

TABLE TALK

A Publication of the Vermont Bridge Association
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Kim Likakis lives in Bennington, Vermont and plays most of her bridge at the Manchester and the Mountains bridge club.

I hope you have noticed our wonderful new sectional flyers. Kim produces them for us. Thank you, Kim

Kim's biography is a fascinating account of many wonderful achievements.

Although she was born in New England and has lived in Vermont for 16 years, Kim Likakis considers Chicago her real home town. It was there that she became one of the early female professional securities traders, and it was there that she embraced the expansive curiosity that has marked every aspect of her life.

“I loved growing up in the Midwest,” Kim says. “We kids were outdoors as much as in. My dad was kind of an interesting guy who believed we should be practically grounded in addition to being well educated. So, he taught us not only how to hunt and fish, and how to clean and cook the result; we also learned how to play cards, handle a pool cue, wager at a track and negotiate for a better table. It was a weird upbringing for a young girl, but it worked.”

Among Kim's earliest memories is lying in bed late at night, listening to her parents play bridge with friends. "You could feel the intensity of those games all the way upstairs. Dead silences that sounded like, frankly, everyone had left the house. Then, explosions of laughter and howls of feigned outrage. Well, we kids really wanted to do that; by the time we were roughly ten or so we were all playing rubber bridge."

In one of those little half-turns that end up influencing lives, Kim worked a summer stint at a broker-dealer in Chicago and fell for the business. After earning her trading license in the early 1970s, she became the first woman to head a non-New York based dealer trading desk for Goldman Sachs. "It's no accident that so many traders and other Street folk gravitate to bridge, particularly arbitrage-oriented people from options, futures, and the like," Kim says. "Bridge's constant invitation to figure odds, its delicious tempering of intellect with luck, its never-ending opportunity for genteel aggression – it's hard for an old trader to resist."

After leaving Goldman, Kim indulged her passion for aviation. She earned her private pilot's license in 1984, and learned to fly aerobatics with the French Connection professional aerobatics team. After holding a variety of positions in the publishing business, she became associate editor for *Aviation Safety* magazine. It was there that she met her husband, John.

While working in aviation publishing, Kim and John started *8-Wt Journal*, a national fly-fishing publication with an emphasis on fishing for non-traditional (i.e., non-trout) freshwater species, plus candid product reviews. The journal attracted the attention of the publisher of *American Angler* magazine in Bennington. "In 1995, Abenaki Publishing bought *8-Wt Journal*, and hired John to run some titles and start up its own warm-water title," says Kim. "That's how we got to Vermont."

With her arrival in Vermont Kim realized that if she was going to continue to play any amount of bridge it was time to play duplicate. She roped her sister, Kate, who lives in Albany, into coming over one evening a week for group lessons with Bob Smith in Manchester. "That was my first exposure to truly advanced bridge bidding and play, and although Kate bailed on me after the course (our whole family still will play on flat dirt in order to play rubber), I was hooked. Petrified, but hooked."

After a bridge hiatus of several of the earlier years in Vermont, Kim was finally able to get back to the duplicate table and play more cards. "I am very lucky in that I'm at a place where I'm able to indulge my love for bridge. I'm thankful to everyone who has played with me, and particularly grateful to those many players much better than I who have gone out of their way to help me." Kim usually plays twice a week at the Manchester and the Mountains Bridge Club.

Kim's interests in addition to cards, flying, and fly fishing include a life-long love of dogs, particularly European-line German Shepherds which she has trained in schutzhund and protection work, and horses, particularly Morgan horses.

"I've also been fortunate enough to indulge my love for graphic design through the years, both for business and pleasure. It's been my privilege to put together some flyers and do some other tasks for the Vermont Bridge Association. It's a spirited group of people, playing and promoting what has to be the greatest game in existence."

	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Auction 1:	1H	2H	4H	4NT
	6H	P	P	6NT!
	D	7C	P	P
	D	P	P	P

	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
Auction 2:	1H	2C	3C	5C
	6H	P	P	7C
	7H	P	P	D (requesting an unusual opening lead)
	P	P	P	

This is a very interesting deal. For the N/S heart contracts, a normal club lead allows 7 to make with the trick one ruff/sluff. A heart lead holds this to 6 because of the N/S mirror distribution (spade loser is unavoidable). A spade lead can lead to a short cross-ruff for E/W. E/W can take the first 3 tricks and actually hold declarer to 4. The double of 7H is the Lightner slam double asking for an unusual lead (usually a long suit as the doubler is void and wants a ruff). East is then forced to lead a spade and this quickly sets the grand.

