



# Bag of Tricks

**Unit 132**

**Sept.-Oct. 2024**

## ***President's Message***

Hoping you've all been enjoying the cooler fall weather, and that it lasts for a while and doesn't skip directly to winter!

I have several things to share with you, but let me start by congratulating Wanda Lonnon, our newest Silver Life Master. In addition, congrats are in order to Wanda and Linus, who became first-time grandparents in September.

### ***Charitable Funds Awards***

Unit 132 was able to nominate Breakthrough (a program of Episcopal Social Services) for one of our ACBL Charitable Fund Awards. This group will receive \$2,000 to provide services to Wichitans living in poverty, as well as sufferers of severe mental illness. It's good to know that the extra dollars we pay for Charitable Fund games are making a difference in our community. Programs in other District 15 cities (Kansas City, Topeka, Oklahoma City, and Bentonville) were similarly gifted.

### ***Bridge Classes***

Thanks to the efforts of Susan Eagle and the Education Committee, seven Robinson Middle School gifted students have signed up for our new class for young players. Susan is challenging them to join us at our Club sometime soon.

Additionally, more than 40 people have enrolled in our new ten-week "Introduction to Bridge" class, which is being offered in two sections on Wednesdays (6:30 p.m.) and Saturdays (9:30 a.m.) through WSU's Continuing Education program. The classes are held at our bridge center and are taught by a five-member team of instructors (Susan, Teresa Scoles, Pat Dooley, Bob Ellison and me). There will be a second 10-week session (with new, more advanced material) beginning in January. We hope to keep as many folks as possible engaged with bridge by offering a 0-20 game (directed by Merlin Suderman and supported by other volunteers) on Saturday mornings in the gap between semesters; we also plan to keep that session going regularly. Imagine if even only half of these folks stay with us what an impact that will be on our Center! Linus Weimer and Teresa Scoles are in training to become ACBL-certified Club Directors to help in such efforts.

### ***EDGAR Program***

I hope you've read the recent email from ACBL Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins, about the EDGAR program, which is being used on a regular basis to help cut down on cheating in Bridge Base

Online. The program looks for regular patterns of unusual plays (not the “OH NO! I made a stupid lead, but it worked” plays) and issues notifications to players who have “crossed the line.” Players identified as possible cheaters are given an opportunity to appeal. The penalties for cheating can be serious, including being banned from ACBL-sponsored games for a number of years, probation for a few more, and revocation of a percentage of earned masterpoints. Fortunately, no one in Unit 132 has been identified by EDGAR, but many familiar names in other units have been. Thank you for being responsible players and keeping the game level for all of us.

### ***Randomized Dealing***

Next, a word about the Common Game deals that appear to aggravate many players: The Common Game uses a randomized hand generator known as “Big Deal.” This program has been well-scrutinized to assure it generates truly random deals. Obviously, “Big Deal” developers have no way of knowing where you will sit when you play hands, and therefore which hands (N/S or E/W) you will play. They haven’t set you up for failure. Other session players are dealt the same cards, and probably feeling similar frustrations. But, isn’t that the way it is with EVERY bridge hand? Sometimes you get great cards; sometimes they are rotten.

My mother, an avid bridge player, often said her cards ran either ice cold or red hot, with no middle ground. I feel that same frustration when my “ice cold” streaks seem to go on for weeks, whether I am playing at the center or in a party bridge game. Our goal, regardless of what the hands look like, is to do as well as possible and remember that this is a GAME! There are no conspiracy theories or “lessons to be taught” components of the Common Game.

### ***Regional Tournament***

Special kudos to Richard Bowman, Jan Cardiff, and everyone else who helped organize and conduct our recently concluded regional tournament at First United Methodist Church in Wichita. As a side note, awhile back, when I attended the District 15 meeting in Bentonville, units were encouraged to schedule their tournaments at churches in an effort to cut down on costs. Thanks to Richard Bowman for being ahead of the curve on that recommendation!

Happy Fall!

--Julie Scherz



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Bi-Monthly Newsletter

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Bridge class on  
Saturday, Oct. 5  
(Photo: Pat Dooley)



## **The Dish** **Pat Dooley**

Bridge is a great summer pastime because it helps us escape the heat. But bridge is even better when colder weather arrives because it makes us feel cozy. Such thinking is evidence that I should remind myself that there's more to life than bridge....Right?

