

# WORLD CLASS

21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



## B R I D G E S T A R S

USA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

**MARC SMITH**

FOREWORD by LARRY COHEN

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# *Foreword*

Thousands of bridge books have been written. Indeed, I have made a small contribution to that questionable use of the rain forests myself. Most concentrate on the mechanics of the game. Victor Mollo first came up with the idea of a book about the game's greatest players when he published *The Bridge Immortals* in 1967. Alan Truscott, Pierre Jais and José Le Dentu followed with *L'Aristocratie du Bridge* (*The Bridge Aristocracy*).

The next book in this genre was Marc Smith's *World Class*, published in 1999, when I was honored to be included in the 25 players and writers whose bridge lives were laid bare for the reader. Not only were we asked about our favorite bridge memories and our most memorable deals, but also for a disaster that haunts us too. After all, which reader doesn't enjoy seeing that experts are as capable as anyone of making a total mess of a hand?

A quarter of a century on, Marc has returned to the well with a new edition. This time there are two volumes, inviting us into the bridge lives of 30 of the world's most amazing players. Volume 1 features Europe's best, while this volume dissects the lives of stars from the USA and the rest of the world.

Those included are all amongst the very best the 21st-Century game has to offer. Who can doubt that Chip Martel and Kerri Sanborn from the USA and Brazilian ace Marcelo Branco deserve the accolade of 'All-Time Greats'? Also included are many of today's top players, both male and female, plus a few of the very brightest up-and-coming proteges. The section in which I appeared in 1999, 'Great Writers', this time includes my former partner Marty Bergen who, in addition to being one of the great theorists the game has known, was also a fine player in his own right.

Readers will find the experiences of these great players both interesting and enlightening, and there is humor in their stories too. In addition, the book contains many deals that demonstrate what makes these players *World Class*.

I am sure that everyone featured in this new edition will be as proud to be included in such an elite group as I was 25 years ago.

Larry Cohen

# Acknowledgements

## Author's Note:

I have to thank three people who have corrected my typos and other errors during the production of these volumes. David Bird, Barbara Giesbrecht and Bill Lide have all done a masterful job. Thanks for both your help and inspiration. My thanks particularly to Babs, without whom these volumes would not exist – she began encouraging me 3-4 years ago to write an updated version of the original. She also helped greatly with many of the interviews. Finally, thanks to a couple of stars from the original *World Class*, Andrew Robson and Larry Cohen, for the kind words they added in their Forewords to these volumes.

In the 25 years since the original *World Class*, the bridge world has lost a couple of those stars featured. It is with great sadness that we have lost one of the stars of this volume before it was even published. Eric Kokish passed away just a few weeks after we had finished going back and forth to make sure that he approved of his chapter in this book. He will be greatly missed by the bridge world and all who knew him. RIP, my friend.

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# Contents

Foreword by Larry COHEN	3
Acknowledgements and Photo Credits	4
Introduction	6

## Section 1: ALL-TIME GREATS

Marcelo BRANCO	(Brazil)	9
Chip MARTEL	(U.S.A.)	25
Kerri SANBORN	(U.S.A.)	49

## Section 2: STARS OF TODAY – MEN

Bobby LEVIN	(U.S.A.)	71
Michael ROSENBERG	(U.S.A.)	89
Joey SILVER	(Canada)	110
Miguel VILLAS-BOAS	(Brazil)	133

## Section 3: STARS OF TODAY – WOMEN

Irina LEVITINA	(U.S.A.)	147
Jill MEYERS	(U.S.A.)	170
Wenfei WANG	(China)	194

## Section 4 : RISING STARS

Renee COOPER	(Australia)	209
Jacob FREEMAN	(Canada)	225
Adam KAPLAN	(U.S.A.)	239

## Section 5 : GREAT WRITERS

Marty BERGEN	(U.S.A.)	261
Eric KOKISH	(Canada)	276

<i>Index of Players</i>	300
-------------------------	-----

# *Introduction*

Who are the people behind the names that you read about in your bridge magazine or watch in major events on internet VuGraph sites? What does it feel like to lose a World Championship final? Which partners or authors influenced their style? Who was the most interesting person they played with or against? How do they see the future of the game?

Published in 1999, the original *World Class: Conversations with the Bridge Masters* is unquestionably my favorite of all the books I have written on the game. It brought to life many of the great players of that era, with 25 subjects divided into five categories: All-Time Greats, Stars of Today, Women Stars, Rising Stars and Great Writers.