This double would also work over 6H but West cannot expect a 2nd defensive trick. For the E/W club contracts, only the heart lead holds this to 6. A spade or a diamond lead allows the 5th diamond to be established as a winner for a discard of the singleton heart in the East hand – making 7!

The actual results were mostly 6H making 7 or 7C doubled down one. So the ‘great destruction’ of 7H doubled down 800 or the ‘great enlightenment’ of 7C doubled making for 1630 didn’t actually occur!

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:

Nancy Donavan
Sheila Sharp

Susan Marchesani
Alison Walsh

Dennis Newman

Club Master:

Doris Bass
Matt Sherman

Millie Kimball

John Runnette

Sectional Master:

Carol Wilkes

Vermont Bridge Association Top 100

Paid up Members as of January 13, 2013

1.	Frank Hacker	6,659	51.	Gary Feingold	951
2.	Philip Sharpsteen	4,289	52.	Gene Kazlow	892
3.	Wayne Hersey	4,171	53.	Paul Cohen	849
4.	J Peter Tripp	3,845	54.	Alan Wertheimer	835
5.	Gerald DiVincenzo	3,762	55.	Irene Vignoe	825
6.	Michael Farrell	3,696	56.	Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder	791
7.	Kathleen Farrell	3,641	57.	Carlos Galvan	769
8.	Donald Sondergeld	3,605	58.	Mitchell Kontoff	750
9.	Fred Donald	3,525	59.	John Conova	749
10.	June Dorion	3,502	60.	Eileen Fleiter	720
11.	Courtney Nelson	3,248	61.	Patricia Earle	644
12.	Patricia DiVincenzo	2,849	62.	John Nelson	634
13.	Rudolph Polli	2,790	63.	Kotze Toshev	617
14.	Penny Lane	2,629	64.	Edward Brass	599
15.	David Shaw	2,625	65.	Ronald Silverman	596
16.	Clifford Gordon	2,529	66.	Raymond Johnson	594
17.	Judith Donald	2,482	67.	Robert Chiabrandy	570
18.	Michael Engel	2,478	68.	Joyce Stone	566
19.	Lynn Carew	2,449	69.	Richard Gazley	559
20.	Jackie Kimel	2,356	70.	June Silverman	558
21.	Robert Smith	2,329	71.	Lucy Morini	545
22.	Patricia Nestork	1,992	72.	Martha Gazley	545
23.	Bryant Jones	1,991	73.	Josephine Machera	537
24.	Peter Bouyea	1,929	74.	Constance Beliveau	525
25.	Andy Avery	1,792	75.	George Malek	517
26.	Jesse Stalker	1,783	76.	Layton Davis	509
27.	Stanley Rosenthal	1,759	77.	Virginia Christy	494
28.	Nicholas Ecker Racz	1,758	78.	Rhoda Chickering	492
29.	Jay Friedenson	1,688	79.	Richard Clark	487
30.	Marcia Wilkins	1,672	80.	Grant Pealer	484
31.	Barbara Fitz-Gerald	1,614	81.	Marsha Anstey	476
32.	Mary Ann Beck	1,612	82.	Lois Mailloux	452
33.	Ruth Stokes	1,544	83.	John D. Newton	421
34.	Gerow Carlson	1,504	84.	John A. Newton	417
35.	Linda Bouyea	1,501	85.	Sally Newton	417
36.	Paul Reardon	1,443	86.	Byron Quinn	412
37.	Ed Midgley	1,416	87.	Betty Stanley	410
38.	Norma Jakominich	1,271	88.	Israel Perlman	409
39.	Mary Tierney	1,237	89.	Robert Springer	408
40.	Rigmor Shawcross	1,225	90.	Judith Ward	389
41.	Donald Campbell	1,210	91.	Jeannie Clermont	385
42.	Steve Dunham	1,197	92.	Barbara MacDonald	382
43.	Jim Daigle	1,184	93.	Bernice Warshaw	382
44.	Jon Stokes	1,126	94.	Michael Bell	359
45.	William Schiring	1,095	95.	Linda Baker	354
46.	David Perrin	1,090	96.	Wendy Baurmeister	353
47.	Louise Acker	995	97.	Gloria Singer	345
48.	Bonnie Clouser	987	98.	Charles Van Royen	344
49.	Edward Schirmer	983	99.	Kenneth Cestone	338
50.	C Kirk Osterland	956	100.	Sheila Long	334

