BRIDGING THE GAP:
SEMBA PRO/AM SET FOR MAY 5

In April 2023, MBA and SOMBA joined forces to host a Pro/Am game. The room was spirited, the bridge was exciting, and the sense of community continued to return after the long COVID hiatus. Our newly merged unit - SEMBA - will host another Pro/Am on ***May 5, 2024*** at the Bridge Connection. Pro's will be recruited individually. Am's with under 200 MPs are eligible. Contact Diane Kosuda by April 28 to sign up: 248-656-1357 or dianekosuda@gmail.com.

TOURNAMENTS CONTINUE TO REBOUND

Attendance vs. Pre-COVID

Tournament	2021-2022	2023-2024
2023 Apple Cider Sectional	**47%**	**66%**
2024 Ann Arbor Sectional	**39%**	**59%**
2024 Valentine Sectional	**40%**	**56%**

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New ACBL Milestones

Junior Master (5)

Jerry Bailey
Paul Gard
Joseph Hartman
Marie Maskin
Carol Nederlander
William Parker

Club Master (20)

James Collins
Dan Irish
Marie Tront
Marguerite Winer

Sectional Master (50)

Ann Katz
Ashok Singhal

Regional Master (100)

Veronica Alger

Adv. NABC Master (300)

Gillian Andrews

Welcome New Members

Nancy Allen
Joseph Beals
Leif Britting
Halina Cross
Judith Jacobson
Bhimsen Rao
Susan Pollock

In Memoriam

David Frank
Rosemary McNair
Anna Renaud
Wilma Swayze

Bronze LM (750)

Richard Voss

Silver LM (1,000)

Lori Strager
Richard Verhelle

Ruby LM (1,500)

Chris Brewer
Ellen Silverest
Xiaoping Wu

SAVE THE DATES

WOLVERINE REGIONAL

May 13-19

» Earn gold and red points

» Single- and two-session pairs

» 3+ days of bracketed teams

» Schedules forthcoming

» Contact Jane Gardner for partnerships (info at bottom of page)

KEN VAN CLEVE REGIONAL

June 20-23

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Chuck Burger Sectional
April 4 – April 7, 2024
at
The Michigan Bridge Connection
26776 West Twelve Mile Road, Southfield 48034
Located just west of Northwestern Highway
248-356-6254

Thursday, April 4	Friday, April 5
Stratified Open Pairs 10:00 a.m. **Stratified 0-1000 Pairs** 10:00 a.m. **Stratified Swiss Teams** 2:30 p.m. **Stratified 0-1000 Pairs** 2:30 p.m.	**Stratified Open Pairs** 10:00 a.m. **Stratified 0-1000 Pairs** 10:00 a.m. **Stratified Open Pairs** 2:30 p.m. **Stratified 0-1000 Pairs** 2:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 6	Sunday, April 7
STRATIFIED Swiss Teams Playthrough 10:00 a.m. **0-1000 Pairs** 10:00 a.m. **0-1000 Pairs** 2:30 p.m.	**BRACKETED Swiss Teams** Playthrough 10:00 a.m. *The teams are divided into two or more brackets based on the average masterpoints of each team. Each bracket is a separate event with its own masterpoint awards. The purpose of bracketing is to establish groups within which each team is competitive.*

Stratified Events: 3 strats with limits determined by the director
0-1000 Stratifications: three strats, as attendance warrants
Average masterpoints will be used to determine stratifications
All pairs events are single session

Proof of COVID vaccination is NOT required to play
Masks may be required dependent on ACBL regulations at time of tournament
Players are on their own for lunch
Saturday and Sunday Swiss lunchtime breaks to be determined by director
No smoking in the building
All Events: $12 per person per session

Tournament Chair
Owen Lien, 828-424-5905, forcingpass@gmail.com
Partnerships
Jane Gardner, 248-719-2941, janegard@umich.edu

DOUBLE - DOUBLE - DOUBLE

BY HENRY SHEVITZ

```
                    ♠ T9842
                    ♥ AJ94
                    ♦ Void
                    ♣ T763
♠ AJ                              ♠ KQ75
♥ Void              ┌─────┐       ♥ 75
♦ QT9642            │     │       ♦ AKJ
♣ Q9854             └─────┘       ♣ AKJ2
                    ♠ 63
                    ♥ KQT8632
                    ♦ 8753
                    ♣ Void
```

Table 1:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♦	P	2N	4♥
5♣	5♥	X	AP

Table 2:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	2N	3♥
4♥	5♥	X	P
5N	P	6♣	P
P	X	AP	

Double game swings are rare, and game-slam swings are much rarer. Today's hand is from a regional Swiss team game. The West hand can be interpreted several ways; at table 1, the West player chose to open with a 2♦ bid. East had high aspirations, and started with a 2NT inquiry. South then joined the fray with 4♥(!), and West showed his distribution by bidding 5♣. North was also invited to the party, and raised to 5♥. East had enough, doubling and anticipating a huge penalty.

As the cards lay, 5♥x by South could not be defeated, on a crossruff, for +850 for N/S.

At table 2, West chose to pass, and East, right or wrong, opened 2NT (Who needs stoppers?). South bid 3♥, and West, a passed hand, cuebid 4♥. North raised to 5♥, and East now bid 6♣. North made a "Lightener double," which calls for an unusual lead, presumably to ruff the opening lead. South duly led a diamond, ruffed by North, but this was the only trick for NS. This was +1540 for E/W, and a gain of 20 IMPS. Freak hands are exciting.

Bridge De-Myth-Ified

In this installment of "dispelling bridge myths," we address a common misconception among new players: "you have to act with an opening hand" over an opponent's opening bid. This is ***FALSE!***

If your opponent opens and you have an average 12-14 count with no 5-card suit to bid and the wrong shape for a takeout double, ***pass!*** You may be able to get in the auction later, but only if it makes sense.

The following two transgressions occurred in recent BBO games:

SOUTH		W	N	E	S
♠ Q742					
♥ K5				1♣	*1♠*
♦ 93					↑
♣ AQJ83				*Don't do this!*	
					↓

SOUTH		W	N	E	S
♠ 9					
♥ KQ75				1♥	*x*
♦ AJ83					
♣ KT54					

Both of these hands ended poorly for N/S, as is usually the case when we mis-represent our shape like this. On the first hand, N/S drifted down in 2♠, while most other N/S pairs collected a plus score against E/W in 1N. On the second, North competed in spades at the 3-level, and landed in an ill-fated 5-1 fit. South would need around 18+ HCP to double and bid no-trump with a shape like this.

2023 Masterpoint Races
The winners of the 2023 MBA & SOMBA Mini McKenney and Ace of Clubs races will be displayed at the May Regional.

THE QUEEN GAMBIT:
TEST YOUR BIDDING ANSWER
~ (from page 20) ~

In January, I went to a tournament I'd been waiting years to go to: the Reykjavík Bridge Festival in Iceland. The city was beautiful, the countryside was breathtaking, and the tournament was impeccably run. This hand came up on the final day of the Swiss Teams.

Let's take stock of what we know:

» Partner has three keycards (♠A ♥AK)

» Partner has 6+ additional HCP

» We have 10+ tricks: 1♠ 6♥ 1♦ 2♣

» North's most likely shapes are 4441 and 3451

» The honors unaccounted for are: ♠KJ ♥Q ♦KQJ. We disregard clubs; partner wouldn't cooperate with a minimum splinter and stiff club honor.

One promising way to get to 13 tricks is if partner has the ♠K. Now we have 3♠ 6♥ 1♦ 2♣; our fourth spade will either be good or can be ruffed in dummy for trick 13.

Unfortunately, we don't have room to ask about the ♠K. If we bid 5N to ask for kings, partner can't bypass 6♥ to show the ♠K. Additionally, there are hands that take 13 tricks without the ♠K:

♠ AJ	♠ Axxx
♥ AKxx	♥ AKxx
♦ KJTxxx	♦ KQJx
♣ x	♣ J

However, we need to beware of hands like these, which are also plausible and only take 12 tricks:

♠ Axxx	♠ AJx
♥ AKQx	♥ AKQx
♦ KQxx	♦ KJxxx
♣ x	♣ x

What is the key difference between these two sets? ***The Q of trumps.***

We generally disregard the queen with a 10-card fit. Here, we can use the queen ask for the opposite reason, ***hoping North DOESN'T have it.*** If North's points are elsewhere, they will either have the ♠K or enough tricks in diamonds to cover our spade losers. Remember, we know partner has a decent hand for a splinter because they cooperated with our slam try.

NORTH	SOUTH		NORTH
1♦	1♥		♠ AKJ4
4♣	4♦		♥ AK87
4♠	4N		♦ Q876
5♦	5♠*		♣ x
6♥	7♥		

*Next non-signoff step = Queen ask

North denies the ♥Q by bidding 6♥ and now East bumps to 7, ***knowing those HCP are in more critical spots in North's hand.*** My partner was the brains of the operation, and deserves all of the credit for the 13 IMP win.

Arbitration Station: Ruling the Game

This iteration of Arbitration Station is slightly different in nature - we will begin with **_ACBL Law 74 (Conduct & Etiquette)_** and use this as a basis for theory around playing and learning this game we so love (and sometimes hate!).

Law 74 directs players on various aspects of **_attitude_** and **_behavior_** to ensure players are courteous, thoughtful about their words and actions, and playing ethically. There are multiple mentions to avoid gratuitous comments, particularly those that may cause "annoyance or embarrassment" to other players. This seems obvious for a social hobby, but we know these rules are necessary.

As a mindsport, bridge can leave us **_emotional_** and **_hyper-focused_**, to the point where we have tunnel vision on a certain hand or result. Perhaps your partner mis-applied a convention you've just added, or you believe you've been "fixed" by an opponent who simply evaluated a hand differently from how you would have.

In these cases, Law 74 is particularly important. Leave the unsolicited lessons, sarcastic or snide remarks, and flippant body language at the door. **_We all approach bridge for different reasons._** Some are on a quest to advance their game; some are

chasing the highs of good results; others play purely as a social activity. Regardless, it is never acceptable to let our egos get in the way of someone else's reasons for playing.

So the next time your heart lurches because partner led the "wrong" suit, or the opponents back into a slam that only makes because three finesses work, take a breath. **_Practice mindfullness and empathy. Consider other perspectives on the hand or what may be others' motivations for playing._** Dare to ask, but kindly. Let's shake the "grumpy bridge player" stigma once and for all!

I/N Quiz: Learning the Language

The Fall 2023 Table Talk issue featured an I/N article on the language of bridge. Test your knowledge below! (Answers pg. 9)

1. In the following auctions, is the final bid game-forcing, forcing, or non-forcing?

WEST	EAST		WEST	EAST
2♥	2♠		1N	2♣
			2♥	3♥

WEST	EAST		WEST	EAST
1♥	1♠		1♣	1♠
3♦			2♥	

2. Which of the following hands is better to start?

♠A ♥K985 ♦Q9632 ♣A42

♠T ♥KQ98 ♦AJ763 ♣K42

Intermediate/ Newcomer Nook

Here, we'll cover two concepts - one for bidding, one for declaring:

Bidding: Consider what you have vs what you've shown

If you ask bridge teachers or experts what a bid shows, you'll often get a response with words like "around," "about," or "more or less" thrown in. Bidding is a highly imprecise language, and most bids show a *range* of hands.

An opening bid at the one-level ranges from a shapely 10-count up to about 21 high card points (HCP). This range gets a bit messier when we consider all of the different shapes our hand can have. The unwieldiness of it all leads us to our first good general principle: *openers should try to limit their hand as soon as possible.* Consider the following three auctions:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	P	1♥	P
1N			

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♥	1♠	2♥
P			

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	X	P	*1♠*
P	3♠	P	

On the first auction, West's *1N rebid* shows a hand with *12-14 HCP,*

balanced (no singleton/void), and with fewer than four hearts. With this information, East will judge where to go next. With 6-10 or 13+ HCP, respectively, East will stay low or get to game. With 11-12, East is invitational: E/W have between 23-26 combined - East wants to bid game opposite the high end of West's range, but not the low end.

Here's where it starts to get good: suppose East bids 2N to invite to 3N. Enter the principle of *"what you have vs. what you've shown."* West has shown 12-14. With 12, pass. With 14, go to game. With 13, consider Tens and Nines, 5-card suits, and concentrated honors to judge how good of a 13 it is. A common trap is to see a scattered 14-count and think "no way am I bidding game." But remember, that's a maximum!