When selecting the subjects, my intention was to choose a representative group of players who could provide an insight into bridge at the top from many perspectives, rather than picking a definitive list of the world's best 25 players. Having said that, many of those who were included would have been in everyone's 'Top 25'. I also aimed to be as international as possible, and 13 countries were represented.

25 years have passed since the first book, and many new players have come to the fore. *World Class: The 21st Century* is published in two volumes so that I can include 30 titans of the game. Volume 1 features players from nine European countries. Volume 2 includes those from the USA and the rest of the world, adding representatives from five more countries, giving us 14 nationalities this time. It is also refreshing to note that more than half of the young players featured in the 'Rising Stars' section are women. (25 years ago, none were.)

Such is the quality of players featured here that many of those in the 'Stars of Today' sections, men or women, could equally have been placed in with the 'All-Time Greats'. One thing is certain — every one of those appearing in this book can truly claim to be 'World Class'...

I'll finish with the same statement I made a quarter of a century ago. The author and publisher wish to thank every one of the subjects who appear within these pages. Most of the interviews were extensive, and we are grateful to them for the time and effort they put in. I hope that they will show their friends and family this book sometime in the future and tell them proudly, "See, I really was one of the best..."

Marc Smith. 2024

*Section One*

*All-Time Greats*





# *Marcelo Branco (Brazil)*



## **SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS**

**1965-1971**

**Adelstano 'Adel' Porto D'ave Filho**

**1972-1977**

**Pedro Branco**

**1976**

**Sergio Barbosa**

**1978-1985**

**Gabino Cintra**

**1988-**

**Gabriel Chagas**

**2006-**

**Diego Brenner**

## **BORN**

August 30, 1945    Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

## **CURRENT HOME**

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

## **PROFESSION**

Degree in Civil Engineering  
Postgraduate degree in Systems (IT)  
Retired since 2016

*A legend of Brazilian and world bridge, Marcelo Branco is one of only ten players to have won the 'Triple Crown' (Bermuda Bowl, World Team Olympiad and World Open Pairs) and the only player to have won the World Open Pairs twice.*

*Since playing in his first Bermuda Bowl in 1969, Marcelo has represented his country in the world's most prestigious event an amazing 18 times. He has collected medals of all three colors, winning gold in 1989 in Perth, silver in 2000, and bronze in both 1973 and 1974.*

*In the other major international team events, he won the Olympiad in 1976 and has twice lost in the final of the World Knockout Teams (the Rosenblum Cup), in 1978 and 1998.*

*The World Open Pairs is only staged every four years, but Marcelo has reached the final six times. He won the title in 1978 playing with Gabino Cintra and in 1990 in partnership with Gabriel Chagas.*

*More than a decade after playing his last Bermuda Bowl, Marcelo is still ranked in the Top 100 (#88) in the WBF list of World Grand Masters. Chagas is the only other South American player on that list.*

*Nearly 25 years ago, Gabriel Chagas was one of the stars featured in the original World Class. Gabriel, whom I am honored to call a friend, also wrote the Foreword for that book. I am now delighted to welcome Marcelo, the other half of Brazil's greatest ever partnership, as one of the 'All-Time Greats' in this second edition.*

*I hope readers will enjoy the insights and memories of someone who has played at the highest level for more than half a century.*

## **In the Beginning**

At my parents' house, we played several card games. Canasta, King and Oh Hell! were our favorites.

Gabino Cintra, my cousin, was a frequent visitor. After spending a weekend at the house of friends who played bridge, he brought along a rudimentary workbook with the rules of the game and basic auction principles. It was 1963 and I was 17 years old. That was my first contact with the game that would dominate the next 50 years of my life.

It was not long before we started going to the local bridge club, which was just a few blocks from my parents' house. Soon we were playing tournaments (all matchpoints in those days). The first two I played with

my brother Pedro – in the first we only got 36%, but in the second we scored a little over 50%. In my third tournament, I played with my brother-in-law Emilio (also a beginner) and, to everyone's surprise, including mine, we won with a score of 61%. I was hooked.

Gabriel Chagas and Christiano Fonseca started to play in the same club, and it did not take us long to combine to contest the team championships. We became the “terrible boys” of the club, sometimes getting good results, but often experiencing huge disasters, like any beginners.