Perrin Pairs

The Perrin Pairs has become an annual December ritual. For many years Dave Perrin and his wife Lyn had the event at their church in Charlotte. For the past few years the event has been held at the Burlington Bridge Academy. This year's game took place on December 1 at the Burlington Bridge Academy. The format was the usual 2 sessions of bridge with a fabulous dinner in the middle. This year's winners were Gerald DiVincenzo and Michael Farrell. Here are the overall standings.

<u>MP</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>		<u>Score</u>
4.25	1			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	279.46
3.35	2	1	1	Stanley Rosenthal – Carol Slesar	262.87
2.39	3			John Kimel – Philip Sharpsteen	257.55
1.79	4			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	241.96
2.51	5	2		Lynn Carew – Patricia Nestork	239.35
1.91	6	3	2	Gary Feingold – Kotze Toshev	238.07
1.43		4	3	Michael Bell – Robert Chiabrandy	225.95
1.12		5	4	John Newton – Sally Newton	214.23

Blackwood 5NT

By Frank Hacker

As I write this article, I am well aware that there are many misguided souls who may disagree with what I have to say. Editorship has its privileges. I only have to convince myself.

The purpose of Blackwood is to avoid slams off 2 top tricks. Everyone from beginners on up understands the meaning and purpose of 4 NT asking for aces. Many people are fuzzy about 5NT asking for kings.

It doesn't matter whether you play regular Blackwood or Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430 or RKC 3014. The message of 5NT is the same. We might have a grand slam. Exploring for a grand slam implies partnership possession of the keycards for which you have already asked. For Blackwood this means all 4 aces; for RKC this means possession of all 4 aces, the king of trump and the queen of trump. The queen of trump gets into the equation, because there are ways to ask for it. Bypassing the queen asking bid implies that the queen is not a problem. The 5NT bidder must have the queen or sufficient extra length in the trump suit to make the queen irrelevant.

Editor's note: There is an opposing point of view. Some bidders believe that knowing partner's kings can be useful to determine whether to play in 6 of a suit or in 6NT. If you hold this view, you might wish to ask for kings on hands where your side is missing an ace

Let's try 2 sample hands. For the purpose of these hands we'll play Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430. I play regular Blackwood with some partners and Roman Keycard with others. Roman Keycard is more complicated and therefore accident prone. Also there are times when you are truly interested in just aces and the king of trump just muddies the waters. Still, I consider RKC to be superior, especially for hands with potential grand slams.

1. S AQ10 H AQ10 D A1053 C A75

Partner opens 1H and you bid 2NT Jacoby. This shows an opening bid or better and heart support. The bid shows 4 card support, but you have made the judgment that 2NT is the best bid. Partner bids 3S showing a singleton spade. Now what?

Partner has opened the bidding and you have 5 of the six keycards. What are you going to do? Partner obviously has a lot of kings, but it's not clear how you are going to elicit the information that will let you know whether you have 13 sure tricks.

I suggest starting with 4NT. Partner will bid 5D showing possession of the one keycard you're missing. Now you can try 5NT. This gives partner a chance to participate. Partner actually holds

S x H K9763 D KQJ82 C K8

Opposite all 4 aces and the queen of hearts, partner can bid a grand slam, in this case 7D, offering the choice between diamonds and hearts.

Note: Partner has made a bad bid. He could have bid 4D over 2NT showing the side 5 card diamond suit. This shouldn't matter, however, since partner could easily have had 6 hearts and 4 diamonds – same trick taking potential.