Consider the second auction: East's 1♠ bid shows 5+♠ (a negative double would have shown exactly four) and 6+ HCP, at least enough to respond at the 1-level. South raises hearts. West *passes*, showing a minimum opening (~12-14) and <three spades. East may now make a non-forcing bid (e.g. 2♠), perhaps bid 2N to invite, introduce a second suit, or even cuebid 3♥ to ask West to bid 3N with a heart stopper. *If West has to decide whether to bid again, remember to consider the context of having shown ~12-14 and 0-2 spades.* If West bids spades later, it will generally show two of them, ideally with an honor (having already denied three).

The <u>third</u> auction goes beyond the opening bidder limiting their hand: South responds a mere 1♠ to North's takeout double. In auctions like this, where partner doubles and the next hand passes, our cheapest bids show ***0-8 HCP.*** We'd need to jump to show 9+. After we bid 1♠, partner leaps to 3♠. Partner likely has 18-19 HCP to jump like this. If you're on the low end of a 1♠ bid (0-5 HCP), pass. If you've got a maximum in context of what you've shown (6-8), bid game.

Overall, these auctions may feel a bit scientific with a lot of memory work. ***But, always consider what range your bids show and trust partner to be bidding with that ranges in mind!***

Cardplay: General Methods for Declaring Trump Contracts

Bridge players often talk about the game in three distinct areas: bidding, defense, and declaring. Many feel that declaring is their weakest of the three - this makes sense, given that we only get to practice it on a smaller fraction of all hands, whereas bidding and defense come up more often. Declaring trump suits, specifically, is an even smaller subset.

In broad strokes, when declaring trump contracts, we want to make a plan for ***getting rid of losers in the hand with the long trumps.*** Remember, you only have to "set up" one hand! This is most often achieved by using one of the three following strategies:

1. Pull trumps, then work on setting up your longest side fit.

2. Ruff losers in the hand with the SHORT trumps, then pull trumps.

3. Cross ruff the entire hand and disregard pulling trumps entirely.

trump ➜ ♠ QJT74	**1.**	♠ K82
side fit ➜ ♥ QT6		♥ KJ53
♦ A		♦ J763
♣ K93		♣ J86

trump ➜ ♠ AJT95	**2.**	♠ 842
♥ 7		♥ A983
ruff in other hand ➜ ♦ AQ53		♦ 64
♣ 963		♣ K852

♠ AJT7	**3.**	♠ 653
cross ruff ➜ ♥ K87		♥ 9
cross ruff ➜ ♦ 6		♦ AKT42
trump ➜ ♣ AQJ84		♣ 9654

I/N QUIZ: ANSWERS
(FROM PG. 7)

1. In the following auctions, is the final bid game-forcing, forcing, or non-forcing?

WEST	EAST
2♥	2♠

*Forcing
(for one round)*

WEST	EAST
1N	2♣
2♥	3♥

Non-forcing

WEST	EAST
1♥	1♠
3♦	

Game-forcing

WEST	EAST
1♣	1♠
2♥	

*Forcing
(for one round)*

2. ♠T ♥KQ98 ♦AJ763 ♣K42

While the two hands have the same HCP total, this hand has more concentrated honors, and honors in our long suits.

It's Your Bid

"It's Your Bid" has been a Table Talk feature for decades. With the SEMBA merger, this is a good time to revisit the "Table Talk Standard" system. ***The convention card on pg. 15*** covers a "vanilla" blend of conventions and basic agreements for these problems.

We invite you to submit hands that are real head-scratchers! The problems selected generally have no clear answer, force us to choose the least of all evils, and theorize about murky auctions. Bids are scored by how many panelists agree. If the Editor has done her job well, none of the panel problems will be unanimous (spoiler: this issue passes the test!), because people approach bidding with different theories, baselines, and experiences.

The next issue's hands are on page 17. The winning panelist & reader annually will receive a free play at the Motor City Regional in October.

Panel Scores

J.Chiesa..........500	B. Webber.......455
M.Maddox.......500	J.Grossman....450
D.Temkin.........500	L. Perlman......450
M.Crane..........490	W.Winokur......450
G.Benedict......480	B. Bryant.........440
S.Burger..........470	O. Lien............435
M.Kleinplatz....470	K. Dasher........420
I.Rosenstein....470	J.Koschik........410
M.Bendure......460	J.Fleischmann.410
D.Eaves..........460	M.Hirschman.405
B.Katz.............455	C.Jolly............405

See problem #4 for an explanation of the extra 5 points in some scores.

Reader Scores

D. Bright.........500	Jethro the Bidding Robot
N. Manley.......460	(see pg. 16).......410
D. Bauman.....440	J.M. Swiger..........400
D. Graff..........430	P. Chirgwin..........380
M. Rosenthal..420	R. Anafshalom.....370

How the Panel Voted

	1	2	3	4	5
Mark Bendure	3♠	1♠	3N	5♣	P
Gene Benedict	4♠	1♠	3N	5♣	P
Brenda Bryant	4♠	1♠	2♦	5♣	1♦
Suzy Burger	4♥	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Joe Chiesa	4♠	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Mike Crane	2♣	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Kurt Dasher	4♠	3♠	3♣	5♣	1♦
Debra Eaves	4♠	1♠	X	5♣	P
Jonathan Fleischmann	4♠	1♠	3♣	6♣	2♦
Jerry Grossman	2♣	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Marty Hirschman	4♠	2♠	3N	4N	1♦
Christian Jolly	3♠	1♠	3♣	4N	2♦
Bob Katz	2♣	1♠	X	5♣	P
Morrie Kleinplatz	4♥	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
John Koschik	2♣	1♠	2♦	5♣	3♦
Owen Lien	4♠	1♠	2♥	5♣	1♦
Myles Maddox	4♠	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Linda Perlman	3♠	1♠	2♦	5♣	P
Irv Rosenstein	2♠	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Dick Temkin	4♠	1♠	3♣	5♣	P
Bob Webber	2♠	1♠	3N	5♣	P
Willie Winokur	2♣	1♠	2♥	5♣	P

1. IMPs. All Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠J9832 ♥6 ♦KQT7 ♣752

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			P
P	1♠	P	?

One of the hardest parts of this problem is the amount of unknowns. We lack in HCP, but have a lot of playing strength opposite a 1♠ opening. But how strong is partner? Why aren't the

opponents bidding even though they have short spades? Is it worth going slow, even though it may allow the opponents to get in more easily? How low am I willing to stop? These questions led to diversity in responses. Many chose a practical 4♠ - a "two-way shot" where you may make it, or take the needed step to shut the opponents out of the auction. Others chose to use Drury, splinter, or raise spades at lower levels.

Action	Votes	Score
4♠	10	100
2♣	5	90
3♠	3	80
2♠	2	70
4♥	2	70

Gene Benedict (4♠): *I have 5 trump, a singleton and a good side suit. I have too much offensive potential to just invite game.*

Jonathan Fleischmann (4♠): *I like to give partner some room to open aggressively in third seat, even sometimes on a four-card suit. That said, partner is vulnerable, one opponent passed originally and the other didn't come in despite having relatively few spades. More likely, partner has a typical opening bid and I need to describe my hand accurately rather than risk stopping too low.*

Jerry Grossman (2♣): *My gut says to bid 4♠, but I really don't see why we should not just give the limit raise that we have and give partner a say in the decision (including making a help-suit game try). Both opponents have passed already, so there is less fear of their finding a heart fit.*

John Koschik (2♣): *I do not believe the fifth trump raises the value of this hand to a game bid (i.e., 4♥).*

Willie Winokur (2♣): *An overbid for vul and imps.*

Linda Perlman (3♠): *Mixed raise too good for 2♠ and not good enough for Drury; shows about 4-8 and 4+ trumps; also preemptive.*

Suzy Burger (4♥): *As much encouragement as I can give. I think partner has a good hand.*

Morrie Kleinplatz (4♥): *Since both opponents are passing with short spades, partner likely has extras. Imagine AKxxx, xxxx, Ax, Ax.*

2. IMPs. None Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠JT97654 ♥A42 ♦void ♣A98

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

 ?

A classic preempting evaluation question with responses that would shock even the most aggressive players from decades past. Many standard guidelines steer us clear of preempting on this hand: few honors in the suit, prime side honors, and a void. This is sage advice - most panelists felt that on this hand, these factors made the hand too good to preempt. And for those HCP loyalists out there, be sure to look for Dick Temkin's comment.

Action	Votes	Score
1♠	20	100
2♠	1	50
3♠	1	50

Mark Bendure (1♠): *Any spade opening at a higher level is doubly flawed, with a topless trump suit and two outside Aces. There is something to be said for passing and making later decisions [...] But, again, the plus factors for this hand demand erring on the side of overbidding (as if I ever needed a reason). Despite only 9 HCP, it has extra spade length, great trump intermediates, and first-round control in all three side suits.*

Joe Chiesa (1♠): *Only 2 choices: P or 1♠, either of which could work. 2, 3, or 4♠ is loathsome, particularly holding the boss suit.*

Debra Eaves (1♠): *Only 9 HCP but a player with 7 losers, 2 quick tricks, and a rebid (Aggressive? Yes)*

Jonathan Fleischmann (1♠): *Preempting with three first-round controls and a topless suit makes me sick to my stomach. My hand has the defensive tricks and offensive potential of a one-level opener.*

Jerry Grossman (1♠): *Pass would be my last choice.*

Morrie Kleinplatz (1♠): *Unanimous in the modern game.*

John Koschik (1♠): *Let's see if [Joe] Chiesa opens this one.*

Dick Temkin (1♠): *Not preempting with 3 first-round controls; and not passing: **points schmoints!***

Marty Hirschman (2♠): *I've never had any luck opening 1 with this kind of hand. 2♠ rather than 3♠ to allow bidding room in case partner has a good hand with hearts or clubs.*

3. MPs. All Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠5 ♥A3 ♦AQT ♣AKT9873

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	P	1♣
1♥	P	P	?

Another hand with an array of questions: How weak is partner? Where are the spades? How likely is it that we can take 9 tricks in NT on a heart lead? How about on a spade lead? There is plenty to consider, and playing matchpoints throws in an additional wrench. Many panelists jumped to 3♣, but others opted to play poker with 3N, reverse into 2♦, cuebid 2♥, or make a takeout double and see what transpires.

Action	Votes	Score
3♣	11	100
3N	4	80
2♦	3	70
2♥	2	60
X	2	60

Morrie Kleinplatz (1♠): *Two-way bid. If partner has some scattered values with no clear bid, this may get us to game. If partner is bust, this may prevent them from finding a spade fit.*

Mark Bendure (3N): *With the overcall, partner's pass isn't necessarily as weak as a direct pass. I'm angling for 3N, so I bid that right now, crossing my fingers that partner has enough help in clubs for me to bring that suit home and that either they don't lead a spade or partner has something that stops them from running the first five. If there is a lesson about hand evaluation with Aces, suit length, and intermediates, this is another good example (but only if it makes).*

Marty Hirschman (3N): *When all you need from partner to make a certain contract is very insubstantial values (here, perhaps, ♠Jxxx and ♣Qx or something like ♠QJxx ♥Jxx ♦xxxxx ♣x) you just have to bid it yourself. Partner will never cooperate. Even just a small doubleton club will give you a 40% chance of scoring seven club tricks, and Jx would increase that to 52%. As a bonus, jumping to 3N will make it pretty much impossible for the opponents to find their big spade fit if they have one.*

Brenda Bryant (2♦): *Bid where I live and also show a good hand.*

Owen Lien (2♥): *Should be showing a big club 1-suiter.*

Bob Katz (X): *You can always correct spades to clubs.*

4. MPs. E/W Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠KJ6432 ♥void ♦KJ72 ♣AQ8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
P	2♥	P	2♠*
P	3♣	P	3♦
P	4♣	P	?

*6+ spades

This hand was played by the Editor in a 2023 National pairs game. On a slightly different auction, 6♣ was reached and defeated after an agonizing wait for the opening lead (which was one of the few cards to beat the contract). A few panelists mentioned they would have bid 3N instead of 3♦ as opener. In this case, five points were awarded to panelists who wouldn't have faced this predicament, but were kind enough to answer the problem anyway.