We had classes with Pinheiro Machado, better known as Pinheirinho. A genius, ahead of his time, he taught us both basic and advanced card play techniques, including squeezes (a subject on which he authored an excellent book).

It was not long before I was invited to play as the partner of one of the best and most experienced players at the club, Adelstano Porto D’ave Filho, better known simply as ‘Adel’. He was a brilliant, intuitive player and I learned so much about the hidden side of the game from him. It was from Adel that I first understood about table presence (from watching him) and about the intuition required to really understand what was happening on each hand. Take a look at this deal:

Nil Vul.            ♠ A 7  
 Dlr: North        ♥ A K Q 3  
                          ♦ A K J 10 6 2  
                          ♣ 5



♠ J 9 4  
 ♥ J 8 5  
 ♦ 8 5 3  
 ♣ Q 8 5 3

West	North	East	South
			<i>Branco</i>
	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♣4 to his partner's king. East continues with the ♣J and then the ♣10. The suit splits 4-4, and West wins with the fourth round of clubs with the ace. You have discarded a spade and two diamonds from dummy, and West exits with a spade to dummy's bare ace.

You cash one high diamond, both defenders following with low cards. You then play two top hearts and cross to the ♥J on the third round of the suit, both defenders following to all three rounds.

When you now lead a second round of diamonds, West follows with the ♦9. Do you follow the "eight ever, nine never" mantra and go up with the king, or do you take the diamond finesse?

In both the bidding and in the play, it is essential to draw inferences. When doing so, it is important to think not only about what the opponents have done, but also about what they have not done.

West is known to hold exactly three hearts and four clubs. If you finesse in diamonds, you are assuming that he started with a 3-3-3-4 shape. If you instead go up with the ♦K, you would be playing the opening leader to have begun with exactly two diamonds, and thus four spades, i.e. 4-3-2-4 shape. You know that he led a club from a suit such as A964. That's not an attractive holding to lead from. Is it not more likely that he would have led a spade, from whatever holding, if he were 4-4 in the black suits?

Reasoning like that, I played West for 3-3-3-4 shape and finessed in diamonds. I was rewarded when East showed out.

*Adelstano 'Adel' Porto D'Ave Filho, Marcelo's partner at his first Bermuda Bowl, and the man who taught him so much about the hidden side of the game.*



There is one other hand that I remember from my early days in the game. Nowadays, I might not think it particularly spectacular but, considering that I had not been playing for long at the time, I like it a lot.

Both Vul.            ♠ J 8 6 4  
 Dlr: West            ♥ A J 6 3  
                              ♦ K 10 7  
                              ♣ 10 3

♠ 9	N	♠ Q 10 3
♥ K Q 10 7 5 2	W     E	♥ 9
♦ Q 8 5	S	♦ J 9 4
♣ 9 8 4		♣ K Q J 7 6 2

♠ A K 7 5 2  
 ♥ 8 4  
 ♦ A 6 3 2  
 ♣ A 5

West	North	East	South
2♥	pass	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	4♠
all pass			<i>Branco</i>

West led the ♣9, so I won with the ace and played off the ♠A-K. To my dismay, West discarded a heart on the second round of trumps. The contract now seemed impossible, as there was a loser in each suit.

I played a heart to dummy's ace, removing the only heart from the East hand, and exited with a trump to the queen.

East won with the ♠Q and cashed a club trick, but he then had to lead a low diamond, on which West was forced to play the ♦Q. I took the trick with the king, crossed to the ♦A, and then exited with a third round of diamonds. Winning with the ♦J, East had only clubs left, so I was able to discard the heart loser from my hand on the forced ruff-and-discard.

Well, not bad for a relative beginner!

## Establishing a Reputation

Playing with Adel, I had my first victories in Brazilian national events and at the South American Championships.

In 1969, the Bermuda Bowl was held in Rio de Janeiro, the first time it had been staged in South America, and we were selected to represent the

host nation. Our team was: Adel and myself; Chagas playing with Pedro Paul Assumpção, Roberto Mello and Decio Coutinho.

The Bermuda Bowl was a much more exclusive tournament in those days. The last time I played in the Bermuda Bowl, in 2011, there were 22 teams. Nowadays, there are even more than that. Back in 1969, there were just five teams; North America, two from Europe (Italy and France), Brazil representing South America and, for the first time in the competition, a team from Asia, Taiwan.

