	Phil Sharpsteen	29.27
3.	Kathy Farrell	37.00	9.	Fred Donald	26.86
5.	Sally Newton	35.68	10.	June Dorion	25.56
			10.	Wayne Hersey	25.56

2013 Aborn Trophy Race

Every year the Vermont Bridge Association awards the Aborn Trophy to the Vermont player who starts the year as a non-life master and wins the most masterpoints in the 4 Vermont Sectional Tournaments. Here are the final standings for 2013. Congratulations again to multiple winner Karen Kristiansen. As usual, I apologize for any errors or inadvertent omissions.

1.	Karen Kristiansen	21.01	5.	Mark Oettinger	6.15
2.	Linda Kaleita	16.05	7.	Richard Tracy	5.71
2.	Ken Kaleita	16.05	8.	Jenny Bell	5.19
4.	Israel Perlmam	8.23	8.	Mike Bell	5.19
5.	Linda Nelson	7.88	10.	Eric McCann	3.58
			10.	Jim Abbott	3.58

Playing the Odds

By Frank Hacker

Here is a hand from a recent Fort Myers duplicate game. See if you can get it right. As South, you wind up as declarer in 6NT on the lead of a small spade.

Dealer South

North

S Q4
H A7654
D K62
C AQJ

South

S AK10
H KQ3
D QJ74
C K63

<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
	1D	P	1H
P	2N	P	3C
P	3H	P	6N
All pass			

Partner has made a very good choice. 6NT is a much better contract than 6H and it also scores more if you make it. The contract is cold if hearts split 3-2 or diamonds split 3-3. That makes the contract about

80%. Of course, there may be squeeze possibilities as well. Are there any other issues? You bet. How do you play the diamonds?

If diamonds are 3-3, it doesn't matter what you do as long as you guess correctly if the opponents hold up twice. As a practical matter, if you won the first 2 diamond tricks you would switch to hearts and only try a third round of diamonds if someone showed out on the second round of hearts.

Very important question: How do you play the diamond suit. You can start with a diamond toward the king or a diamond from the king toward the QJ. Does this matter? What's the point here? Let's consider the possibility that someone has a doubleton ace. If it's West and you lead low toward the king, you will be unable to take advantage, because you will have to go up with the Q or J on the way back. If it's East with the doubleton ace, and you lead low toward the QJ, one of your honors will win the trick. You can now go back to the board and lead toward your other honor. East will have to play the ace on air and you will have 3 diamond tricks. This will give you the tricks you need to make 6NT, even if the hearts don't split.

It turns out that you are rewarded for a different reason. East ducks the ace of diamonds when you lead low toward the QJ and also, of necessity, ducks the second diamond when you lead toward the remaining honor. West shows out on the second diamond. Now you can make 6NT even if you have to give up a heart to West, because you have severed the opponents' communication. It turns out that you'll make 7 on the hand, because even though hearts don't split the opponent with the long hearts pitches a heart on the second round of diamonds. The full hand is

		<u>North</u>			
		S	Q4		
		H	A7654		
		D	K62		
		C	AQJ		
	<u>West</u>			<u>East</u>	
S	J8532			S	976
H	10982			H	J
D	8			D	A10953
C	842			C	10975
		<u>South</u>			
		S	AK10		
		H	KQ3		
		D	QJ74		
		C	K63		

As you can see, 6N is cold the way the cards lie and 6H has virtually no chance. I always marvel when people opt to play in the "safer" suit contract instead of NT. To quote Porgy and Bess, "The things that you're liable to read in the bible, they ain't necessarily so."

Vermont On The Tournament Trail

Many Vermonters have had success (10 or more points) at the Phoenix Nationals or at regional tournaments. As frequently occurs, the majority of the tournaments were in Florida. Sorry for any inadvertent omissions.

Phoenix Nationals:

Allan Graves	137.96	Penny Lane	20.73	J Peter Tripp	20.73
Rhoda Chickering	11.38				

Orlando:

Allan Graves	122.97	Mary Savko	22.18	Ellie Hanlon	22.18
--------------	--------	------------	-------	--------------	-------

Daytona Beach:

Allan Graves	95.50	Mary Savko	52.83	Ellie Hanlon	52.83
--------------	-------	------------	-------	--------------	-------

Tampa:

	Allan Graves	77.75	
--	--------------	-------	--

Mansfield:

Phil Sharpsteen	15.76	Frank Hacker	15.76	Jay Friedenson	14.34
-----------------	-------	--------------	-------	----------------	-------

Coming Attractions

Feb. 12 - 17:	NE KO Team Regional, Crowne Plaza, Cromwell, CT
Mar. 1 - 2:	GNT/NAP District 25 Finals, Host Hotel, Sturbridge, MA
Mar. 20 - 30:	Spring Nationals, Sheraton Dallas Downtown, Dallas, TX
Mar. 29 - 30:	Eastman NLM Sectional, Center at Eastman, 6 Clubhouse Lane, Grantham, NH
Apr. 21 - 27:	Gatlinburg Mid Atlantic Regional, Convention Center, Gatlinburg, TN
Apr. 31 - May 4:	Keohane Senior Regional/Sectional, Hyannis Resort, Hyannis, MA
May 30 - June 2:	Vermont Spring Sectional, Holiday Inn, Rutland, VT
June 17 - 22:	NE Summer Regional, Radisson Hotel, Nashua, NH (note used to be in Sturbridge, MA)
July 11 - 13:	Vermont Summer Sectional, Holiday Inn, Rutland, VT
July 17 - 27:	Summer Nationals, Las Vegas Hotel, Las Vegas, NV