Everyone I've talked with is looking forward to our upcoming regional tournament (Oct. 10-12 tournament at First United Methodist Church). In addition, there's a "feel good" vibe at the club coming from the series of bridge lessons recently organized and launched by our Education Committee. Julie's "President's Message" covers this, but here's one more thing: The club owes a big "Thank You!" to the 5-6 club volunteers who attend each class to help students with their practice hands. After it's all over, look for a report that summarizes class highlights, lists of participants (instructors/mentors/students), student accomplishments, and suggestions for any changes being consider for future lessons.

### **Bridge on YouTube**

I've mentioned YouTube's in a couple previous issues, but if you haven't yet checked it out for yourself, don't wait. YouTube is an online video sharing platform that includes links to videos on every imaginable topic, including the game of bridge. For example, it includes bridge lessons for players at all levels, stories about the history of the game, myriad news and information concerning bridge-related organizations, competitions, notable players, bridge-related songs, jokes, etc.

Here's how to find bridge-related stuff on YouTube: First, to find the YouTube channel, type [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) in your internet search field and hit return. When the YouTube channel pops up, type "bridge games" into its search field and hit return. Look below for the first two videos that popped today when I used this search term.

The screenshot shows a YouTube search interface with the search term "bridge games". The left sidebar shows navigation options like Home, Shorts, Subscriptions, and YouTube Music. The main content area displays two video results:

- Video 1:** "Bridge for First Time BEGINNERS [SUPER EASY LESSON!]" by Puzzling Games. It has 16K views and was uploaded 10 months ago. The thumbnail shows a man in sunglasses pointing at a bridge hand. The video has 4K views and includes 10 chapters.
- Video 2:** "Remembering the cards played in bridge" by Sky Bridge Club. It has 29K views and was uploaded 2 years ago. The thumbnail shows a man speaking and a diagram of a bridge hand. The video has 6:43 duration.

Using other search terms in your research will help you dig deeper into YouTube’s bridge-related videos. Here are a few suggestions: “History of bridge card game,” “bridge clubs,” “duplicate bridge tournaments,” “bridge players,” “bridge competitions,” “bridge winners,” “bridge tips,” “bridge conventions,” for example. A caveat: Like all internet searches, you’re searches will undoubtedly take you to some false hits, but don’t let them deter you. Look below for interesting channels and videos I discovered in just a few minutes of searching.

World Bridge Federation’s Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@WBFOfficial>

This channel features videos relating to Bridge World Championship events and other events that the World Bridge Federation is involved with. It offers 723 videos, as well as links to others that feature the game. Interviews with notable players are included, as well as a bunch of entertaining “shorts,” some of which are set to music.

Ted Talk Lecture

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YICFXRPFek0>



“Bridge—  
The Ultimate  
Mind Game”

by Sunil Varghese

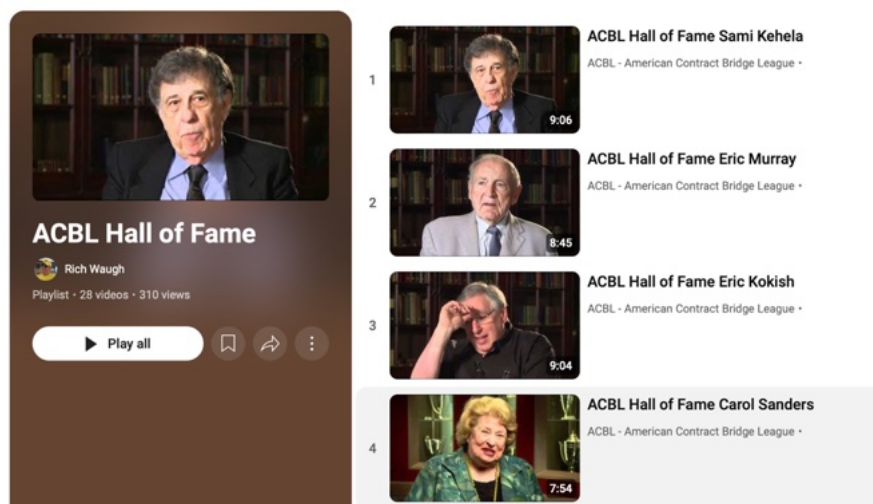
The video starts with Varghese’s three arguments that demonstrate, in his opinion, why bridge is the ultimate mind game.

ACBL Hall of Fame

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCD55D9BEDC91A3C8>

The American Contract Bridge League has posted more than two dozen videos featuring interviews with bridge players of great note. To find them, type “ACBL Hall of Fame,” or the above link, in YouTube’s search field.