I remember our first match against the very strong team from North America – Sidney Lazard, Bobby Goldman, Billy Eisenberg, Bob Hamman, George Rapee and Eddie Kantar. We beat them 68-42 (16-4 VPs). We celebrated a lot! Overall, our bridge was very naïve and we finished in last place, but it was a great experience for all of us and the start of my top-level career in the game.

In 1972, we started playing Precision and the Brazilian team became my brother Pedro and myself, Chagas and Assumpção, Cintra and Fonseca. We qualified for the 1973 and 1974 Bermuda Bowls, the first held in Guarujá (São Paulo) and the second in Venice, Italy. The team gained more experience, starting to threaten the big ones – Italy, US, France and others. We won bronze medals in both tournaments and started to be recognized in the bridge world.

*You became a World Champion in 1976. What do you remember about that experience?*

The 1976 World Team Olympiad was held in Monte Carlo. The curious thing is that I was not originally part of the Brazil team, but one of the players withdrew and I was called as the sixth player. The team was: Barbosa and myself, Chagas and Assumpção, Cintra and Fonseca. The format was a grueling round robin of 44 16-board matches in two weeks.

Going into the final round, it seemed almost certain that the title would be won by Italy, represented by the famed “Blue Team”, who were both the defending Olympiad champions and had also won the three previous Bermuda Bowls. Meanwhile, we seemed to be headed for fourth place.

In a dramatic turn of events, the Italians lost unexpectedly, 3-17 against Greece. We won a 20-0 blitz over Canada that leapfrogged us over all of the teams ahead of us. Italy had to settle for silver medals, with Great Britain third and Poland fourth. It was the first time that the Olympiad had been won by a team from the Western Hemisphere, and we also became

the first team from outside either Europe or North America to win an Open Teams Championship.



*Brazil wins the 1976 World Team Olympiad title.*

The bridge world was certainly surprised by our victory!

*Two years later, in New Orleans, you proved that your victory in the Olympiad was no fluke*

Another big surprise. With two rounds left in the qualifying stage of the World Open Pairs, Cintra and I were lying in 101<sup>st</sup> place with only 40 pairs to qualify for the final. We rallied well and two big sessions pulled us up to 24<sup>th</sup>. We were delighted to have made it into the final, but the best was yet to come.

Almost half of the qualifiers for the 40-pair final were from the USA. There were also a few French pairs but, for the first time in the event's history, not a single Italian pair in the final. After two of the four sessions, we had climbed up to 11<sup>th</sup> place. We had a great third session and moved up into 2<sup>nd</sup> place! The last session was a good one too. We played well and with a healthy dose of luck.

There were no computers and it was a long wait for the result: first place, ahead of Canada's Eric Kokish and Peter Nagy. Cue the champagne party!

The teams began the next day. It was the first time that the World Knockout Teams Championship for the Rosenblum Cup had been held and the format was a mystery to everyone. We made it to the semi-finals, where we managed to defeat a strong American team led by Hamman/Wolff.

However, the final against the Polish team proved to be one step too far for us, and we were well beaten. We could hardly complain, though. We had taken on the world's best and come away with two medals, one gold and one silver.

In the following years, I won some more South American championships, sometimes with Cintra as a partner or my brother Pedro. I also participated in world tournaments, but without any great successes.

I recall one memorable deal from that period. It occurred in the Teams event at the 1983 South American Championships.

Both Vul.	♠ Q		
Dlr: West	♥ A 10 9 6 5 3		
	♦ 7 3		
	♣ A 8 5 2		
♠ ---		♠ 10 8 6 3	
♥ 7		♥ K J 8 4	
♦ K J 10 6 5 2	N W     E S	♦ Q 9	
♣ K Q 9 7 6 4		♣ J 10 3	
	♠ A K J 9 7 5 4 2		
	♥ Q 2		
	♦ A 8 4		
	♣ ---		

West	North <i>Barbosa</i>	East	South <i>Branco</i>
2NT*	pass	3♣	4♠
5♣	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

West's 2NT opening showed both minors.

West leads the ♣K against your slam. How would you play?

West has bid to the five-level, vulnerable, with no encouragement from his partner, so he must have really extreme shape. I could see how the contract could be made as long as East held only three clubs, which was certainly possible on the bidding.

I won the opening lead with the ♣A, pitching a diamond from my hand, and immediately ruffed a club. A trump to the queen returned the lead to dummy and I ruffed a second club, hopefully denuding East of that suit.