2. S AKQJ2 H 2 D A53 C AJ75

Here you open 1S. Partner responds 2H (game forcing). You bid 3C. Partner asks with 4NT. After your 5D response (showing 0 or 3 keycards), partner continues with 5NT. Wow!!! Partner is considering a grand slam and you have a mountain. You can show your king of spades with a bid of 6S, but that would be missing the point. You have a running spade suit with 4 or 5 tricks. That's got to be enough to commit to a grand slam. Take a shot at 7NT.

Partner has

S 3 H AK975 D KQ76 C KQ8

As you can see, there are 13 top tricks, and more tricks if spades or diamonds split evenly. If you bid 6S over 5NT, partner won't be able to count 13 tricks and will sign off in 6NT.

Let's review the message of this article. 5NT in a Blackwood sequence is a grand slam investigation. To investigate for a grand slam, you need all the keycards. The knowledge that your side possesses all keycards allows partner to participate. Sometimes responder will know what to do even if the 5NT bidder is unsure.

Vermont On The Tournament Trail

Many Vermonters have had success (10 or more points) at the San Francisco Nationals or at regional tournaments. Here is a list. Sorry for any inadvertent omissions

San Francisco Nationals:

Mary Savko	33.97	Ellie Hanlon	21.20	Penny Lane	14.99
J Peter Tripp	14.99				

Naples:

Gerald DiVincenzo	51.72	Don Sondergeld	38.13	Mary Savko	32.65
Ellie Hanlon	32.65				

Daytona:

Mary Savko	23.12	Ellie Hanlon	23.12		
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Mansfield:

Phil Sharpsteen	17.24	Frank Hacker	17.24		
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Tampa:

Ellie Hanlon	28.20	Mary Savko	28.20		
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Director (please)

By Jim Thomas

The revoke law changed in 2008. However, revokes still generate a lot of confusion. There was disagreement about the penalty in the top bracket of a knockout in Tampa last month.

According to the laws, the definition of a revoke is: "Failure to follow suit in accordance with Law 44 or failure to lead or play, when able, a card or suit required by law or specified by an opponent when exercising an option in rectification of an irregularity constitutes a revoke." (Law 61A)

Calling attention to a possible revoke is addressed in Law 62. Declarer may ask a defender. Defenders may ask declarer or partner. Dummy may only ask declarer. It may or may not be in your best interest to ask an opponent. It is not permitted to examine quitted tricks until play ceases. (Law 66c). Therefore, if at trick 7 you believe your opponent failed to follow suit on trick 5, you must wait until the hand is complete to find out.

Law 63 addresses the establishment of a revoke. Essentially, any play by the **offending side** to the following trick or the making of a claim establishes the revoke. Once established, the revoke may not be corrected (exception is a trick 12 revoke) and the revoke trick stands as played.

Correction of a revoke is addressed in Law 62. A player **MUST** correct his revoke if he becomes aware of the irregularity before it becomes established. To correct the revoke, the offender withdraws the card played and substitutes a legal card. For defenders the withdrawn card becomes a major penalty card. A card may be replaced in declarer's hand or in dummy without penalty. There is one major exception. Declarer is penalized if the violation is first noticed by a dummy who has lost his rights. (Law 43B2b).

After correction of a revoke, each member of the non-offending side may withdraw and return to his hand any card he may have played after the revoke but before attention was drawn to it. After a non-offender so withdraws a card, the player of the offending side next in rotation may withdraw his played card. However the withdrawn card is a penalty card if the offender is a defender. Law 16D addresses information from withdrawn plays. For the non-offending side, all information is authorized. For the offending side, all information is unauthorized. (That means the offender may not choose from among logical alternative actions one that demonstrable could have been suggested over another by the unauthorized information.) If the revoke by a defender is corrected before his partner plays to that trick, partner may not choose to play a card that could possibly have been suggested by seeing the revoke card.

Rectification after establishment of a revoke is found in Law 64. There are seven instances where no rectification occurs:

The offending side did not take the revoke trick or any subsequent tricks

The offender made a subsequent revoke in the same suit (no penalty for the subsequent revoke)

The revoke was made in failing to play a card faced on the table or belonging to a hand faced on the table (including dummy)

Attention was first called to the revoke after a member of the non-offending side has made a call on the subsequent deal

Attention was first called to the revoke after the round has ended

The revoke occurred on trick 12

Both sides have revoked on the same board.