Action	Votes	Score
5♣	19	100
4N	2	60
6♣	1	50

Brenda Bryant (5♣): *Tough!! I have 3 beautiful trumps, but only 3 and no aces outside of the trump suit. Tough to know how many losers we have...or winners. It's probably a 6 or 4 hand!*

Suzy Burger (5♣): *Good trumps, but that's about all.*

Kurt Dasher (5♣): *Too much likely wasted in spades and diamonds to bid more than this.*

Marty Hirschman (5♣): *Partner is at least 5-5 in hearts and clubs, possibly 6-5 or 6-6 since they blew past 3N. Obviously I prefer clubs. I don't have much for 6♣: My KJs are pretty much worthless for slam since partner is short in both those suits. If all partner needs for six is my AQ8 of clubs, they probably will just take a shot at it.*

John Koschik (5♣): *My hand got worse with every bid partner made.*

Owen Lien (5♣): *Wish I'd bid 3N at my 3rd turn. 3♦ feels like a punt and makes partner's 4♣ bid less clear. That said I don't see anything else to bid now other than 5♣. No pointed suit ace and only 3 clubs point to going low.*

Bob Webber (5♣): *I would have bid 3NT last time, creating a slightly different problem if partner then bid 4♣. Does 3♦ show this hand or could it be a hand with less than a full ♦ stopper?*

Jerry Grossman (4N): *To play. A club slam looks doubtful with so much of my strength in suits partner doesn't have.*

Christian Jolly (4N): *Last train.*

Jonathan Fleischmann (6♣): *This seems practical, as other efforts at science risk confusion in an auction where we bid all four suits naturally. Partner should have a pointed-suit ace and the club king a large percentage of the time.*

5. MPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠8 ♥KQJ6 ♦QJT754 ♣QT

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	P	P	?

This is a slight variation of a Bridge Connection hand from Spring 2023 (thank you, Bob Ondo, for the submission!). Many panelists were worried the opponents could outbid us in spades and land a plus score they wouldn't have if we'd passed the board out. There are competing theories here, including "Pearson Points" (Open in 4th chair if your HCP + number of spades = 15+), or alternatively, a modern theory that if you would've opened the hand in any other seat, you should still open it in 4th.

Serendipitously, the Editor recently gained access to a bidding program to put some of these theories to the test. After running 5,000 hands, instructing the bidding program to give South this hand and E/N/W hands that don't qualify for any opening, the results are in - see page 17 for details (hint: the panel's intuition may be skewed on this one).

Action	Votes	Score
P	15	100
1♦	4	70
2♦	2	60
3♦	1	50

Mark Bendure (P): *Bottom line: the hand is adequate in playing strength but not very strong for defense. The opponents own the spade suit and their share of A's and K's so they are likely to win any part score battle that we initiate. As a final consideration, the vulnerability means that we pay a steeper price than they do for overbidding by a trick or two.*

Joe Chiesa (P): *A plebiscite on Pearson points (HCP + Spades --- 15 to open). Not close here.*

Debra Eaves (P): *11 HCP + one spade is not 14 or 15 Pearson points and this hand has no aces.*

Jerry Grossman (P): *This looks like the penultimate hand on page 65 of the January Bulletin. There you held AKJT98 of hearts and Qxxx in diamonds, with, as here, a singleton spade. The advice was "Pass in fourth seat [...] We're unlikely to go plus." Who am I to doubt that expert?*

Bob Katz (P): *As fast as I can get the pass card out of the box.*

Bob Webber (P): *I've been told to open any hand in 4th seat which would be opened in any other seat, but I just can't do it. **<u>Could somebody run a simulation?</u>***

Brenda Bryant (1♦): *Can't*

preempt myself out of a heart game or part score.

Kurt Dasher (1♦): *Opponents likely have a spade fit and half the points in deck. But with 6/4 hand likely can compete to 3-level.*

Marty Hirschman (1♦): *Rule Number 1 for 4th-seat openers: If you would have opened in 1st or 2nd seat, you have to open. If we are forced to the 3-level in a competitive auction, just a smattering of values in partner will see me home in 3♦. And we still might have a game in hearts. East's failure to open in 3rd seat at favorable vulnerability suggests weakness and therefore makes it more likely that partner has a decent hand.*

Owen Lien (1♦): *If they outbid me, good for them, but hopefully they'll be at least at the 3-level and partner can double. Not out of the question for us to have a game.*

Jonathan Fleischmann (2♦): *My experience has been that passing in fourth seat with normal opening bids doesn't work well, even when we don't meet the Rule of 15. That should be reserved for borderline balanced hands. 2♦ shows a very good weak two or so, and has the advantage of preempting the opponents out of spades if they own the suit. I'm not nearly as worried about playing in the wrong red suit when partner is a passed hand as I am about letting the opponents have an easy time competing in spades.*

NAMES Table Talk Panel

GENERAL APPROACH

2/1 Game Forcing

Two Over One: Game Forcing ■   Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid □
VERY LIGHT: Openings □   3rd Hand ■   Overcalls □   Preempts □
FORCING OPENING: 1♣ ■   2♣ ■   Natural 2 Bids □   Other □

NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS

1NT		
15 to 17	3♣ Puppet Stayman	
to	3♦ 5-5 Majors GF	
5-card Major common ■	3♥ 31(54)	
System on over x, 2♣ ■	3♠ 13(54)	
2♣ Stayman ■ Puppet □		
2♦ Transfer to ♥ ■	4♦ , 4♥ Transfer ■	
Forcing Stayman □	Smolen ■	
2♥ Transfer to ♠ ■	Lebensohl ■ (Fast_denies)	
2♠ ♣	Neg. Double ■	
2NT ♦ or minors	Other:	

2NT 19+ to 21
Puppet Stayman □
Transfer Responses:
Jacoby ■   Texas ■
3♠   Minors

3NT to
Solid minor (7+)

Conventional NT Openings

SPECIAL DOUBLES

After Overcall: Penalty □
Negative ■ thru 4♥
Responsive ■ : thru 4♥   Maximal □
Support: Dbl. ■ thru 2M_ Redbl ■
Card-showing ■   Min. Offshape T/O □

SIMPLE OVERCALL

1 level 7 to 17 HCP (usually)
often 4 cards □ very light style □
Responses
New Suit: Forcing □ NFConst ■ NF □
Jump Raise: Force □ Inv. □ Weak ■

JUMP OVERCALL

Strong □   Intermediate □   Weak ■

OPENING PREEMPTS

Sound   Light   Very Light
3/4-bids   ■
Conv./Resp. (Depends on vul.)

DIRECT CUEBID

	OVER:	Minor	Major
Natural		□	□
Strong T/O		□	□
Michaels		■	■

SLAM CONVENTIONS Gerber ■   4NT: Blackwood □   RKC ■   1430 □
Quantitative 4NT, 5NT = pick-a-slam, 5NT after RKC = Specific King ask
Gerber only over 1N, 2N opening, & 2C-2D-2N
                                    vs Interference: DOPI □   DEPO □   Level: ROPI □

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS

Direct: 15 to 18 Systems on ■
Conv. □
Balancing: 11 to 16
Conv. □
Jump to 2NT: Minors □ 2 Lowest ■
Conv. □

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP

vs:	16+	15-
2♣	♣ + Major	Majors
2♦	♦ + Major	Nat.
2♥	♥	Nat.
2♠	♠	Nat.
Dbl:	1m or 2M	Nat.
Other	2NT = minors	

OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE

New Suit Forcing: 1 level ■ 2 level ■
Jump Shift: Forcing □ Inv. □ Weak ■
Redouble implies no fit ■

	2NT Over	Limit+	Limit	Weak
Majors		■	□	□
Minors		■	□	□
Other				

VS Opening Preempts Double Is

Takeout ■ thru 2♥   Penalty □
Conv. Takeout:
Lebensohl 2NT Response ■

MAJOR OPENING

Expected Min. Length	4	5
1st/2nd	□	■
3rd/4th	■	□

RESPONSES
Double Raise: Force □ Inv. □ Weak ■
After Overcall: Force ■ Inv. □ Weak ■
Conv. Raise: 2NT ■ 3NT □ Splinter ■
Other: Rev. Berg: 3♣ Limit; 3♦ Mixed
1NT: Forcing □   Semi-forcing ■
2NT: Forcing □ Inv. □ to
3NT: to
Drury ■ : Reverse □ 2-Way □ Fit ■
Other:

MINOR OPENING

Expected Min. Length	4	3	0–2 Conv ■
			NF
1♣	□	■	□
1♦	□	■	□

RESPONSES
Double Raise: Force □ Inv. □ Weak ■
Forcing Raise: J/S in other minor □
Single raise ■ Other: Inv. +
Frequently bypass 4+ ♦ ■
1NT/1♣   6 to 10
2NT Forcing □ Inv. ■ 11 to 12
3NT: 13 to 15

		DESCRIBE	RESPONSES/REBIDS
2♣	22 to + HCP		
	Strong ■ Other □	In Comp: x=Neg	
	2♦ Resp: Neg ■ Waiting ■ P = GF		
2♦	5 to 10 HCP		2NT asks feature (AK)
	Natural: Weak ■ Intermediate □ Strong □ Conv. □		2NT Force ■ New Suit NF □
2♥	5 to 10 HCP		2NT asks feature (AK)
	Natural: Weak ■ Intermediate □ Strong □ Conv. □		2NT Force ■ New Suit NF □
2♠	5 to 10 HCP		2NT asks feature (AK)
	Natural: Weak ■ Intermediate □ Strong □ Conv. □		2NT Force ■ New Suit NF □

OTHER CONV. CALLS: New Minor Forcing ■   2-Way NMF □
Weak Jump Shifts: In Comp. ■   Not in Comp. ■
4th Suit Forcing: 1 Rd. □ Game ■
Over strong 1♣ and strong ♣ P 1♦ : x=Majors, NT=Minors

DUPLICATE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: INTRODUCING JETHRO THE BIDDING WIZARD

If you're coming from the "It's Your Bid column," you likely noticed mentions of Jethro the Bidding Robot, a program useful for __generating hands, practicing bidding, simulating bridge matches, and more.__ Jethro is the brainchild of Ann Arbor player Bob Rasmussen, akin to the bidding capabilities of the BBO robots ("GiB"). However, the similarities stop there. After playing around with the program for only a matter of weeks, I find Jethro much more __reliable__, __customizable__, and __savvy to modern bidding__ than the various other bots out there.

Jethro came to life as a COVID-lockdown project and has blossomed into a fully-fledged bidder, with a companion program for mock bridge matches that could be used to compare different:

» __Styles__ (e.g. aggressive vs. conservative)

» __Conventions__ (e.g. Meckwell vs. DONT over 1N openings)

» __Meanings__ of a bid in a given situation (e.g. 1♥ (4♠) __4N__)

The following are some interesting points about Jethro's progress and future. A full Q&A with Bob is at the end of the TT online/emailed issue.

» Bob estimates that 99% of Jethro's bids are plausible, and __95% would pass the Turing Test,__ meaning a human would not be able to distinguish Jethro's bids from a human's.

» Jethro evaluates hands based on "working points" which incorporate __classic HCP, length/shortness, honor placement, tens, and more,__ into a HCP-esque structure. This is a pretty

sophisticated process that makes Jethro a powerful practice tool for __improving hand evaluation skills.__

» Like all programmatic bidding bots, Jethro struggles with nuanced situations, particularly those where there is no "good" answer, as well as with secondary assumptions, which rely on __negative inferences__ (e.g. narrowing down partner's possible shapes in light of what they DIDN'T bid).

» __Bob invites bidding & theory enthusiasts to be part of Jethro's training process.__ This includes looking over random deals to find peculiarities, reviewing less tested settings (like different systems over 1N), and considering how to improve algorithms for less formulaic situations, like deciding when to convert partner's takeout doubles to penalty.

» The __quirky name__ is a clever rock music reference. Bob recalls:
Very early in the development, when I was working on opening bids, I was having trouble with a specific problem. You pick up a hand that you think of as an obvious 3♥ opener, say,

♠86 ♥AQT9854 ♦9 ♣QT4

If the hand was a bit better, you would have opened it 1♥ instead, perhaps with:

♠K6 ♥AQT9854 ♦9 ♣KT4

The point is that somewhere in between, you have to decide if a hand is a preempt, a one-level opener, or in some very few cases, neither a preempt nor an opener. When I was talking to a friend I referred to this as the Jethro Tull problem, because it made me think of their song, "Too Old To Rock 'N' Roll, Too Young To Die." The next time I was talking to my friend, he asked, "How is Jethro?" and the name stuck.

If you're interested in getting the latest version, check out the attached Q&A for details.

