



**Palmerston North
Bridge Club
June 2008**

Congratulations!



Recently, a number of us at the club have been on tenterhooks waiting for Jan Whyte to get those last few points which would raise her to the status of Grand Master.

It has been like watching a cricketer in the nervous nineties. But we all knew she would get there. Jim Esson has been particularly worried since he has delayed updating the club trophy boards for the year until Jan made it. She joins an illustrious group comprising Bob and Evelyn Hurley, Lorraine Stachurski, Wayne Burrows, John Lenart, Liz Burrows and Alister Stuck.

I talked to Jan a few days after she reached her target

Many members of our club are probably unaware of how one gets to be a Grand Master. Could you tell us what you have to do?

You need to get a thousand A and B points of which 500 must be A points.

How do you obtain these points?

You get B and C points for finishing high in club sessions and certain tournaments [100 C points = 1 B point]. It is more difficult to obtain A points. You need to do well in Open Tournaments or other high level competitions like the Interprovincial Teams.

How many tournaments do you reckon you have entered to get to that level?

I hate to think. But I didn't really start focussing on the goal of becoming a Grand Master until about five years ago, when I realized it was achievable.

Do you remember your first A point?

Yes. It was in a Levin Open Tournament. Playing with someone called Anne Slade in the

early 1980s, we won a session. It was a proud moment.

Further back – when and where did you learn bridge?

I was working at Lake Alice in the early 1980s and the staff used to play bridge at lunchtimes. I was only allowed to sit in when someone was away. I first joined the Marton Club, and then, when I moved to Palmerston North, I joined the local club.

What has been your most satisfying achievement so far?

Reaching the Final of the New Zealand Open Pairs with Liz Burrows.

And your most embarrassing moment?

One year, Liz Burrows and I were due to try out for the Interprovincial Open Team and I thought the competition started at 1pm, so went to do my Saturday morning shopping. They finally got hold of me in the middle of the morning to tell me it had started at 10am. When I arrived at 11.15, Liz and I were fined a large number of Victory Points – but we still managed to qualify!

What would you recommend as a formula for success?

You can only get to GM level by enjoying the game and being able to withstand the inevitable knocks from playing so much. I have always been an aggressive bidder and it often seems to pay off in practice.

What is the next big goal?

I haven't really thought about it but it would be great to make the final of the New Zealand Open again.

Who is your favourite partner?

Even if I had one, I am sure you wouldn't expect me to answer that question! I have to say, though, that I am grateful to all the people I have played with who have helped me get to this level.

Ray Kemp

News and Views

Our next tournament is the Charity Pairs on Saturday 5th July. The charity this year is Camellia House which provides accommodation and help for young women in need. More information about this very worth cause can be found at their website: camelliahouse.orconhosting.net.nz/index.htm. Please give them your support by, first of all, competing in the tournament (all entry fees go to the charity) and, secondly, by donating prizes for the tournament or money for the charity. Prizes can be put in a box located in the corner of the club rooms. Cheques can be given to the director at any session. With money being tight this year it is difficult to get outside sponsors so all contributions will be gratefully received. Grocery items for the raffle prizes are also welcome and there is a separate box available for donating suitable tasty treats.

The Charity Tournament is one competition where there is a real mingling of grades with novices playing against grandmasters and all abilities in between. Arguably, this fusion is good for all concerned. Should we be doing more of it?

We currently have three graded evening bridge sessions, of course, and this allows players to compete with others of a similar standard. The disadvantage is that it may be difficult for members to move grade or to get practice against other more experience players. For these reasons we have been relaxing the rules a little.

For example, we have chosen to pair up more advanced players with novices on Monday evenings for a month. Hopefully, this will allow those new to the game to gain confidence and also get advice from more seasoned players. Also, a few Tuesday night players (including myself) have been playing with Juniors on Intermediate night. This seems to work quite well, but, I understand that some members are concerned about this arrangement.

I believe that, as long as such mixed pairs are not allowed to win monthly competitions,

this initiative is of benefit to all. We would value others opinions on whether these moves should be extended or whether we should try to keep each grade tightly prescribed. Email me at r.kemp@xtra.co.nz if you would like your say.

The Hawkes Bay Congress on Queen's Birthday weekend was the largest ever, with 156 couples in the Open Pairs competition. It is always highly competitive with top players from around the country taking part. One of its attractions is its venue, the Memorial Hall, which is right on the front and gives splendid view right across the bay. Local players who did well included Lorraine Stachurski and Alister Stuck who won the Swiss Pairs Event, Bob and Evelyn Hurley who came seventh in the Open Pairs and fifth in the Swiss Pairs, and Liz Burrows who was in the fourth placed team in the Plate.

The trials for the Central District Open and Intermediate Teams for the Interprovincial Teams were held at Wanganui recently. Jan Whyte and Janice Coleman won the Open section with Alister Stuck and Noel Woodhall second. In the Intermediate competition, Janice Willoughby and Gail Kirton won through.

You will all be aware by now that the new 2007 Laws of Bridge became applicable this month. Most of the changes are marginal, and players will generally notice little difference. However, one Law that will have immediate impact requires that after you have played a hand (or if it is passed in) you must shuffle the cards before returning them to the board.