Rectification is dependent on whether the **revoking hand** took the trick on which the revoke occurred. If the revoking hand did not take the revoke trick, but the **offending side** took that trick or a subsequent trick, one trick is transferred to the non-offending side. If the **offending player** took the revoke trick and the offending side took a subsequent trick, two tricks are transferred to the non-offending side. As always, if the penalty does not restore equity, the Director shall assign an adjusted score. Usually this occurs only in No Trump contracts when the revoke disrupts timing and allows or interferes with the running of a long suit.

Remember the words at the inside top of your convention card. “When attention is called to an irregularity – CALL THE DIRECTOR.”

Any questions can be directed to me at mftjet@aol.com

Vermont Fall Sectional

Holiday Inn, Rutland VT

October 26-28, 2012

Friday Afternoon Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
4.33	1	1		Lynn Carew – Pat Nestork	64.10
3.25	2	2	1	Wendy Baurmeister – Josephine Machera	62.98
2.44	3			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	62.66
1.83	4			Fred Donald Jr. – Judith Donald	58.65
1.88	5	3		Bonnie Clouser – Bryant Jones	58.17
1.62	6			Kathleen Farrell – Patricia DiVincenzo	57.85
1.41		4		John Conova – Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder	55.13
1.06		5		June Dorion – Donald Campbell	53.85
1.59		6	2	Raymond Lopes – Susan Ransom	53.53
1.19			3	Israel Perlman – Shirley Perlman	52.86
0.89			4	Arlene Fleming – Matthew Fleming	51.76
0.70			5	John Newton – Sally Newton	51.28

Friday Evening Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
3.50	1	1		Pat Nestork – Lynn Carew	60.19
2.30	2/3			Robert Smith – Wayne Hersey	59.26
2.30	2/3			J Peter Tripp – Penny Lane	59.26
1.97	4	2		John Conova – Elizabeth VonRiesenfelder	57.18
1.11	5			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	56.48
1.47	6	3		Joseph Morein – Courtney Nelson	55.56

0.97	4/5		June Dorion – Donald Campbell	53.01
0.97	4/5		Reid Fleming – Rich Stevens	53.01
1.65		1	Kenneth Kaleita – Linda Kaleita	52.78
1.24		2	John Newton – Sally Newton	46.99
0.93		3	Jack Linn – Ronald Plante	45.37

Saturday Morning Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
4.50	1			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	68.11
3.50	2	1		Rich Stevens – Reid Fleming	63.46
2.53	3			Penny Lane – J Peter Tripp	62.18
1.90	4			Philip Sharpsteen – Frank Hacker	58.81
1.42	5			Wayne Hersey – June Dorion	56.57
1.13	6			Gerald DiVincenzo – Michael Farrell	55.93
2.63		2		Bonnie Clouser – Mary Tierney	55.77
1.73		3/4		Jay Friedenson – Ruth Stokes	54.81
2.47		3/4	1	Lorraine Streeter – Thomas Cronin	54.81
1.62		5/6	2/3	Peter Allen – Helen Lewis	54.49
1.62		5/6	2/3	Donald Campbell – Jan Gisholt	54.49
1.04			4	John Newton – Sally Newton	53.53
0.87			5	Michael Bell – Jenny Bell	53.21
0.53			6/7	John Nelson – Linda Nelson	53.04
0.53			6/7	Peter Mitchell – Robert Dickson	53.04

Saturday Afternoon Open Pairs

MP	A	B	C		Pct
4.17	1			Frank Hacker – Phil Sharpsteen	64.79
3.13	2			Patricia DiVincenzo – Kathleen Farrell	61.04
2.35	3			J Peter Tripp – Penny Lane	59.84
3.21	4	1		Norma Jakominich – Lawrence Rawls	58.28
2.41	5	2		Judie Muggia – Albert Muggia	54.30
1.81	6	3		Bonnie Clouser – Mary Tierney	54.12
2.12		4	1	Patricia Zoli – Kay Showalter	53.53
1.59		5	2	John Conova – Kim Likakis	53.47
0.76		6		Reid Fleming – Rich Stevens	53.35
1.19			3	Judith Ward – Linda Baker	52.10
0.89			4	Peter Mitchell – Robert Dickson	51.46
0.70			5	Peter Allen – Helen Lewis	51.40