» For those waiting with baited breath on the simulation results from It's Your Bid #5: a 5,000 board BAM match was simulated where South held the specified hand and E/N/W held random, non-opening hands. South on Team "Open" was instructed to open 1♦ in 4th chair on every board (then Jethro continues the auction without human interference). South on Team "Pass" was instructed to pass the board out. (Note: When left to its own devices, Jethro opened 1♦, which was detrimental to its "It's Your Bid" score). The match score was:

"Open"= 2812 "Pass"= 2188	Opening 1♦ netted a plus score **56.24%** of the time.

Opening was a winner, but take this with a grain of salt. An extended spot check of the simulated hands revealed no issues, but it's not a guarantee that Jethro bid exactly as a human would after the 1♦ opening. Additionally:

» This was a MP test. Spot checking revealed the **_big risk of opening this hand at IMPs_** - the unlikely but possible case where E/W bid and make a game.

» We'd want a sample of 10,000+ hands to draw statistical conclusions, but Jethro is not strictly set up for this analysis, so running 5,000 took a fair amount of time and labor.

» Many of Team Open's minus scores were N/S getting to 2N or 3N and going down (sometimes as many as -5). Conventions like Good/Bad 2N can help clarify opener's strength when competing with a long minor. This convention may help Team Open score even better.

Summer 2024 "It's Your Bid" Hands

1. MPs. E/W Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠KT9765 ♥T2 ♦void ♣AQT72

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	?

2. MPs. E/W Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠Q ♥QT98 ♦QT9 ♣J9863

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	2♥	P
P	3♣	3♥	

3. MPs. None Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠JT7 ♥QT54 ♦KQJ76 ♣J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	1♦	1♠	X
P	2♣	2♥	?

4. IMPs. E/W Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠QJ6 ♥86 ♦QT873 ♣AK4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		P	1♦
3♠	X	P	?

5. IMPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠A ♥AKQ9754 ♦3 ♣KQ98

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	?

Readers, submit responses by *April 30, 2024*

jarbit24@gmail.com

Mailing address on back cover

SEMBA Club Directory

[Numbers] correspond to club info on right; *Invite-only games

Monday
[1] Winners Bridge | 11a
[2] Blue Water Bridge Club | 12p
[3] War Memorial | 12p
[4] Ann Arbor City Club | 1p*

Tuesday
[5] Downriver BC | 10:30a
[6] Alger Center BC | 12p
[7] Plymouth DBC | 12:30p
[4] Ann Arbor City Club | 1p*
[8] Ford DBC | 6p

Wednesday
[9] Eton Center DBC | 11a
[10] Mid Week BC | 11a
[7] Plymouth DBC | 12:30p
[11] Country Club of Dt. | 12:30p*
[12] Mackinaw BC | 1p*
[13] Ann Arbor Bridge Club | 7p

Thursday
[14] Burns Park Bridge | 12p
[15] Neighborhood Club | 12p
[11] Country Club of Dt. | 5p*
[16] Trenton DBC | 6:30p

Friday
[17] Bridge Central | 11a
[18] St. Clair DBC | 12p
[19] Highland DBC | 12:15p
[4] Ann Arbor City Club | 1p*

[20] Bridge Connection
- Mon-Fri | 11:55a
- Sat | 12:30p
- Weds | 7p

Virtual
- Listings here are IN-PERSON
- On Bridge Base Online, click "Virtual Clubs" then "ACBL - North America "to find VIRTUAL games

Limited
[4] Ann Arbor City Club | Thurs 1p | <499*
[17] Bridge Central | Tues 11a | <2500
[20] Bridge Connection | Thurs 11a | <1000; Tues 9a | <300 (Barometer)

Club Location & Managers
See pg. 19 for club manager contacts

[1] 38651 Woodward, Blmfld Hls; Dave Fletcher
[2] 600 Gd River, Port Huron; Fred Goodell www.bluewaterbridgeclubs.com
[3] 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pt Fms; Tony Faint
[4] 1830 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; Ronnie Meade
[5] 14680 Dix-Toledo, Southgate; Cono Emanuele
[6] 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pt Fms; Dave Fletcher
[7] 525 Farmer St, Plymouth; Jim Perna
[8] 3640 Madison, Dearborn; Ellen Silverest www.facebook.com/FordBridgeClub
[9] 4900 Pardee, Dearborn Hts; Joyce Kozma
[10] 38651 Woodward, Blmfld Hls; Tony Faint
[11] 220 Country Club, Grosse Pt Fms; Dave Fletcher
[12] 190 E.Long Lake, Blmfld Hls; Josie Doherty
[13] 2114 Pauline, Ann Arbor; Ray Gentz https://arbor.bridgeclubs.net/
[14] 1320 Baldwin, Ann Arbor; Matt Evett
[15] 375 Lothrop, Grosse Pointe; Tony Faint
[16] 2700 Westfield, Trenton; Bob Ondo
[17] 17200 Dove, Clinton Twp; Vickie Vallone
[18] 308 S 4th St, St Clair; Fred Goodell www.bluewaterbridgeclubs.com
[19] 444 Beach Farm, Highland; Jim Perna
[20] 26776 W 12 Mile, Southfield; Mike McDonald www.bridgewebs.com/connection/

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   esilvere2002@yahoo.com
Vallone: bridgecentralstation@gmail.com

Ann Arbor Tournament Results

Saturday _Flights A & B:_ Xiaoping Wu, Yanping Zhang, Ching-Po Wang, Song Lin | _Flight C:_ Flora More, Donajean Lawson, Aileen Bement, Patricia Carson

Sunday _Flight A:_ Brenda Bryant, Michael Crane, Suzy Burger, Bob Webber | _Flight B:_ Richard Bauman, Royce Williams, David Aderente, Stuart Collis | _Flight C:_ Paul & Karen Stunkel, Dan Irish, Paul Kubicek

Valentine Sectional Results

Open pairs _Thurs AM:_ Robert Mendelson, Bob Webber

Fri AM: Jerry Grossman, Bob Webber | _Fri PM:_ Jonathan Fleischmann, Robert Katz

0-1000 pairs _Thurs:_ Jean Hellekjaer, Deepak Dighe _Fri:_ Leslee Crowley, Bridget Schipper

0-500 pairs _Thurs:_ Chris Hill, Sharon Maaske | _Fri:_ Julian Prince, Eric Wiedmayer

SS Swiss: _Thurs:_ Suzy Burger, Howard Perlman, Bob Webber, Robert Mendelson

Sat. Bracketed Swiss _Bkt 1:_ Suzy Burger, Brenda Bryant, Robert Mendelson, Howard Perlman | _Bkt 2:_ Bruce & Nanci Poling, Susan Bowers, William Dwyer Jr | _Bkt 3:_ Jane Gardner, Cheryl Kreger, Paul & Karen Stunkel

Test Your Bidding
Intermediate/Advanced
By Julie Arbit

SOUTH
♠ Q765
♥ JT6432
♦ A
♣ AK

NORTH	SOUTH
1♦	1♥
4♣	4♦
4♠	4N
5♦	?

North opens 1♦, South bids 1♥. North *splinters* with 4♣; South makes a slam try by *cuebidding* 4♦. North cooperates with the slam try by *cuebidding* 4♠.

South asks for *keycards* and learns that North has the three missing keycards (♠A ♥AK).

What next? (answer, pg. 6)

Upcoming Tournaments

Apr 4-7: Chuck Burger Sectional
May 13-19: Wolverine Regional
June 20-23: Ken Van Cleve Regional

In September of '21, as I was contemplating yet another Covid induced lockdown winter, I was thinking I needed a project to keep me busy. Since I am a tournament bridge player, and a retired software/firmware engineer, a computer program related to bridge seemed like the thing to do.

So I started writing a program to make an opening bid, given any 13 cards. A few months later I was reasonably happy with the results. Of course, the next step was to write a program to bid an entire auction from start to finish. Now, after another couple years of tinkering, I've got what seems to me like a pretty decent bidding program. This article describes, in Q&A format, the program I wrote and some ideas for further development.

Q: What do you call it?

A: Jethro. If you make it to the bottom of this article, I'll explain how that name came to be.

Q: How good is it? How well does it bid?

A: Subjectively, my opinion is "pretty well." What I am aiming for is 100% of the bids to be "plausible," and I think 99%+ of all bids made are in the plausibility neighborhood. On most hands (~95%+) I believe Jethro passes the Turing test; if you were on the other side of a bidding screen you would have a difficult time distinguishing Jethro from a live person. Jethro gets to a credible strain and level almost all of the time. I think it is safe to say that anyone who has played a fair amount of tournament bridge has played with many a partner who did not bid as well as Jethro.

Jethro is still very much a work in progress. It is the kind of project that is never really "done." I definitely do not agree with every bid Jethro produces. I do at least a little bit of testing and programming most days, and I like to think I am making improvements.

Q: How do you decide if Jethro has bid to a good contract or not?

A: Some of it is subjective. I won't claim to be a world class player, but I do have decades of experience to draw on when looking at a bridge hand. There is also a Double Dummy Solver built in to the code, so I can tell at a quick glance if it is possible to make the contract that is bid to. I also have some thoughts (see below) concerning metrics to measure the efficacy of a pair's bidding.

And this is a good time to give a shout out here to Bo Haglund and Soren Hein, who made their Double Dummy Solver code available for free to the world. The Solver typically takes a second or two to analyze a hand and calculate the results. Once in a great while it may take 15 seconds or more. As far as I know, it has never failed to produce the correct answers. See http://privat.bahnhof.se/wb758135/index.html for more information. A truly amazing piece of software. Thank you, Bo and Soren!

Q: How does it compare to other computer bidding programs? Specifically, how does it compare to the BBO robots?

A: I've got an old copy of Bridge Baron 14, and the BBO bots are free for anyone to use. It would be great to be able to make lots of direct comparisons, but it is not particularly easy to set up to do so.

I also found hands from what I think was the most recent computer bridge championship – 2019 in San Francisco(!) – and spent maybe an hour looking at the bidding. I don't think Jethro would have been embarrassed. Of course, as Mike Tyson famously said, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." I really do not know how Jethro would have fared in a head-to-head matchup.

Jethro likes to bid, and likes to compete. My sense is that Jethro passes less frequently than other computer bidders I have seen. Jethro also likes to bid slams; of course, not every slam makes, so that can be a mixed blessing.

Here are a few examples:

Jethro will open the following hand 1♠ in first seat. There are many hands with 11 HCP that Jethro will not open, but lighter openings are definitely part of the modern style.

♠ KQJ87
♥ A743
♦ 64
♣ JT
.

Change the hand slightly, and a different decision is made. Jethro will pass this hand:

♠ KQJ87
♥ A74
♦ 64
♣ JT6
.

Here are a couple of auctions using the above hands. Jethro made every bid:

Board 17
Dlr: North
Vul: None

North: ♠ KQJ87 ♥ A743 ♦ 64 ♣ JT
West: ♠ T62 ♥ KJ ♦ AKT83 ♣ Q82
East: ♠ 54 ♥ 98 ♦ Q97 ♣ AK7643
South: ♠ A93 ♥ QT652 ♦ J52 ♣ 95

West	North	East	South
	1♠	2♣	2♠
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

4♣ is not, in general, a desirable spot to land in. But on this hand 4♣ is the par contract, after West asks if East has a ♠ stopper, and East cannot oblige.

Board 123
Dlr: North
Vul: None

North: ♠ KQJ87 ♥ A74 ♦ 64 ♣ JT6
West: ♠ A94 ♥ QT965 ♦ AT73 ♣ K
East: ♠ 53 ♥ KJ8 ♦ KJ982 ♣ 742
South: ♠ T62 ♥ 32 ♦ Q5 ♣ AQ9853

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

On this hand, North chose not to open 1♠, but backs in later with an overcall.

E/W can make 4♥, but it's not clear how to bid it. (It's always easier when looking at all four hands!)

Here is another one, where Jethro gets to 5♦:

```
Board 1        ♠ 98
Dlr: North     ♥ K952
Vul: None      ♦ K53
               ♣ AK85

   ♠ K53              ♠ AQT762
   ♥ 8643             ♥ Q7
   ♦ T98              ♦ 64
   ♣ 964              ♣ 732

               ♠ J4
               ♥ AJT
               ♦ AQJ72
               ♣ QJT
```

West	North	East	South
	1♣	2♠	3♦
3♠	4♦	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

One might reasonably ask, "How does bidding this compare to the BBO bots?"