Now was the time to start ruffling my trumps. When I cashed the last spade, I had ♥Q-x and ♦A-x left in my hand and dummy was ♥A-10-9 and a diamond. East had to keep three hearts, or I could just duck a heart to him and dummy's long heart would be my twelfth trick. He therefore had to relinquish one of his diamonds.

So, I cashed the ♦A and ran the ♥Q. East won with the ♥K but then had to lead away from his remaining ♥J-x at trick twelve.



*Marcelo's cousin, Gabino Cintra, who introduced him to the game. He was a teammate for more than two decades and the partner with whom Marcelo won the World Open Pairs in 1978.*

Then, in 1988, I started playing with Gabriel Chagas as a partner...

## **The Chagas Years**

Our first championship together was the Team Olympiad in Venice, but the result was not very good. The following year, we resolved to work hard on our partnership in preparation for the 1989 Bermuda Bowl in Perth, Australia.

The team was myself and Chagas, Pedro, my brother, playing with Roberto Mello, and Carlos Camacho with Ricardo Janz. For months the three pairs met regularly and put in some serious study time. We perfected our auction methods and spent many long hours discussing opening leads and card play in general.

Exactly 20 years after my first Bermuda Bowl, we scored a spectacular victory!



*BRAZIL: the 1989 Bermuda Bowl winners*

The victory was not by chance, and it was convincing. With hard work and effort, we had achieved a technically prepared team with high morale.

We opened up a 45-IMP lead after two stanzas of the 160-board semi-final against Poland. They never managed to make significant inroads into our advantage and we won 369-327. The final against the Americans was a 176-board marathon. Although they were the defending champions, this was our chance to atone for the last-board loss to them in the 1985 semi-final. This time, we took no chances; with two 16-board sets to play we led by 103 IMPs. We lost half of our lead over the remaining 32 boards, but our final margin of victory, 442-388, was still comfortable enough.

It wasn't easy, but we felt that we fully deserved our victory in the game's most prestigious event.

The following year, 1990, it was again time for the World Pairs Championship. The popularity of the event had grown enormously since I won eight years before, in New Orleans. In Geneva, there was a field of 572 pairs (compared with 78 when the event was first staged, in Cannes in 1962). A four-session qualifying stage and then a four-session semi-final whittled that number down to 72 for the five-session final. The event was very long and, playing matchpoints, where every trick counts and there are no boards on which to relax, incredibly tiring.

I had played the event with Chagas four years earlier, in Miami Beach, but we had managed only to finish fifth. This time, we were very lucky: the opponents made a lot of mistakes against us. On the first board we bid

to 4♥-X (which was due to go three down), but one of the opponents saved us by bidding on to 4♠. We duly doubled, and he went three down instead.

We only qualified for the final in 38<sup>th</sup> place. But, a monstrous first session in which we scored almost 70%, an unprecedentedly high score in a tournament at this level, carried us to the top of the leader-board. A 62% second session then gave us a significant advantage. We went into the final session with a massive lead that we were never in danger of relinquishing. Again, Canada's Peter Nagy collected a silver medal behind me.

Here is one of the hands from the final that I will never forget.

Both Vul.	♠ J 4										
Dlr: North	♥ A Q J 7 6 3										
	♦ 10 3										
	♣ 10 9 5										
♠ A Q 10 6 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;"> </td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 8 2		♥ 10 9 4									
♦ K 8 5		♦ J 9 6 2									
♣ 7 3		♣ K Q 4									
	♠ K 9 3										
	♥ 5										
	♦ A Q 7 4										
	♣ A J 8 6 2										

West	North <i>Chagas</i>	East	South <i>Branco</i>
1♠	pass	pass	1♣
pass	2♥	pass	2NT
	3NT	all pass	

Don't ask me why Chagas did not open 2♥, but there was no time to dwell on that. West led the ♠6 and dummy's jack won. I advanced the ♣10, taking East's queen with the ace and continuing the suit. East won with the ♣K and started to think. Clearly, if he simply returns a spade, the contract will go down trivially.

Expecting my spades to be better, and recognizing that the hearts would be running if I held a doubleton, East switched to the ♦J, hoping to find his partner with ♦AQxx. It could have been brilliant but, fortunately for us,

not today. I covered with the ♦Q, so West took the king and returned the suit, dummy's ♦10 winning.