Sunday Swiss Teams

MP	A	B	C		Score
4.16	1/2			Michael Farrell – Kathleen Farrell Gerald DiVincenzo – Patricia DiVincenzo	82
4.16	1/2			Rudolph Polli – Fred Donald Jr. Philip Sharpsteen – Frank Hacker	82
2.67	3			Penny Lane – J Peter Tripp Wayne Hersey – Judith Donald	80
3.50	4	1	1	Joseph Morein – Kenneth Cestone Irene Vignoe – C Kirk Osterland	69
2.63		2	2	John Conova – Karen Kristiansen John Newton – Sally Newton	66

Eleven Interesting Hands

By Frank Hacker

How often have you made a preemptive bid and wound up trumping that same suit by the end of the hand? The defensive hand shown below, from a club game at the Burlington Bridge Academy, is more of a curiosity than anything else. Neither declarer nor the defenders covered themselves with glory. I held the West hand. Right hand opponent opened 1 heart. I entered the festivities with 3 spades. Left hand opponent bid 4 clubs. Partner passed and opener bid 4 diamonds. Lefty raised to 5 diamonds, concluding the auction. I led the king of spades.

		<u>North</u>	
		S 75	
		H 2	
		D AJ85	
		C KQ7632	
	<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>
S	KQJ8643		S 9
H	Q		H K109653
D	432		D 76
C	84		C AJ95
		<u>South</u>	
		S A102	
		H AJ874	
		D KQ109	
		C 10	

Declarer won the spade ace and cashed the heart ace. Declarer followed this with a club to the king and partner's ace. Partner returned the 10 of hearts, on which declarer played low. I ditched a club and declarer ruffed in dummy. Declarer now embarked on a 6 trick cross ruff, ruffing clubs in hand and hearts

in dummy. Since I had only spades and trumps, I ditched a spade every time, so that, at the end of all of this, I was out of spades.

At trick 11, declarer led a spade from dummy, partner dumped his last heart, declarer followed suit and I got to trump my original 7 card suit. This was our second trick. Declarer also lost the last trick for down 1. Strange hand!!

Those of you who have waded through all this and have not found the previous hand stultifying beyond the level of your endurance may now be wondering what this hand has to do with the title of the article.

This hand is one of 11 interesting hand you can access from the Vermont Bridge Association web site www.vermontbridge.org. There is a link on the front page to eleven interesting (and I believe entertaining) hands. There you will find a hand where bidding and making a doubled grand slam is not good enough for a top, a hand where declarer must ruff in both hands, a hand where dummy ends up with 4 cards of the same denomination and a hand where the opponents made a grand slam by (I'll stop here. You'll have to read this one to believe it.)

The VBA web site provides access to sectional flyers, tournament results, a history of the Tiernan Trophy and many past issues of Table Talk. Kudos to our web master John Conova. Please visit our website. You'll miss a lot if you don't.

2012 Tiernan Trophy Race

Every year the Vermont Bridge Association awards the Tiernan Trophy to the Vermont player who wins the most master points in the 4 Vermont Sectional Tournaments. VBA president, Phil Sharpsteen, a frequent winner, has done it again. This time he tied with his partner and former winner Frank Hacker who, for the first time in several years, competed in all 4 tournaments. Here are the top 10. As usual, I apologize for any errors or inadvertent omissions.

1.	Phil Sharpsteen	44.55	6.	Wayne Hersey	29.92
1.	Frank Hacker	44.55	7.	John Conova	29.84
3.	Kathy Farrell	35.09	8.	Mike Farrell	29.63
4.	John Newton	30.23	9.	June Dorion	29.08
4.	Sally Newton	30.23	10.	Patricia DiVincenzo	26.91

2012 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 master points in the 4 Vermont Sectional Tournaments.

Last year's winner, Karen Kristiansen, has won again and is now a 3-time winner. Here are the top 10. As usual, I apologize for any errors or inadvertent omissions.