Give this hand to the BBO bots, and they too will get to 5♦. But only if West passes, which is what a BBO West bot will do on its own. If West sticks in the cheeky 3♠ bid, as Jethro does (more or less blindly following The Law after a preempt), the auction dies at 3♠.

Here is another somewhat complicated auction:

```
Board 84       ♠ AT5
Dlr: West      ♥ J542
Vul: Both      ♦ J3
               ♣ QT93

   ♠ QJ8762           ♠ 93
   ♥ KQT9             ♥ A8
   ♦ 85               ♦ AKT642
   ♣ J                ♣ 872

               ♠ K4
               ♥ 763
               ♦ Q97
               ♣ AK654
```

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	2♣
X	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	3♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Plenty of close decisions here. If this hand came up in a tournament, I would expect a lot of different auctions at different tables. Is there a "best" auction for all four hands here? I really

don't know. West Jethro's negative double with 6-4 in the majors might not be everyone's first choice, but I would argue it is not implausible.

One more:

```
Board 22          ♠ J62
Dlr:  East        ♥ K7
Vul: E/W          ♦ AK7
                  ♣ AJT97

    ♠ A9                      ♠ Q83
    ♥ QJ542                   ♥ A6
    ♦ J983                    ♦ QT52
    ♣ 64                      ♣ KQ83

                  ♠ KT754
                  ♥ T983
                  ♦ 64
                  ♣ 52
```

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	2♠
3♦	3♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Getting to the par spot. 3♦ can make, 3♠ is down 1, according to the DDS. Personally, I would have sold out to 3♦ with the N hand.

The BBO robots run a different auction[1]:

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	1NT	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

North chooses to get in the auction with a strong NT overcall. Jethro won't make a strong NT overcall when two opponents have been bidding. South declines to introduce their five card ♠ suit, and the auction dies at 2♦.

And, of course, the obligatory Grand Slam hand:

```
Board 19          ♠ AKQT9
Dlr: South        ♥ 3
Vul: E/W          ♦ A954
                  ♣ Q32

   ♠ 5                    ♠ 8643
   ♥ T76542               ♥ KJ98
   ♦ Q32                  ♦ T76
   ♣ J87                  ♣ T4

                  ♠ J72
                  ♥ AQ
                  ♦ KJ8
                  ♣ AK965
```

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	7♠

3♦ is game forcing "Wolff Checkback." If you choose not to play that treatment, then 3♦ still would have been the bid made, but then it would have been described as "New Minor Forcing." (On this particular hand, it's really a distinction without a difference.)

The option was set so that 5NT asked for specific Kings, so South bid 6♣ to show the ♣K. Had the option been set to show the number of Kings, South would have shown 2 Kings by bidding 6♥.

No worries; 6♦ asks for the ♦K. South has it, so bids 7♠. Either way, the grand slam is reached.

There are certainly hands South might hold for this auction where 13 tricks will not make. But the algorithm judged -- correctly, in this case -- that bidding 7 was a risk worth taking.

Q: Did you have a master plan? A unified vision, from the beginning, about how everything would fit together?

A: Yeah, right. Sure. And I've got some beachfront real estate you might be interested in….

No, the truth is, to large extent I made it up as I went along. Necessity being the mother of invention, I created the concepts I needed as they became necessary. If I was going to start over today from the beginning I would undoubtedly make many different choices knowing what I know now.

Having said that, I did (and do) have one very broad goal. Whether Jethro is playing as your partner, your opponents, or both, I want it to feel like you are playing in an expert game. Which begs the question, what does that mean? What does it feel like to play with and against experts? What attributes do experts brings to the table? How can a computer program mimic those attributes?

It all starts with hand evaluation. Which leads to:

Q: How does it work?

A: Numbers and rules. LOTS of numbers and LOTS of rules.

Numbers first: every hand gets an initial valuation, which is represented by a number. This valuation is a weighted average of three different measures:

- the K&R (Kaplan&Rubens / CCCC) evaluator, as described in the October, 1982 edition of The Bridge World (see https://www.jeff-goldsmith.com/cgi-bin/knr.cgi) for a demo
- "Bergen" points, as defined by Marty Bergen (see https://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala/Hand%20Evaluation.pdf)
- A homegrown method of my own, using what purports to be a more accurate point code method plus extra value for long (5+) suits. Instead of the traditional A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1 point count method, I use A=4.5, K=3, Q=1.5, J=.75, T=.25; I read an article somewhere that had data to back up the assertion that Aces and Tens are traditionally undervalued, while Queens and Jacks are overvalued. (Bergen points do this as well, without resorting to fractions.)

There are also several other ancillary measures computed, but the one above forms the basis for what I call "working points," which is my main workhorse.

As the auction proceeds each hand is re-evaluated for every subsequent bid. This results in an adjustment (which can be either up or down) depending on the information revealed by the other players' bids. How much adjustment? Well, that is a very good question! There are a lot of potential adjustments that might be made, including, of course, upgrades if you find a fit with partner. Here is a simple example: suppose your holding in some suit is Qx. That gets some initial valuation. How much is it really worth? Who knows at this point. Now suppose someone at the table makes a bid showing that suit. How does your initial valuation for Qx change, depending on which player made the bid? At the moment it is "what seems right to me" after having looked at a countless number of hands. Frankly, I don't find that to be a particularly satisfying answer, though what I have done seems to work reasonably well. I've got some ideas (below) about how one might go about making improvements to the methodology.

For hands contemplating no trump contracts after the first round of bidding, I invented another measure which I call "NT working points." Long suits count extra, but shortness hurts the valuation, depending on what one's partner might have shown.

Opening 1NT bids are defined as 15-17 (traditional) HCP. It's not a strict requirement. Jethro doesn't deviate from 15-17 as frequently as Marty Bergen might propose, but exceptions are made. These 14 HCP hands, for example, are opened 1NT,

while these 15 HCP hands are not:

.

As you can see, hands with Queens and Jacks are downgraded, while Aces and long suits are upgraded. This is true for hands considering suit contracts, too. If you are a confirmed high-card point counter, this can take a little getting used to.

What about rules?

Overcalls are based on a combination of suit strength and overall strength. A separate calculation is used for two suited overcalls. Takeout doubles employ yet another calculation. If a hand might qualify for multiple actions, an arbitration routine decides.

The first round or two of bidding is usually about describing one's hand for partner's benefit. Strength and shape may be somewhat fuzzy. In most auctions, by the third round of bidding, both sides strength and shape are coming into focus.

With every bid that is made, strength and shape information is conveyed to everyone at the table. I call this "advertised information." In later bidding rounds this may include "stopper" information, for NT contracts, or "controls" for slam bidding. Most of the time the advertised information will be a reasonably accurate representation of the hand that is actually held. As in real life, however, sometimes the cards do not cooperate, and the advertised information will be less accurate. That's bridge.

In any case, every time before Jethro bids, an estimate is made of partner's strength, based on the strength and shape that has been previously advertised. This is added to the known strength in the hand being looked at, and a bid is chosen. Again, sometimes there are multiple possible bids that need to be arbitrated.

Here is a (freakish) hand that popped up while I was looking for examples:

♠ KQ975
♥ Q2
♦ 32
♣ AJ76

♠ A
♥ AJ97653
♦ AQJ64
♣ -

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	

South's rebid choice here is between 3♥ and 3♦. With this hand, Jethro chooses 3♥.

But change the South hand just a little bit, to

♠ A
♥ AJ9765
♦ AQJ64
♣ 3

and the same two bids are considered, but this time Jethro's rebid is 3♦. Are those bids "correct"? I don't know – what do you think? -- but I would put both of them in the "plausible" category.

Q: How does a computer bidding program differ from a real live expert bidder?

A: I do not believe human experts typically think in strict numerical terms. They look at their hand, perhaps do some rudimentary calculations, then rely on their experience to guide them to the bid they make. I'm sure a lot of it is unconscious. A common thought might be, "I made that aggressive bid because I liked my hand." Or, "I didn't like my hand." Sometimes I think they make the determination without necessarily being able to articulate exactly why.

Computer bidders have to somehow convert that information into numbers, then choose a course of action. The goal, of course, is to have those decisions mimic human experts. For example, you, West, hold this hand,

♠ KT5
♥ JT742
♦ 73
♣ A42

and hear this auction,

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	1♥	2♣
?			

If you have a photographic memory, and a lot of unused space in your brain, you might recognize this hand from the February, 2023 ACBL Bridge Bulletin. It is hand #5 from the "It's Your Call" article.

Fourteen out of fifteen experts decided this hand rated a 3♣ bid, which was described as a "limit raise-plus kind of hand." I don't know that this hand qualifies as a "classic" limit raise – good luck, by the way, finding a precise definition of "limit raise" – but the experts almost unanimously agreed it was the best description of this particular hand.

If you want your computer program to mimic human experts, you'd better have an evaluation method that judges this hand worthy of a "limit raise."

How does Jethro do?

Jethro's algorithm gives this hand an initial valuation of 8.86 "working points" and an initial Pass is West's first bid. Before West's second bid, the hand is reevaluated based on the current auction, and the new valuation is 11.42 working points. That is enough for Jethro to make the same 3♣ bid favored by the experts. The difficult part, of course, is deciding how any particular hand should be reevaluated.

Q: What about competitive auctions?

A: Experts are really good at picking their spots to get in – and at least as importantly, get *out* – of competitive auctions. Jethro struggles a bit here. It's not so much deciding when to get into an auction or compete further, as it is to convey the correct information to one's partner, so that partner doesn't get overly excited. If you advertise a certain strength, a computer program will take you at your word, and respond accordingly. Getting partner to slow down is sometimes difficult. The crossover between making a "constructive," informative bid and a purely tactical or possibly "destructive" bid can be a fine line.

Q: What other auctions are especially difficult to mimic?

A: High level decisions can be very tricky. Do I compete to the 5 level? When should I double? No one always make the right decision in those situations. Experts are more consistently correct than non-experts. This is another place where I believe computer programs tend to struggle.

Q: What about breaking the rules?

A: First, experts know all the rules that apply to their bidding system. In an expert partnership, both players know exactly what a given bid is intended to convey. They also have a deep understanding of what other bids might have been available, and how to interpret the auction while considering all the bids that were *not* chosen. Second, experts know when and how to break the rules when they deem it necessary.

Computer programs are not good at this. Some bidding situations are ambiguous, and ambiguity is always difficult to deal with.

In real life, I have, on occasion, put down the dummy while mumbling that I hope partner can take a joke after I have made a questionable or "imaginative" bid or two. With a computer partner, there is good news and bad news in this situation. The bad news is that, no, a computer partner cannot take a joke. The good news is that they Do Not Care. Do it again on the next hand, and they won't think any less of you, or tell you to find a new partner.

Finally, if you "break the rules" by creating a "new" bid on the fly, an expert partner might have the wherewithal to figure out what's going on. At best, a computer partner is likely to struggle.

Q: What about hands where nothing really fits the situation, or stands out as the right bid to make?

A: These situations are difficult for people, and can be even more difficult for a computer program. It is a common theme in bidding competitions to ask a question that does not have a good answer. Here is Problem #1 from "It's Your Call" in the January, 2019 Bridge Bulletin:

IMPs, E/W vulnerable.

	♠ 95
	♥ Q2
	♦ AKJ842
	♣ QT6

West	North	East	South
	1♠	3♥	

What should South bid? The answer favored by 9 out of 15 experts was "Double." Larry Cohen explained: *"Marty Bergen called this a 'thrump' double, with 'thrump' an abbreviation for 3NT – which is what partner should bid with Hearts stopped, even with four spades. Of course, if partner disappoints me as usual and doesn't bid 3NT, I can retreat to diamonds."* Two more experts bid 3NT on their own. The other four experts chose 4♦. No one Passed.

In this auction, holding this hand, Jethro won't consider Double without 4 spades, and won't consider 3NT without a full stopper. Jethro, in fact, chooses Pass as their bid, which no expert did. All I can say is, when bidding works, it works; bidding something will get you to game or slam when it is right. But is bidding something clearly better than Passing? I asked Jethro to generate hands for 20 auctions that started 1♣ – 3♥, while holding the South hand constant. In 14 of those hands, Passing was the only way to get a plus score. Maybe Jethro's criteria for overcalling 3♥ vulnerable at IMPs are more stringent than the experts are used to playing against.