When I then ran my minor-suit winners, West had to keep three hearts so he bared the ♠A. I took the winning heart finesse and exited with a spade, forcing him to give me a second heart finesse. I therefore ended up making ten tricks; four clubs, two diamonds, one spade and three hearts.

As I said earlier, we had a lot of good fortune in that final. When the wind is blowing in your favor, these things happen.

*The legendary Gabriel Chagas who, along with Marcelo, is one of only ten players to have won the 'Triple Crown'.*



I played many events with Chagas. We won numerous national titles and some South American championships. In addition to our World Championship victories in 1989 and 1990, we were also the runner-up twice in important team tournaments, the 1998 Rosenblum Cup in Lille, France, and the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda. We also won a North American championship, the 1992 Reisinger BAM, playing on Jimmy Cayne's team. We were very successful as a pair.

## **Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Around the turn of the century, we decided that it was time for both of us to play with new partners. I played championships with Miguel Villas-Boas, Paulo Brum and Marco Toma, with some significant victories.

In 2007, I played in the Seniors World Cup with Eduardo Vianna, a great player who had been away from bridge for a few years. We had a

good tournament, coming in fourth playing as a team with my brother, Pedro, Marcelo Amaral, Christiano Fonseca and Carlos Camacho.

I have one more deal that I'd like to share. I have always loved the psychological aspects of the game, and this hand illustrates how it is essential to put yourself into the opponent's shoes. By envisioning the hand from his point of view, you may see how to lead him down the wrong path.

Both Vul.	♠ 7 4 2											
Dir: South	♥ A 10 9 7 3 2											
	♦ Q 5											
	♣ 9 4											
♠ 8 3		<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 9 5
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 5			♥ K 6									
♦ A 9 6 3 2			♦ K 10 8 4									
♣ J 8 6 5 2			♣ A 10 7									
	♠ A J 10 6											
	♥ Q J 8 4											
	♦ J 7											
	♣ K Q 3											

West	North <i>Chagas</i>	East	South <i>Branco</i>
pass	2♦	pass	1NT
pass	4♥	all pass	3♥

West leads the ♣5 to his partner's ace. East then switches to the ♠K and I win with the ace as West follows with the ♠8 (discouraging). How would you continue?

If the heart finesse works, I will have ten tricks. What if the ♥K is offside? I will then need to persuade West that the layout is quite different from the actual hand. To make the defense a little more difficult for him, I don't discard a diamond from dummy, but instead take an immediate heart finesse. To my dismay, East wins with ♥K and plays the ♠Q.

I quickly play the ♠J under the queen. Holding the ♦K, East, can see no urgent need to attack diamonds, so he returns a club. Now I am home. I win with ♣K, cross to dummy in trumps, and run ♠7, assuming ♠9-x

remaining in East's hand. (When West discouraged with ♠8 it was clear to me that he did not have ♠98x.) I now come to hand in trumps and discard dummy's losing diamonds on the ♣Q and the ♠10. 4♥ made!



In 2006, I started to play more frequently with Diego Brenner (left), an exceptional young professional player currently living in Barcelona, Spain. We played numerous important tournaments that produced victories in Nationals and South American Championships, both pairs and teams. We also participated in a number of World Championships together.

More recently, again playing with Chagas, we won the 2020 Brazilian Trials to select our country's representative team for the year. Unfortunately, the arrival of the Covid pandemic meant that tournaments were canceled, so that victory was worthless.

I have slowly been reducing the amount of bridge I play, and I have only rarely played online at BBO. However, partnering Pablo Ravenna in a team with Marco Toma and Stefano Tommasini, Sandra Garafulic and Alejandro Quiroga, we won the 2021 Brazilian Team Championship. That was my first online tournament victory.

## The Future

I'd like to finish by talking a little about the state of the game today.

I believe that too many conventions are spoiling the game, which is partly the fault of the professionals. I was amazed to learn recently that the system used in a beginners' course was 19 pages long!

This needs to be changed. At least in local tournaments, few conventions should be allowed. Ideally there should be a single system for all pairs. And abolish the Alert card!

Good times were those when ten minutes of conversation was enough to make arrangements with a new partner. Today, there are so many bidding conventions, carding methods and styles that it takes a few hours.

It is no coincidence that the average age of ACBL members is over 70!