1.	Karen Kristiansen	24.87	6.	Josephine Machera	8.37
2.	Israel Perlman	10.49	7.	Jan Gisholt	7.13
3.	Kenneth Kaleita	10.19	8.	Michael Bell	6.77
3.	Linda Kaleita	10.19	9.	Jenny Bell	5.99
5.	Joseph Morein	9.05	10.	Kenneth Cestone	5.27

A Bit of History

Just about all bridge players have something in common. Their first act after sorting their hand is to count their points – 4 for an ace, 3 for a king, 2 for a queen, 1 for a jack, 3 for a void, 2 for a singleton, 1 for a doubleton. Subject to minor variations, we pretty much all count our points that way.

Who deserves the credit or blame for all of this?

Contract bridge (as opposed to auction bridge) was invented in the late 1920s. There were two transcendent stars during the first 40 years of contract bridge: Ely Culbertson (1891 – 1955) and Charles Goren (1901 -1991). It's of interest to note that Culbertson died in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Culbertson came first. He did not use points to evaluate hands. Instead he used honor tricks. Goren and Culbertson overlapped somewhat and Goren popularized the point count with his 1949 book "Point Count Bidding in Contract Bridge." This book sold 3 million copies and went through 12 reprintings in its first 5 years.

Charles Goren does not deserve the credit for introducing or developing the point count. Bryant McCampbell introduced the 4-3-2-1 point count in 1915, not for auction bridge, but for auction pitch.

Auction pitch in 1915 was very much like the game of Pitch (sometimes called Smear or Hi-Lo-Jack) that many of us used to play in our college dorm rooms or student unions. Bryant McCampbell was also an expert on auction bridge and he published a book on auction bridge in 1916. This book is still in print and available from Amazon.

Milton Work (1864 -1934), who was an expert on whist, bridge whist, auction bridge and contract bridge, gets credit for popularizing the point count for bridge with a 1923 publication.

In its early days the 4-3-2-1 point count was used for hand evaluation primarily for no trump contracts. Most players still used the Culbertson honor trick method of hand evaluation for suit contracts.

The credit for distributional point count goes to Canadian bridge expert William Anderson (1905 -1969). Anderson was one of Canada's leading actuaries who rose to be president and later chairman of the North

American Life Assurance Company. He was also president of both the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and the US based Society of Actuaries.

In the 1940's William Anderson spent 2 years to verify the accuracy of the 4-3-2-1 point count method. He determined that a small mathematical improvement was possible, but that the simplicity of the 4-3-2-1 method made the results about as good as one could get. Anderson then developed the 3-2-1 distribution evaluation.

Goren acknowledged Anderson's contribution in his point count bidding book and in 1981 in one of his columns. Bill Anderson was recently inducted into the Canadian Bridge Federation Hall of Fame.

Note: I could not discover the years of birth and death for Bryant McCampbell. I even asked the ACBL and they didn't know.

Computer Dealt Hands

Computer dealt hands --- can't live with them, can't live without them.

I know very few people who can't find something bad to say about computer dealt hands. The distribution is wild. Every hand has an offside singleton king. They are set up to punish aggressive bidders. If you can conjure up a complaint, you can bet that somebody has made it.

There also many conspiracy theorists who complain that the ACBL may generate random hands, but then sifts the hands to remove the normal distributions, or that the ACBL purposely has their program generate abnormal hands. The ACBL denies this and I am inclined to believe them. Sifting hands would be a huge effort and, as for purposely generating wild hands, why should the ACBL do it, why should the ACBL lie, also why should the ACBL expect to be able to conceal this behavior?

Of course, players who suspect something fishy can't prove conspiratorial behavior. The best they can do is to provide anecdotal evidence, credible to them, but not to others.

The ACBL does not have a corner on computer hands. Many clubs use dealing machines that generate multiple copies of computer dealt hands. Players like these hands, because all sections play the same boards, the players don't have to do the work and they get hand records afterwards.

These dealing machines are capable of dealing hands that meet specified criteria. That may be fine for teaching hands, but competition bridge hands should be completely random.

I play in a Florida club that claims that they program their dealing machine to avoid hands with very long suits. Lately there have been many nine card suits and for the first time in almost 50 years of bridge I have had a 10 card suit. Somehow the club's programming seems to be producing the opposite of the intended effect.