Or maybe this hand is subtly different from other hands where "thrumping" or bidding 3NT is the right action. Case in point:

In the September, 2021 Bridge Bulletin, Mike Lawrence wrote an article he called, "My Personal Headache." Here is the hand from that article:

The similarities to the previous hand are obvious. Mike's advice on this hand was for South to bid 3NT. (Mike is nothing if not consistent – he was one of the 3NT bidders on the other hand.) On this particular layout, 3NT does not fare well, assuming E/W don't tangle up the Hearts. An off-shape negative double would likely have led to 4♠, which works like a charm here. Or perhaps, on another layout, 4♦ would lead to the best spot.

Once again, I asked Jethro to generate 20 hands that fit this auction while holding the South hand constant. In those 20 hands,

- 3NT made: 11 times
- X led to a plus score: 9 times
- 4♦ led to a plus score: 4 times
- Nothing works; 3♥ goes down: 5 times
- No plus scores; 3♥ makes: 1 time

The total is more than 20, because some times multiple actions led to plus scores. E.g., 3NT or X leading to 4♠ both worked.

In any case, Mike's recommendation of 3NT looks like sound advice here. So what's different between these two South hands, and how does that impact the successful action? Looking at the "headache" hands generated, South's JT4 Heart holding makes it less likely that East's Heart suit will run; sometimes the suit is blocked, or East lacks a late entry. Next, compared to the first hand, South's ♠Q85 makes the Spade suit a much more likely source of tricks. South's ♥Q2 on the first hand is likely to be wasted. In fact, Jethro evaluates the "headache" hand to be worth about 1.5 more "working points" than the first hand. On marginal hands, that is a substantial difference. Bridge is full of subtleties.

As for Jethro? I added a line to one of my bidding tables to handle this exact "headache" hand, holding JTx (or better) in Hearts, and 13+ working points. Jethro is a 3NT bidder on this one, but not on the first hand.

Q: Are there others places where Jethro especially struggles compared to humans experts.

A: Sure. Lots of 'em. Any hand where a secondary, or worse, tertiary assumption is justified will likely be difficult to handle.

Here is one from the Fall, 2023, _Table Talk_, the Official Publication of the Southeast Michigan Bridge Association, Julie Arbit, Editor. (Reprinted with permission.)

SOUTH
♠ 874
♥ KT76
♦ AJ2
♣ J84

None vul
MPs

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	1♠	X
2♠	P	P	?

» **How many spades does partner likely have?**

The opponents are advertising a spade fit, implying eight total spades. Accounting for our three, partner likely has two.

» **What are partner's two most likely shapes?**

2=3=3=5 and 2=4=3=4

Partner has at most two spades, has at most four hearts, and shouldn't have 4+ diamonds after opening 1♣ (unless 4=5 or 4=6 in the minors).

» **What action should you take?**

Bid 3♣.

At matchpoints, try to avoid letting the opponents play at the 2-level when neither side is vulnerable (unless you have good reason to think you're beating it). So, you definitely want to act here.

Bidding 3♣ gets us to our club fit if partner is 2=3=3=5; partner will correct to hearts with 2=4=3=4. Making a takeout double isn't unreasonable, but implies a stronger hand and/or shorter spades.

Table Talk

This is excellent advice. Jethro struggles here. North's 1♣ opening bid only advertises 3 clubs, and Jethro will definitely not volunteer to play in what might, in theory, be a six card fit. Figuring out that, on this particular auction, partner almost always has either 5+ clubs, or 4 hearts is a logical leap too far.

But I can get a little closer. On this hand, if I give South a 4th club, so their shape is 3=4=2=4, Jethro will compete to 3♣.

To really have a chance to get this one right, I think it would be necessary to do modeling on the fly during the auction. And that seems like a really big science project I haven't thought much about. (A tiny bit more on that, below.)

Q: What about conventions?

A: Conventions are well and fine, and there are definitely times when a specific convention built to handle a specific situation will make your life easier. But experts are still experts even when playing a very limited number of conventions.

As you will see below, Jethro has a few dozen optional conventions. But it's not really a particular point of emphasis.

Q: Are there other approaches one might try when creating a bidding program?

A: Sure. I won't claim to know a lot about neural networks, but that is one approach I have heard suggested. I do know that neural networks depend upon training data to "teach" themselves how to recognize and respond to certain situations. Where that training data for bidding bridge hands comes from and how it is assessed for "accuracy" would seem to me to be extremely difficult if not impossible. After all, one can look in any bridge magazine and see a bidding contest where experts disagree about the "right" bid to make. Training data would also have to take into account which conventions and treatments are in use, both by you and your opponents.

I'm not sure exactly how GIB (Matthew Ginsberg's bridge playing program, the brain behind the BBO bots) makes bidding decisions, but there is some information here, written by Professor Ginsberg in approximately 1998: https://www.ijcai.org/Proceedings/99-1/Papers/084.pdf

Concluding remarks in that paper include:

"There are a variety of straightforward extensions to GIB that should also improve its performance substantially. Principal among these is the further development of GIB'S (i.e., Meadowlark's) bidding database, and the inclusion of a facility that allows GIB to think on its opponents' time. None of these modifications requires substantial technical innovation; it's simply a matter of doing it. Martel has predicted that GIB will achieve expert levels of performance around 2000, and be stronger than any human player within two or three years after that. The prospects for doing this seem fairly bright."

In retrospect, Ginsberg's conclusion seems overly optimistic. If it was just a matter of "putting in the work" one would think that someone would have done so by now. I am not aware of any bidding program being equally compared, much less favorably compared, to human experts.

Since the "Meadowlark database" is mentioned, here is another article featuring an interview with Rodney A. Ludwig, creator of Meadowlark Bridge: https://greatbridgelinks.com/chatting-with-meadowlark/

I don't know exactly what is meant by "bidding database". Is it, literally, a gazillion different bridge hands used for pattern matching? Or a database of possible bids that might fit a given situation? Or something else? I just don't know.

There is also mention of "Monte Carlo" simulation, which is creating random hands that fit the information gleaned from the auction and using those hands to inform subsequent bidding decisions. Jethro does not do any of that on the fly, but I actually did do some "pre-investigation" outside of Jethro to inform certain decisions. For example, I randomly created 50,000 preempt (2 or 3 level opening) hands and used the data to decide how the preemptor's partner should respond, based on the shape and strength of responder's hand.

Bottom line: I don't think "numbers and rules" is necessarily the best way to go, but it was the only method I could wrap my head around when I started coding, so that's what I did. In any case I think a "numbers and rules" approach is the most intuitive (at least it is to me) and I now have a program that can provide a good benchmark for comparison to other potential solutions.

Another thing that is important to me is that I need to be sure I understand why every decision is made. The evaluation algorithm might not be "correct" (whatever that means) but however a hand is evaluated, I need to be easily able to determine the factors that went into the calculation. I don't want there to be any "magic" involved.

One final observation: Just in case you are wondering, ChatGPT isn't quite ready for bridge bidding contests yet. A friend sent me this email:

> I submitted one of your old questions to ChatGPT and here is the response:
>
> *Playing duplicate bridge You hold: S J92 H AT986 D T7 C AQ6 The opps pass throughout:*
>
> *Partner   You*
> *-----------------*
> *1D   1H*
> *2D   ?*
>
>
> *What do you bid?*
>
> *Here is the answer from ChatGPT:*
>
> *Given your hand, you should bid 2S. This is a constructive bid, telling partner that you have a good hand with 6+ spades and likely more than 8 points.*

I am impressed that ChatGPT correctly recognized this as a bridge bidding question. And the answer is certainly positively asserted. But very, very, wrong. No. Just no.

Q: Will Jethro win bidding contests, like the ones they have in The Bridge World or the ACBL Bulletin?

A: Highly unlikely. Bidding contests seem to invariably ask experts to pick a bid in a situation where there is no good answer. In other words, where rules don't apply, or aren't helpful. Sometimes it seems as though the experts' suggested action is always either a nebulous cue bid or double, expecting partner to successfully field anything you throw at them.   Jethro will take a stab at every problem, and the result won't be random, but The Master Solver's Club is unlikely to be threatened. To further quote Matthew Ginsberg in the article referenced above: "*When faced with a situation that it does not understand, GIB's bidding deteriorates drastically.*" I think that is likely to be true for most if not all bidding programs.

Q: Are there bugs in the code?

A: Yep. Certainly. Anyone who tells you they write bug free code is qualified for membership in the George Santos Club. The program will flag obvious errors, like passing a forcing bid, or making an insufficient bid, or doubling a doubled contract. When that occurs I take a look and fix whatever it was that caused the problem.

There are still some occasional auctions that slipped through the cracks and go completely off the rails. Those are definite failures of the Turing test. I hate it when that happens….

On the bright side, Jethro has never caused my operating system to crash. But I won't say it is impossible.

Q: Does Jethro cheat?

A: No. Where is the fun in that? What would be the point? Every decision Jethro makes is based on the same information that would be available to a person sitting at the table holding those cards, with full knowledge of the bidding systems used by both pairs. Having said that, there is one situation I am aware of which can be difficult to diagnose and replicate. There are sometimes multiple pathways that might result in the same bid being made with different holdings. When that might occur, it seems to me it is not impossible that different information might be advertised, depending on which path was taken. That is wrong. Whatever bid is made, the same information should be advertised for the same bid. This is akin to "unauthorized information." If and when I come across such situations I fix them.

Q: What bidding conventions are available?

A: I have included options for most of the conventions I play with my regular partners, and a few more, too. Adding new conventions is not high on my "to do" list. Feel free to ask for additional conventions, but don't hold your breath.

Here is the current "Convention Card" screen, along with the Jethro's default choices:

General Style	No Trump Openers and Responses			Defensive Bidding		
○ Aggressive	1NT 15 - 17	☑ 5 Card Major Common	☑ Jacoby Transfers	Simple Overcalls	NT Overcalls	Defense vs. NT
⦿ Middle of the Road	2NT 20 - 21	☑ Singleton AKQ Ok	☑ Texas Transfers	One Level 7 - 17	Direct 15 - 18 ☑ Sys. On	○ Natural
○ Conservative	☑ Systems on over 2♣|X	☑ Smolen / 1NT (only)	☑ 3NT Gambling	☑ Preemptive Jump Overcall	Balancing 11 - 14 ☐ Sys. On	○ DONT
	☑ 3♣ Puppet Over 1NT	☑ Lebensohl	☑ No Outside Stopper	☑ Preemptive Jump Raise	Jump to 2NT for Two Lowest ☑	⦿ Meckwell
	☑ 3♣ Puppet Over 2NT	(fast denies)		☐ Michaels Weak/Strong		○ Capelletti
				☑ Leaping Michaels	Doubles	
	2♠ / 2NT over 1NT	3♠ / 3NT over 2NT	Double of Opp. Bid	New Suit by Advancer	Takeout Through 4♠	
	⦿ Four Suit Transfers	⦿ Transfer to 3NT	○ Penalty (Always)	○ Not Forcing	Lebensohl 2NT Response ☑	
	○ Minor Suit Stayman	○ Minor Suit Stayman	○ Neg. @ 3 Level	○ Forcing	Responsive Through 3♠	
	○ 2NT Natural	○ Idle (3NT Natural)	⦿ Neg. @ 2 or 3 Level	⦿ Forcing by Unpassed Hand	Negative Through 4♥	

Major Openers (see notes)		Minor Openers (see notes)	Opening 2 Bids	Other Conventions
1M - 3?	Follow up	1m - 2m	☑ Simple Kokish over 2♣	4th Suit Forcing
○ Natural	○ Natural	○ Natural	☐ Flannery 2♦	○ One Round
○ 3m = Strong JS	⦿ NMF	○ JS other m = Strong JS	2NT over Weak 2s	⦿ To Game
⦿ 3m = Inv. (6+)	○ 2 Way NMF	⦿ JS other m = Forcing Raise	⦿ Feature	☑ Spiral
⦿ Bergen	○ XYZ	⦿ Inverted; JS other m = Const. Raise	○ Ogust	☑ Unusual / Unusual
				☑ Leb. over Reverses
Over Opponents Takeout Double		1m - 2M	Slam Conventions	☑ Western Cue Bids
⦿ Standard ○ BROMAD		⦿ Weak ○ Strong ○ Rev. Flannery	Blackwood	☑ Wolff Signoff
		1m - 2 / 3 NT	○ Standard	☑ Support X/XX (2♥)
☑ Two Way Reverse Drury		⦿ 11-12 / 13-15 ○ 13-15 / 16-18	○ 0314	
☐ Namyats			⦿ 1430	
		☑ Frequently Bypass 4♦	☑ 5NT for Specific Kings	

And here are the included "Bidding Notes." There are undoubtedly many situations not explicitly mentioned. In those cases I tried to program what I think are "standard" bidding sequences. And, no, my definition of "standard" might not match yours.