One of them is Zia Mahmood (from Pakistan), who said he started playing bridge after being invited to learn the game by a woman he was falling in love with. “Instead, I fell in love with bridge,” he recalls.





# Bag of Tricks

## PLAYER PROFILES

### ***Building Bridges*** ***Pat Dooley***

If you play in Tuesday afternoon's 749er sessions, you've undoubtedly competed against Steve Brown. A recent recipient of ACBL's Life Master award, Steve's record is impressive. For a look at his stats, go to the club website and search for "Steven Brown" under the menu heading "Member's Personal Summary."

But here's something really awesome about Steve that few of us know about: He is a champion pinball machine player. I asked him to write up a summary of his bridge and pinball lives. [Please, let me hear from you if you'd like to recommend someone for inclusion in this column.]



### ***Wichita Bridge's Pinball Wizard***

#### ***Steve Brown***

I grew up playing pitch, and continued to do so with my extended family. I tried to learn bridge by reading the *Wichita Eagle's* bridge columns. It seemed like a Cryptoquip. My boss at SRS around the turn of the century gave me beginning and intermediate bridge-a-matics that were decades old.

I've been playing duplicate bridge since 2004. Ron Fischer was my first partner. We began by showing up to play at Wichita's "Bridge Kastle" one Wednesday. After Ron moved to Colorado, I played with Krista Kehl, who moved to Canada, as well as Troy Emigh and his partner Fran Burtrum. Fran and I qualified for the 2009 NABC, in Houston. I didn't play much from 2010-2014. After 2014, I started playing again, this time with my dear friend Randy Hopson (who I also met at SRS/DCF). Since Covid I have played with him, as well as with Gordon Tolle.

My favorite convention is one from the ancient Goren system. For example, "Any double made after your partner bids is for business." I know it's heresy. Even Chuckie G changed his tune about negative double/stolen bid/support doubles—take your pick.

I've played pinball literally for as long as I can remember. My parents were in bowling leagues and I would get dimes and quarters to play pinball while they bowled. I remember moving chairs to stand on to see the entire playfield. As an adult, I spent many lunch hours and stolen minutes playing pinball at places like laundromats, restaurants, bowling alleys and arcades back when they existed. I didn't compete in pinball competitions until I was in my 50s, in line with its resurgence in the last decade.



Pinball's sanctioning body is the IFPA. (The "F" is for flipper.) The association is the labor of love of a guy who monetized it to the tune of \$1 per event. In this utilitarian way, it differs from the ACBL. Players get points in pinball similar to bridge. But in pinball, you get more of an ongoing average and current ranking as opposed to achieved points totals. I try to be in the top 16 in the state annually so I can compete in the Kansas state pinball championship. I finished third last year. My best finish ever. Yesterday I won the finals of the pinball league.

## ***Bob's Game: Part Two—Bridge Before Wichita***

### ***Bob Ellison***

One day, when I lived in Fort Worth, my office door opened and a short, white-haired woman poked her head in.

"Excuse me, but did I see you at the bridge club?"

"Yes," I replied.

In response, she said, "I need a partner; would you play with me?"

I didn't know it, but I had just agreed to play with a MENSA member and head of training at General Dynamics Corporation, later at Heinz, later at Oracle Corporation. Earlier, she was a newspaper reporter, and in her future life a Ph.D. trainer. We got along great. Her name was Karie, and Karie and Bob became a dangerous pair.

In the early 90's, the Two Over One bidding style was coming into full play. It was discussed in passing in my Root and Pavlichek book, but we bought and studied Max Hardy's *Two Over One Game Forcing*. We played all kinds of goofy stuff, mostly because we didn't realize bridge is really about card play and defense. And of course, everybody reads Marty Bergen's book *Better Bidding with Bergen*, and we used some of his recommendations. More on conventions later.

We won lots of match point games. We won some Swiss matches and knock-outs. At one knock-out in, Dallas, someone asked, "Are you the guy from Fort Worth who just walked in off the street and



played?" I wondered what he was talking about. I guess it could have been me, but I'd never heard that. It must have been someone else he was asking about. But word got around.

After a year or so of playing together, I got laid off and had to take a job out-of-state for a year. During this time, Karie had to find another partner and it really got funny. When I returned, she told me they'd been learning splinter bids and played a contract in a 1-1 fit! Another funny story was about when they were trying to add a popular convention for competing against 1NT, the Astro convention. It was pretty slick, a way to show two suits that featured the majors, but not the way they played it. Sometimes they played "Fi-Astro" and sometimes it was "Dis-Astro"! I'm not sure if it ever worked for them, but it created stories.