Personally, I don't worry at all about machinations to produce bizarre hands. I do believe that in many cases the internal programs that produce random hands may be flawed in some way, and that someone may have screwed up the generation algorithm or the programming of it. Many people believe that results generated by a computer must be right. I'm not one of them.

Recently on board 8, I held S xxx H x5x D AKJ109 C A8

On board 9, I held S xxx H x5x D AKJ10x C A8

The x's represent spot cards that are different from hand to hand.

I held almost identical hands on consecutive boards, remotely possible, I suppose. If you believe that nothing has gone wrong, I have a bridge you may wish to purchase. It's in Brooklyn.

I am reminded of something Marilyn used to say. "If you are looking for an explanation of something and stupid is one of the possibilities, always pick stupid."

Mathematical Drivel

Maybe it was Aristotle or maybe it was Rabelais quoting from an old Latin proverb who told us that "Nature abhors a vacuum." Your editor agrees. Even though he really has nothing to say, he refuses to shut up.

Most of us have heard the expression eight ever nine never. This tells us that we should finesse for the missing queen if in our combined hands we have eight cards in a suit, but that we should play to drop the missing queen if we have nine cards. We can look up the probability of success in the Bridge Encyclopedia or, if you're a retired actuary weirdo like me, you can do the calculations yourself.

In general, everybody knows that with AJ97 opposite K1065, you cash one of the high honors and then finesse for the queen. Your probability of success (defined as not losing a trick to the queen) is 52.8%, because you might drop a singleton queen.

I have never seen an exposition as to how the odds change as the hand unfolds. Since the answer doesn't actually affect the play of the hand, nobody seems to care (well, almost nobody).

Let's say that you start by cashing the ace. The queen doesn't appear, but you do see 2 small cards. What has this done to your probability of success? The best play is still the finesse. Your probability of success is down to 50%.

Let's say that you continue with the jack of the suit and next opponent plays a small card. Many players would now rise with the king under the presumption that, if the opponent doesn't cover, he must not have the queen. This doesn't work very well against decent opposition. They know you are trying to guess the

suit and can see there is no benefit to covering. Your probability of success has gone down to 45.6%. More than half the time you will lose a trick. Maybe you should now play for the drop. No, the probability of success there is only 27.3%. Some of the good things that could have happened have failed to occur, Logically this has reduced your likelihood of success.

If you would like to discuss the calculations with me, you can send me an email (my email address is on the first page masthead). We geeks really love that kind of stuff.

Life Master Requirements

Long time ACBL members need 300 master points with at least 50 black points, 50 silver points and 50 red/gold/platinum points of which 25 must be gold/platinum.

The ACBL has taken into account masterpoint inflation and increased the requirements. The old Life Master requirements now earn you the title of Advanced NABC Master.

For members who joined after January 1, 2010 or had their membership reinstated after that date, Life Master requirements are:

500 master points with at least 75 black, 75 silver, 100 red/gold/platinum of which 50 must be gold/platinum

It may be of interest to some that the higher ranks also have pigmented point requirements. For example,

Gold Life Master: 2,500 MP with at least 500 silver/red/gold/platinum

Diamond Life Master: 5,000 MP with at least 1000 silver/red/gold/platinum

Platinum points are available only national tournaments and in nationally rated events with no upper masterpoint limit. These are the points the ACBL uses to determine the player of the year.

Coming Attractions

Feb. 13 - 18	New England KO Team Regional, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell CT
Mar. 14 -24	ACBL Spring Nationals, St. Louis Renaissance Hotel & America's Center, St Louis MO
Apr. 15 – 21	Smoky Mountain MABC Regional, Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg TN
Apr. 24 -28.	Ethel Keohane Senior Regional, The Resort and Conference Center at Hyannis, Hyannis MA
May 31 – June 2	Vermont Spring Sectional, Holiday Inn, Rutland VT
June 10 -16	Saratoga Springs Regional, Saratoga Hilton, Saratoga Springs NY
June 18 -23	New England Summer Regional, Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge MA
June 26 – July 1	CAN-AT Regional, Fredericton NB