At last count there were 200+ different kinds of bids made and responded to by Jethro, ranging from the mundane, e.g., "Natural and Constructive" to the somewhat more esoteric "Do Something Intelligent" double.

Q: What ideas do you have about deciding if a program (or, really, any partnership) is bidding well? What makes a world class bidder?

A: As alluded to above, one of the pie in the sky ideas I had in the back of my head when I started this project was to create a world class bidding program. (Why not aim high? And, no, for the record, I do not believe Jethro is remotely close to that level, however a "world class bidder" might be defined.)

But then I started wondering, what metrics could one use to measure the efficacy of a bidding program? There are some things that are objectively easy to tabulate, when looking at all 52 cards: How the HCPs are distributed, what fit (or lack thereof) might exist, etc. The Double Dummy Solver gives an objective measure of how many tricks can be taken by each hand. These elements could be combined into a table(s) showing the probability, for example, of taking 10 tricks in a spade contract where the partnership has a total of 8 spades and 23 high card points. Above a certain threshold, you want to be bidding that game. Does the program get there?

There are, needless to say, a nearly unlimited number of permutations one might pursue in "scoring" a bidding program along the lines suggested above. What about defensive bidding? What about sacrifices? Competing for part scores? Slam bidding? Etc., etc. I am under no illusions that it would be easy to assign appropriate "scores" to all the potential actions. But the idea intrigues me; I'm all ears if anyone wants to discuss something further in this area.

What I do know is that it would be absolutely great to have a library, of say, 100,000 deals to use for testing a bidding program. (Creating hands for testing is not a problem.) Run the deals through the program and get a total "score." Make some changes to the bidding program, run the same deals through again and get a new score for comparison. If the score is higher, keep the changes. One serious concern is that the scoring would influence the programming so that the program was geared toward getting a good score – kind of like "teaching to the test" – not necessarily bidding well.

One of problems I am now experiencing is making a change to the program to handle a problem hand (it often *appears* to be obvious what the change should be) only to discover some days or weeks later that the change I made creates a new problem elsewhere, often in a place that previously worked just fine. I hate playing whack-a-mole with fixes. Having a test suite would be hugely helpful.

Q: Can I use Jethro to practice my own bidding?

A: Yes. But it wasn't easy to get there. I made a serious mistake when I began programming. I will explain below.

I picked on the BBO bots a little bit above, but they really do provide some nice features. One of the very best things about the BBO bots is that they provide instant feedback about potential bids you might make. When the BBO bot is your partner, and it is your turn to bid, you can mouse-over the bids in the bidding box, and see how your bot partner will interpret any bid you might be considering.

I don't know how GIB solved this problem. Is there really a database of thousands of bidding sequences, and a table of possible bids in each sequence? That would be one way to do it. Since GIB plays only GIB's system, and GIB's conventions are all baked in, it might be doable. Once one starts adding optional conventions the problem scales up very quickly. If anyone knows the answer to the question of how GIB solved this problem, I would very much like to know.

In any event, I have some advice for anyone thinking about writing their own bidding program. For every bid to be made, I started from the premise, "Here is my hand. Taking in all of the previous information gleaned from the auction, and our partnership agreements, what bid should I make in the current situation?" This is not the approach I would take if I were starting

today. The right question is not, "What bid should I make?" but rather, "For all possible current legal bids, what would each of those bids show in the current context?" If you can answer that question, then you can answer the question of how any bid will be interpreted by everyone else at the table. It's ok for the answer to be ambiguous, i.e., "This bid might show (a) or (b) or (c)."

But, sad to say, that's not how I programmed Jethro. I did not build in any way of keeping track of the possible bids that were *not* made, and what those bids would advertise. When Jethro makes a bid, strength and shape information is advertised to the table by the program. This is public information, based on the bidding system and conventions/treatments you are playing, so it is available to everyone. Think of it as kind of like a "self-alert" for every single bid. Since Jethro's partner (also Jethro) knows, in intimate detail, what bidding system the partnership is playing, there is no unauthorized information. But programmatically, it only occurs because the bidder published it.

If, however, I was playing as Jethro's partner, and I made a bid, Jethro had no capacity to interpret my strength/shape on its own, since I was not explicitly advertising anything. Similarly, if a bid was made by an external agent, either a person or a different computer program, Jethro was in the dark. Solving this problem for any particular bid that might be made by not-Jethro is really just the one special case of solving for all possible bids that might be made, i.e., that mouse-over information mentioned above.   Unfortunately, there was no way, given how I had written the program to keep track of what bids were possible, but *not* made, and what those alternate bids might have advertised.

Since, at some point it became clear that I would very much like to be able to use Jethro as a partner for practice bidding, or possibly to compete against other people or programs, I had to do some serious retro-fitting. I embarked on a path that I consider somewhere between insane and semi-brilliant. Before every single bid is made, I play a "what if" game. What if I held this hand, or this hand, or … any of ~7000+ test hands of various shapes/strengths. What bid would I make? So, literally, before any bid is made I run every hand in my universe of "test hands" through the bidding algorithm to see what bid would be made with each of those hands. I keep track of all the different possible bids made. I now know, for example, a 3♣ bid at a particular point of the auction means <something> and a 3♠ bid means <something else>. This exercise had the side effect of exposing a **lot** of bugs; there were plenty of times when I wanted to make the same bid but advertise slightly different hands. That shouldn't happen.

The good news is that I can now interpret bids that are made by not-Jethro. The not-so-good news is that I have to assume every bid has the same meaning as if Jethro made it. Since Jethro will not make every legal bid in every situation, there are times when a bid might be made that Jethro does not have an interpretation for. Hopefully those circumstances are rare. But when they occur, I make my best guess based on the current situation and move on.

There are some other ramifications of these assumptions. Jethro plays 2/1 GF with 5 card majors and strong (15-17) NT openers, which is what passes for "Standard American" these days. The "Convention Card" allows a lot of different options and treatments on top of that basic system. Every bid that is made, whether by a robot or a person is interpreted in that context. After every bid, information is advertised to the table about the hand that just bid. That information is everything that is publicly available to all players: shape, strength, forcing/non-forcing, what kind-of-bid, stoppers (where applicable), keycards, etc. Robot opponents also have a "convention card," which, of course, can be configured however one wants. This is how the program knows, for example, what a 2♦ overcall of our 1NT opening means.

If you want to practice some other system, say Precision or a Canape style, it just isn't going to work. A 1♣ opener, for example, means what it means to Jethro, and that is that. Anything else would require changes to the convention card, and (likely) significant additional work. Adding weak NT is on my to-do list, but I haven't gotten around to it; I confess I don't feel like I have a good enough grasp on the whole weak NT system to be confident programming it.

If you want to practice *against* some other system, that is possibly doable, but would require extra work that I haven't really contemplated. It would have to go something like this: A bid is made by an external agent, either a person or a different program. An extra step would be required, where the external agent would have to explicitly advertise the shape/strength/etc. information the program is entitled to know about.

I don't know how this situation is handled by computer opponents in a computer bridge tournament, but it seems something along those lines would be necessary. Either the conventions/treatments allowed would have to be proscribed, or there would have to be a mechanism to relay that information. Requiring all programs to know about all other programs' possible foibles would be impossible, or so it seems to me.

Here is a screenshot showing how you might set up to bid as South, with the other hands hidden. When it is your turn to bid, a "bidding box" pops up:

Board 17
Dlr: North
Vul: None

North

West   **East**

♠ Q862
♥ Q972
♦ KT7
♣ A8

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	

1) East: Passed Hand
    Pass Not Forcing
    WP ≤19.5
1) South: Responder
    1♥ Natural Response Forcing
    WP ≥4
    ♥≥4
2) West: Passed Hand
    Pass Not Forcing
    WP ≤19.5
2) North: Opener
    2♥ Natural and Descriptive Not Forcing
    WP 12.7-18.7
    ♥≥4 ♠≥3
2) East: Passed Hand
    Pass Not Forcing
    WP ≤19.5

	North	East	South	West
Hand			Q862 Q972 KT7 A8	
	☐Lock ☑Hide	☐Lock ☑Hide	☐Lock ☐Hide	☐Lock ☑Hide
Shape Requested	????	????	????	????
HCP Requested	0 - 37	0 - 37	0 - 37	0 - 37
First Bid Requested	?	?	?	?
	☐Use Bidding Box	☐Use Bidding Box	☑Use Bidding Box	☐Use Bidding Box

Stats

Clicking on "Show Hint" tells you what Jethro would bid in this situation:

Checking the "Show Interpretation of All Bids" box tells you how every bid you might make will be interpreted by Jethro. Every legal bid will be listed, even the bids that Jethro would not consider in the current situation. If you choose a bid Jethro would never make, a warning box pops up, and Jethro will make a guess as to how to interpret your bid.

1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠	1NT	☑ Show Interpretation of All Bids

2♣	2♦	2♥	2♠	2NT	Pass Not Forcing
					              WP 4-11
					              ♥≥4

3♣	3♦	3♥	3♠	3NT	2♠ Game Try Forcing
					              WP ≥10.1
					              ♥≥4

4♣	4♦	4♥	4♠	4NT	2NT Spiral Asking Bid Forcing
					              WP ≥11
					              ♥≥4

5♣	5♦	5♥	5♠	5NT	3♣ Game Try Forcing
					              WP ≥10.1
					              ♥≥4

6♣	6♦	6♥	6♠	6NT	3♦ Game Try Forcing
					              WP ≥10.1
					              ♥≥4

7♣	7♦	7♥	7♠	7NT	4♥ Natural and Descriptive Not Forcing
					              WP 12.1-19.6
					              ♥≥4

Pass			X		
Show Hint			OK		
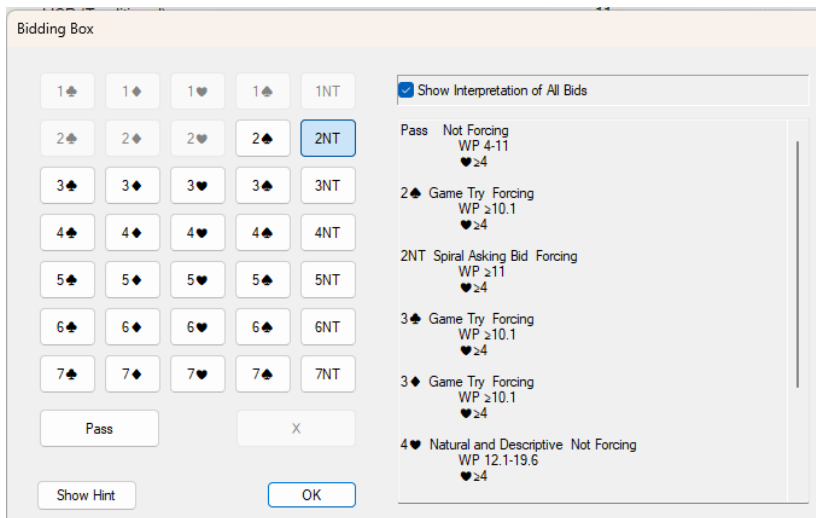
Q: How else might I use the program?

A: I use Jethro regularly to help me decide if a bid I made when playing with friends was reasonable or ill advised. There are tools built in that make it easy to ask for hands of specific strength and shape. If that isn't enough, you can also ask for hands where specific bids were made.

For example, here is a hand that came up recently, and led to a lengthy discussion. You are South, and it is your bid:

♠ 9
♥ KQ3
♦ T74
♣ AJT542

West	North	East	South
	1♠	2♦	

You might bid 3♣, you might Pass, you might even make an off-shape negative double. If you pass and partner reopens with a double you will have another decision to make; if partner does not reopen, you might wish they had done so. It's not clear at all how any of those actions might eventually work out. It is possible that defending 2♦ is your last chance for a plus score. Or it could be a disaster.

Jethro may be able to help. Lock in the South hand to this specific holding, then ask for hands with auctions that start 1♠ - 2♦ - ? It only takes a few seconds to generate each hand. After you've looked at 15 or 20 hands with this auction, and having seen the Double Dummy analysis, you will likely have a better sense of the possibilities.

Q: What about creating test hands?

A: A useful feature is the ability to save hands to a file. There are a lot of options for getting exactly the hands you want, based on shape, strength, and other parameters. Hands can be saved to a human readable file, from which they can be printed, and in .PBN notation (a kind of de-facto standard for documenting bridge hands.)