The speed of play in high-level bridge has long been an issue for me. If we want to encourage people to play and to watch the game, the time allowed for each hand must be significantly reduced. It is often unbearable to watch a match: they think and think and think, even in ordinary situations. I recently saw a player think for almost ten minutes before leading from two low cards in his hand towards K-J in dummy. There wasn't any extra information. It was a guess. Perhaps he was waiting for a message from the gods...?

There must be new rules to make the game more interesting. And this is urgent!

In conclusion, I believe that:

1. In local clubs, bridge should be lighter and more fun, making it easier for new players to join.

2. In high-level tournaments, the time for each hand should be reduced, and also the use of esoteric conventions that make the game unintelligible for spectators should be limited. Will players make more mistakes? Yes, and that will also make the show more entertaining and attract even more spectators.

Finally, thank you very much for the opportunity to share my "exploits" in bridge and my opinions.

*Thank you, Marcelo. It's been a pleasure to have you on board.*

### Marcelo Branco : Major achievements

1969 International Debut. 5<sup>th</sup> in Bermuda Bowl

(Adel Porto d'Ave Filho, Roberto Mello, Gabriel Chagas  
Pedro Paulo Assumpcao, Decio Coutinho)

1973 3<sup>rd</sup> in Bermuda Bowl (Pedro Paulo Branco, Assumpcao,  
Chagas, Gabino Cintra, Christiano Fonseca)

1974 3<sup>rd</sup> in Bermuda Bowl (team as above)

1976 4<sup>th</sup> in Bermuda Bowl (team as above)

Won World Team Olympiad

(Assumpcao, Chagas, Cintra, Fonseca, Sergio Barbosa)

1978 2<sup>nd</sup> in Rosenblum Cup

(Assumpcao, Chagas, Cintra, Barbosa, Roberto Taunay)

Won World Open Pairs (with Cintra)

1985 4<sup>th</sup> in Bermuda Bowl (Cintra, P.Branco,

Barbosa, Claudio Sampaio, Fabio Sampaio)

- 1986 5<sup>th</sup> in World Open Pairs (with Chagas)  
1989 Won Bermuda Bowl  
(P.Branco, Chagas, Mello, Ricardo Janz, Carlos Camacho)  
1990 Won World Open Pairs (with Chagas)  
1991 4<sup>th</sup> in Bermuda Bowl (team as above)  
1992 Won Sunday Times Invitational Pairs (with Chagas)  
Won Reisinger BAM Teams (Chagas, Jimmy Cayne,  
Chuck Berger, Mike Passell, Mark Lair)  
Won US Lebhar IMP Pairs (with Vera Gama)  
1993 Won Cap Gemini Invitational Pairs (with Chagas)  
1997 Won Cap Gemini Invitational Pairs (with Chagas)  
1998 2<sup>nd</sup> in Rosenblum Cup  
(Chagas, Miguel Villas-Boas, Joao-Paulo Campos)  
11<sup>th</sup> World Open Pairs (with Chagas)  
Won 1<sup>st</sup> IOC Grand Prix (team as above)  
1999 2<sup>nd</sup> in IOC Grand Prix (team as above)  
2000 2<sup>nd</sup> in Bermuda Bowl  
(Chagas, Villas-Boas, Campos, Mello, Janz)  
Q-F of World Team Olympiad (Chagas, Villas-Boas,  
Campos, Marcelo Amaral, Diego Brenner)  
2005 Q-F of Bermuda Bowl  
(Chagas, Villas-Boas, P.Branco, Mello, Janz)  
2007 4<sup>th</sup> in World Seniors Teams  
(P.Branco, Amaral, Camacho, Fonseca, Eduardo Vianna)  
2008 8<sup>th</sup> in World Open Individual  
2009 Q-F of World Transnational Teams (Chagas, Villas-Boas,  
Campos, Brenner, Mauricio Figueiredo)  
2018 Q-F of Rosenblum Cup (Chagas, Villas-Boas,  
Brenner, Pablo Ravenna, Marco Toma)