I worked for a year in Fairhope, Alabama, and played across the bay in the Mobile bridge club. It was nice. The members had purchased a lot on the west side of town in a pine forest and contracted for a metal building and paved parking lot. I learned an important tip from one of the Southern ladies at the club. It concerns deportment and propriety. After the obligatory "Are you a Mobilian?"-- followed by "No ma'am."-- I apparently wasted time after the auction to pick up my score card and write down the contract. In a stern but frank tone, she said, "You should make your lead BEFORE you write down the contract." And she was absolutely correct! I've always remembered that, but I hesitate to say that in our club. I'm not as graceful as she was. What a beautiful accent! Ahh, the South.

By 1994, I hadn't yet advanced to Life Master due to my job and travels. My company, in its wisdom, sent me to South Korea for more than two years. I didn't play any bridge during that period. Only after returning to Forth Worth, in 1996, was I able to play again. But Karie had moved on to another state and my skills had not been helped by the time off.

After I returned from Korea, I spent a couple of weeks in Nagoya, Japan, on a business trip. I had the bright idea of playing bridge. Somehow or other I found a phone number for the bridge club in Nagoya.

"I'm on a business trip and would like to play, would that be possible?"

To my surprise, someone answered in English, "Sure, we're glad to have you."

I responded, "Your English is perfect! Where in the world did you learn to speak such great English?"

"Oh, I used to live in Hawaii. I'll be glad to find you a partner."

With some trepidation, I took two subways and walked past at least 3,000 bicycles to a very nice two-story building. I walked in and found the convention cards and was expecting to see something strange, like Precision, but it was the ACBL card. I then realized they play Standard American. This wasn't China! The director introduced me to an elegant, middle-aged woman, who was to be my partner, and I really thought we would have to point to the conventions we played on the card.

In perfect English, she asked, "What conventions would you like to play?"

I responded, "Your English is great, where did you learn it?"

“Oh, I used to live in Houston.”

Go figure.

We had a pleasant game, but I can't remember scoring well. I played bridge there whenever I had a free evening and at the end of the first week, one of the Japanese men wanted to play with me. He spoke NO English. He approached me, pointed at me, and then at himself. I got the message. My Japanese was purely “please” and “thank you.” But we tried it and survived. One of the interesting things is they played IMP Pairs exclusively rather than match point pairs. I certainly was not familiar with that.

I played intermittently from 2000 to 2011. In 2001, I took a job in Waco, Texas, and played there and in Temple. During this period, I met Melody Euler, who is now a national director.

Around 20 years ago, I went to Tyler, Texas, to attend a lecture presented by Bob Hamman, who was then ranked as the number one player in the world. His lesson focused on the question, “What are the minimum conventions needed?” His advice is still sound.

Note: Bob took notes, and a list of these conventions will be included in the newsletter's next issue.

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## **Wichita Players Show Off at Regional**



**Bentonville**  
Bridge Tournament

These twelve Wichita players came home with big smiles on their faces after competing in the July 29-Aug. 3, Bentonville, Arkansas, tournament.

- *Monday evening Side Pairs:* Sandy Hager and Julie Scherz came in first, Marie Mareda and Ken Howell came in second, and Pat and Charles Wiggins came in third.
- *Tuesday Gold Rush – Second Place:* Marlyn Ash-Potter and Ardie Condon
- *Thursday Open Pairs – Third Place:* Linus Weimer and Wanda Lonnon
- *Thursday Gold Rush – First Place:* Ken Howell and Marie Mareda

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## **Bridge in Print**

“How the Pandemic Brought Cheating to the World of Competitive Bridge,” by Adrienne Raphael, explores the argument that Covid, when combined with online bridge, led to an increase in cheating. It was published in *Atlasobscura*, in February, 2024.

Go to: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/bridge-cheating-secret-games-column>

“After a Breakup, I Needed a Game I Could Master,” by Shayla Love. This article's opening words set the scene: “Suddenly unsure of both my luck and skill, I did the logical thing: learn to play the hardest card game of all time.” Surprisingly, this is not a piece of romance fiction, but includes some interesting bridge-related information. It was published in *Esquire*, on Dec 6, 2023.

Go to: <https://www.esquire.com/lifestyle/a46029017/breakup-bridge/>