Talking of the laws, one player last week contacted me because they felt that they had been unfairly penalized for an infraction at the table by the director (not me!) and could I confirm that the penalty applied was the correct one. I didn't have my Law Book with me so couldn't say one way or another. However, players should realize that directors do make mistakes and that if you believe that the judgement at the table is incorrect then ask if the director can show you the relevant law. If you still don't agree then it is possible to set up an appeal committee.

One law that can cause directors a headache is Law 70. This deals with contested claims. Whilst directing a Junior night session this month, I had to adjudicate upon a contested claim, after at least one of the

participants had gathered up their cards, so it was difficult to unscramble the situation (once the director is called, it is important not to re-arrange any of the cards). As is often the case, the claim was made by declarer and there was still a trump out. If you do make a claim, it is important to specify exactly what you are going to do, rather than just saying 'I claim the rest of the tricks'. If you don't mention that you are going to draw the remaining trump, for example, then it is not unreasonable for the director to conclude you have forgotten there is one out. As a result, it may be assumed that you would have played the rest of the cards as if that was the case. Remember: the imprecise cuts no ice.

Lastly, stationery is a continuing expense for the club, particularly bidding pads. It has been suggested that we try to get a sponsor who could have a company name printed in the corners of each pad. If anyone has contacts (or better still a business of their own) then get in touch with your session representative.

Ray Kemp

Moment of Truth

Like a number of players, I enjoy reading bridge columns in newspapers and magazines. The one in the Listener, written by David Bird, is a particular favourite. I am not sure that tackling the problems in these columns helps one's bridge playing, any more than attempting crosswords helps improve one's English, but they are fun.

There are a few reasons why solving the problems don't necessarily help improve bridge. For example, at least in the Listener column, you see all four hands which, unless you cheat or are a very good card player, is unrealistic.

I often think, however, that the most compelling reason why these quizzes are artificial is that you know there *is* a problem. If the expert presents you with a contract which seems impossible to make, then you know there will be a way of playing it to secure a good result, or at least to give yourself a chance. Conversely, if the contract looks solid, or the play looks obvious, you know there will be a catch – perhaps an extreme distribution that can take you down and which you must guard

against. Given these clues you will examine the hands carefully until you find the solution (or give up and read the expert's analysis).

At the bridge table, there are no external indications of such moments of truth. Unlike the movies, no dramatic music plays at a critical point in a contract. The only recourse is to remain vigilant, although even the most focussed player cannot concentrate on every card in every hand. This is where experience comes in. Some little voice in the head says this is a crucial decision point in a contract or defence.

Here is one such point that occurred in the May Tuesday night Teams event. As West, you pick up the following uninspiring collection:

S QJ92
H 8763
D AT
C T84

and, with EW vulnerable, the bidding goes:

North	East	South	West
			Pass
1C	2D	2H	Pass
2S	3D	3H	Pass
4H	All pass		

Your initial decision is what to lead to the contract. I think most players would agree that the ace of diamonds seems a reasonable choice. Normally, as we have noted before, leading off an unsupported ace is a perilous act, but since our partner seems so keen on the suit it might be a good idea this time. We can always blame partner if it goes wrong.

Anyway, none of the alternative leads seem very attractive. Dummy has bid both black suits, and leading trumps will, as likely as not, just help declarer. Having made this first decision we now see dummy revealed:

S KT53
H K2
D 92
C AKQ93

S QJ92
H 8763
D AT
C T84

On your ace of diamonds lead, the two is played from dummy, partner plays the eight, and declarer plays the three. Since you play attitude signals, it looks as if you have done the right thing. Surely, partner has the king, and, as long as partner has no more than seven cards in the suit, declarer has two, so you can cash two quick tricks in diamonds before declarer can mop up the trump suit. If you leave it too late he may discard one or more diamond losers in hand on dummy's clubs.

However, this is when the dramatic music should play. Your aim in teams, and even in pairs, should be to take down the opponents if possible. This is the last time you are likely to be on lead, so you should ask yourself is there any better card to continue with than the ten of diamonds?

Since I have posed the problem, you will already have guessed that the answer is yes. If partner has the ace of spades then you may be able to take two quick tricks in the suit and then cash a diamond to take the contract off. However, partner cannot lead spades from their side. You must do so. The continuation that gives you the best chance of defeating the contract is the queen of spades.

If you made this switch at the table on the night then congratulations. You have passed the 'moment of truth' test. Here is the full deal:

	S KT53	
	H K2	
	D 92	
	C AKQ93	
S QJ92		S A64
H 8763		H 9
D AT		D KQ87654
C T84		C J2
	S 87	
	H AQJT54	
	D J3	
	C 765	

Ray Kemp

Postscript

Two mature ladies were playing in a tournament against two celebrated masters.

One of the ladies opened the bidding with one no trump. The master to her left was looking at a balanced hand containing 15 points on which he considered bidding. He turned to the opening bidder's partner and asked, "What kind of no trump do you play?"

"Strong," she answered, "16-18 points."

Whereupon the master hastily passed and so did the opening bidder's partner. The Dummy laid down two jacks and a queen and the expert silently congratulated himself for not having stuck his neck out.

But the defence started to take trick after trick and eventually accumulated nine of them beating the contract three, un-doubled. Game, it transpired, was cold the masters' way.

The expert with the 15 point hand turned to the dummy and said in an aggrieved tone, "Didn't you say you played a strong no trump?"

"I do," answered the lady. "But my partner plays a weak no trump, 12-14 points."