Q: How might Jethro's bidding be improved?

A: New rules can be introduced to deal with those situations that have slipped through the cracks. This is tedious, but often necessary. One of the things that makes bridge infinitely challenging is the fact that special cases abound. Programmers don't like special cases; we prefer generalized algorithms that magically handle all possible inputs. Bridge bidding is very uncooperative in this regard. Bridge bidding is extremely context dependent. There will always be room for new rules to handle specialized situations. In that regard, the programming will never be "done."

And about all those numbers mentioned above. There are literally hundreds of numbers baked into the code. From initial hand evaluation, to dynamic hand evaluation as the auction proceeds, to the threshold values that used to decide if/how much to bid, and lots of other places, there are numbers everywhere. Are those numbers "correct?" Certainly not. They are a bunch of best guesses, based on Double Dummy analysis and my experience. As I said at the top, my initial goal was "plausibility." Plausible and optimal may not live in the same zip code.

How might those numbers be improved? I created another program which allows me to run bridge matches of Jethro vs. Jethro. One of the Jethro partnerships get a slightly altered version of the software. Maybe a bit different on some of the rules and some of the numbers. Run a 1000 board match; it's a computer so it won't take that long. Compare the results. Keep the winning code as the new baseline, and try again.

If I am really, really clever – and I admittedly do not know how realistic this is – I will be able to automate the process so that some of the numbers are changed randomly without requiring manual intervention. I have read just enough about "Genetic Algorithms" to be foolishly and optimistically over-confident. See https://www.britannica.com/technology/genetic-algorithm for a (very brief) overview of this topic if you are interested.

Q: Can I practice my bidding by playing with/against Jethro?

A: Yes. In the "Jethro vs. Jethro" program mentioned above, you can set up a bridge match where you bid as one or more of the players. Then the same hand is bid at a table populated entirely by "Jethros." A comparison is made, just as if you were playing a team game. If you

want to try the same hand again, and bid it differently, or try out different conventions (either yours or your opponents) that's easy to do.

Here is a screen shot from that program, showing a hand where I bid the South hand at Table 1. On Board 7 my bidding differed from Jethro's, resulting in a 9 IMP gain for me. On the other hands the bidding was identical, so the results were also identical.

Results are calculated using the Double Dummy analyzer, assuming perfect play by both the declarer and the defenders; if the hands were actually played out, there would undoubtedly be many more disparate results.

R Jethro's Bridge Match   Version 240103   Copyright 2024, Bob Rasmussen All Rights Reserved

Deal Options

Repeat!   Deal   ☐ Auto Deal   Setup Challenge

☑ Auto Bid   Bid   # Boards 100

Get Deals From PBN File

Save to PBN File

Save to TXT File

Dealer: ○ North ○ East ○ South ○ West
Vul.: ○ None ○ N/S ○ E/W ○ Both
☑ Cycle Dealer and Vul.

Board 7
Dlr: South
Vul: Both

Hands

	North	East	South	West
Hand			AK A76 942 T8652	
	☐ Lock ☑ Hide	☐ Lock ☑ Hide	☐ Lock ☐ Hide	☐ Lock ☑ Hide
Shape Requested	????	????	????	????
HCP Requested	0 - 37	0 - 37	0 - 37	0 - 37

Table 1
N/S Convention Card
E/W Convention Card
Use Bidding Box
☐ N ☐ E ☑ S ☐ W

West	North	East	South
			1♠
1♦	1♥	1NT	X
Pass	Pass	Pass	

HCP 6.0-13.9 WP 6.3-14.5
♠ Stopper ♥ Stopper
2) South: Opener
X Support Double Forcing
WP 12.7-21.5
♥=3 ♠≥3
3) West: Overcaller
Pass Not Forcing
HCP 9.0-16.4 WP 9.8-16.4
♦≥5
3) North: Responder
Pass Penalty Pass Conversion Not
WP ≥8.2
♥≥4
3) East: Advancer
Pass Not Forcing
HCP 6.0-13.9 WP 6.3-14.5
♠ Stopper ♥ Stopper

Table 2
N/S Convention Card
E/W Convention Card
Use Bidding Box
☐ N ☐ E ☐ S ☐ W

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

♠≥4
2) East: Passed Hand
Pass Not Forcing
WP ≤19.5
2) South: Passed Hand Responder
2NT Natural NT Not Forcing
HCP 11-13 WP 11.8-12.7
♠2-3 ♥2-3 ♦2-4 ♣2-5
3) West: Passed Hand
Pass Not Forcing
WP ≤12.7
3) North: Opener
Pass Not Forcing
WP 12.7-21.5
♦≥4
3) East: Passed Hand
Pass Not Forcing
WP ≤19.2

Results

Team A is Table 1 N/S and Table 2 E/W
Team B is Table 1 E/W and Table 2 N/S

Scoring
☐ Hide Identical Results   ○ IMPs ○ BAM   ☑ Report Repeats

Board#	Table 1		Team A	Team B	Table 2	
1	4♠ W +1	+450	—	—	4♠ W +1	+450
2	4♠ S +1	+650	—	—	4♠ S +1	+650
3	6♥ W =	+1430	—	—	6♥ W =	+1430
4	3♥ E -1	-100	—	—	3♥ E -1	-100
5	3NT N -1	-100	—	—	3NT N -1	-100
6	4♥ N +1	+450	—	—	4♥ N +1	+450
7	1NTX E -2	-500	9		2NT S =	+120

Totals: 9   0   Clear

Board 7 hand diagram:
♠ J43 ♥ KQ93 ♦ KJT8 ♣ K7
♠ QT65 ♥ 85 ♦ AQ763 ♣ J4
♠ 9872 ♥ JT42 ♦ 5 ♣ AQ93
♠ AK ♥ A76 ♦ 942 ♣ T8652

Double Dummy Analysis

	W	N	E	S
NT	5	8	5	8
♠	7	6	7	6
♥	5	8	5	8
♦	5	8	5	8
♣	5	8	5	8

☑ Calculate Double Dummy
☑ Hide Double Dummy

Double Dummy Solver thanks to Bo Haglund and Soren Hein. See http://privat.bahnhof.se/wb758135/index.html

Q: What about declaring or defending?

A: Not on my radar at this time. That is a very different problem. Maybe someday I will take a stab at it, but apart from "create random hands that fit the auction and use the Double Dummy solver" I haven't really thought about it.

Q: What platform(s) does it run on, and can it be ported to different platform(s)?

A: Well. About that. It's a problem.

Jethro is a Windows 11 program. It might or might not work on Apple or Linux systems with Windows emulators; I've heard mixed messages about that. There is no web based version.

Jethro's GUI (Graphical User Interface, the part of the program you directly interact with) is written using Microsoft Foundation Classes (MFC). This is 20+ year old technology that I taught myself back in the day. It is now obsolete, but, fortunately for me, the programming tools still support it, at least for now. None of the clients I had in my 30+ years of running a one-man programming shop called on me to create web interfaces for anything, and I never bothered to teach myself. And, to be bluntly honest, I have no interest in doing so.

Geek alert: Feel free to skip the next part.

The bridge-y part of Jethro is written in straight C++ code. I expect it could be easily ported anywhere with a C++ compiler. There is nothing particularly tricky going on.

MFC is all C++. There is a very thin interface between MFC's C++ GUI code and Jethro's C++ code.

The point is that if someone was interested in putting a different front end on to Jethro, be it web based, or other platform based, I think it would be non-trivial, but relatively straightforward. If this idea piques your interest, and you have the requisite expertise, please contact me.

Q: How much does it cost, and can I get a copy?

A: I am not trying to make any money. Jethro is free for the asking. Send me email at JethroTBW@gmail.com and I will send you the latest version.

Q: Is there a way for other people to help?

A: Sure. Ask for your own copy of Jethro and try it out. I'm sure there are plenty of situations that have slipped through the cracks. Let me know when you find them.

If any of the ideas or thoughts above spark some interest, let me know. I have been working more or less in a silo of my own for a good long time. I am at a point now where it would be extremely useful to have broader discussions than the ones occurring between my own ears.

You are encouraged to send this Q&A document to anyone and everyone you think might be interested.

If it was not clear from the above, I do not have a personal website, or a place where the program could be downloaded from. If you do, and would be willing to be a host site for Jethro downloads, I would be honored.

Q: Are you going to release the source code?

A: Not at this time. Maybe someday. One of my primary reasons for not releasing it is because I have no desire to write up the documentation that would be necessary to let others successfully make changes and additions. There is a lot going on. Having spent several professional decades looking at and modifying/fixing code that I did not write, I can pretty confidently say it would not be easy for someone else to dive into the Jethro code. Not impossible, but there would be a distinct and steep learning curve.

Having said that, I do think there are plenty of opportunities for others to contribute to the various algorithms. Here is one specific case in point:

There is a software function called "`WeExpectToBeatOppContract.`" Before a penalty double is made, or partner's "Do Something Intelligent" double is converted to a penalty double, this function is called to see if Jethro thinks the double will be successful. If not, a penalty double will usually be eschewed. There are a lot of factors considered inside this function. I am confident the function could be made better. Obviously you don't want the opponents outbidding you and stealing you blind. Just as obviously, no one enjoys writing -530 or -790 on their scorecard.

Here are the factors currently considered by the algorithm in this function. Jethro puts 'em all together somehow and calculates a number representing the number of tricks you expect to beat the current contract.

- The current contract
- Your hand
- Partner's advertised shape, including "Did they advertise a two-suiter?" or "Did they advertise a single-suited hand?"
- Partner's advertised strength
- Did partner make a preemptive bid?
- Both opponents' advertised shape, including "Did they advertise a two-suiter?" or "Did they advertise a single-suited hand?"
- Both opponents' advertised strength
- Did an opponent make a preemptive bid?
- Did our side previously make a penalty oriented double?
- Did the opponents have a game forcing auction, or did they get to game without one?
- Was partner's last bid a "Do Something Intelligent" double, or some other kind of ambiguous strength showing bid?
- Is partner a passed hand?
- Have the opponents advertised an 8+ card fit in their suit?
- Do we have an 8+ card fit anywhere?

- What was the contract, and who was the declarer, before and after partner's most recent bid?
- Did the opponents take us out of game, or were we in a game forcing auction when they outbid us?

 If you want other information about the auction, it is probably easy to get.

The question is, "Can you do better than Jethro?" I would love to see what other people come up with. The software tools I created make it easy to try out new algorithms and compare them to the existing code.

This is just one of many, many places where new ideas could be tried and tested.

Q: Future plans?

I think I've got enough to keep me busy for the foreseeable future. And who knows what else might pop up. I'm not holding my breath waiting for BBO or anyone else to contact me about making Jethro available (for free, of course) in some bridge related product, but one never knows.

Q: And finally: why did you name your program "Jethro"?

A: Very early in the development, when I was working on opening bids, I was having trouble with a specific problem. It goes something like this. You pick up a hand that you think of as an obvious 3♥ opener, say,

♠ 86
♥ AQT9854
♦ 9
♣ QT4
.

If the hand was a bit better, you would have opened it 1♥ instead, perhaps with,

♠ K6
♥ AQT9854
♦ 9
♣ KT4
.

The point is that somewhere in between, you have to decide if a hand is a preempt, a one level opener, or in some very few cases, neither a preempt nor an opener. When I was talking to a friend I referred to this as the Jethro Tull problem, because it made me think of their song, <u>Too Old To Rock 'N' Roll, Too Young To Die</u>. The next time I was talking to my friend, he asked, "How is Jethro doing?" and the name stuck.

For the record, I went searching for hands that Jethro put in this category: too good to preempt, not good enough to open. Here are a few I found:

♠ Q3
♥ 85
♦ QJ95432
♣ AJ

♠ A
♥ JT98653
♦ K96
♣ Q3

♠ KQ
♥ T76
♦ 3
♣ AT76543

♠ QJT6432
♥ A53
♦ Q7
♣ 4
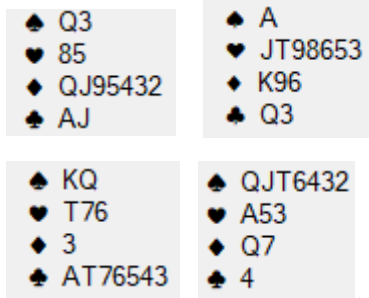
To which I say, "Ok, I'm not 100% sure that's what I would have done, but I think it's plausible."

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