# *Index of Players*

- Abedi, Nishat 74  
Agica, Marius 257  
Ahmed, Nisar 74  
Albert, Mary 65  
Albu, Migry see Zur-Campanile, Migry  
Alder, Phillip 244, 246  
Allison, Karen 168  
Alpaugh, Nancy 65  
Amaral, Marcelo 21, 24, 143, 144  
Amoedo, Rafael 144  
Andersen, Ronald 52  
Aranha, Sergio 143  
Armstrong, John 31  
Arnold, Russ 71, 72, 73, 75, 85  
Ashton, Sophie 224  
Assumpcao, Pedro Paul 23  
Auken, Sabine 48, 65, 66, 98, 166, 183  
Austberg, Per Erik 137  
Baker, Lynn 63, 66, 67, 162, 168, 169, 192, 193  
Balcombe, Keith 132  
Baldwin, Robert 86, 108  
Balicki, Cezary Jacek 32, 48, 94, 95, 108  
Baqai, Iftikar 'Ifti' 181, 192, 193  
Baran, Boris 126, 129, 132, 299  
Barbosa, Roberto 14, 16, 23, 144  
Barbosa, Sergio 9  
Barda, Joe 223  
Baron, Hermine 65  
Bates, Roger 33, 47, 93, 107, 173  
Bathurst, Kevin 87, 244  
Bausor, Michael 224  
Beauchamp, David 224  
Becker, Michael 'Mike' 48, 85, 86, 107, 108  
Belladonna, Giorgio 91  
Benjamin, Albert 91  
Benstead, Richard 92, 107  
Bergen, Marty 3, 5, 85, 107, 131, 148, 153, **261**, 278  
Berger, Chuck 24  
Berkowitz, Dana 252  
Berkowitz, David 48, 52, 57, 85, 107, 108, 109, 123, 275  
Berkowitz, Lisa 57, 178, 192  
Bertens, Huub 293, 299  
Bessis, Veronique 166  
Bessis, Thomas 41, 48  
Bethe, Kitty 58  
Bhatt, Anshul 233, 235  
Bilde, Denis 109  
Bitschene, Jochen 286  
Bjerkan, Cheryl 'Cheri' 27, 65, 192, 193  
Blanchard, Justin 85  
Blanchard, Shane 85  
Blanchard, Robert 65  
Bluhm, Lou 85  
Blumenthal, Mark 117  
Bocchi, Norberto 84  
Boyd, Peter 46  
Brake, Jessica 'Jess' 213, 224  
Bramley, Bart 48, 85, 95, 109, 180, 227, 229, 238  
Branco, Marcelo **9**, 101, 133, 134, 136, 138, 139, 144  
Branco, Pedro 9, 23, 24, 144  
Braun, Daniel 224  
Breed, Mildred 66, 178, 192, 193  
Brenner, Diego 9, 22, 24, 133, 144  
Brescoll, Zach 212, 239, 245, 257  
Brink, Sjoert 229  
Brock, Sally 67, 123, 162, 169, 193, 223, 224  
Brogeland, Boye 39  
Broustunov, Viktor 151, 152  
Brown, Fiona 67, 162, 169, 193  
Brownstein, Sid 187  
Brum, Paulo 20, 144  
Buchalter, Ralph 47  
Burger, Chuck 46  
Burgess, Stephen 38  
Camacho, Carlos 17, 21, 24

Campbell, Gordon 132  
 Campos, Joao-Paulo 24, 133, 136,  
 137, 138, 141, 144  
 Cannell, Drew 299  
 Caplan, Mark 235, 238  
 Cappelletti Jr., Mike 244  
 Cappelletti, Shannon 193  
 Carmichael, Jenni 242  
 Carmichael, Tom 244  
 Carruthers, John 110, 122, 130, 132,  
 230, 238  
 Casen, Drew 86, 108  
 Cayne, Jimmy 20, 24, 26, 86, 107  
 Chagas, Gabriel 9, 10, 11, 14, 17-  
 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 101, 133, 134,  
 136, 138, 139, 140, 143, 144  
 Chambers, Juanita 65, 66, 168, 192  
 Chambers, Neil 131, 275, 299  
 Chang, Morris 107  
 Charney, Gerald 299  
 Chazen, Bernie 116  
 Cheek, Curtis 293, 299  
 Chemla, Paul 35  
 Chen, Jien 206  
 Chen, Zelan 200  
 Chorush, Ira 85, 278  
 Cintra, Gabino 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17,  
 23  
 Coffin, George 51  
 Cohen, Billy 299  
 Cohen, Dori 275  
 Cohen, Larry 4, 48, 66, 85, 107, 108,  
 118, 182, 183, 261, 263, 264, 265,  
 269, 275, 278  
 Cohen, Mark 275  
 Cohen, Ralph 278  
 Cohen, Stasha 168  
 Cohen, Steve 192  
 Cohler, Gary 193  
 Cokin, Allan 85  
 Cole, William 109  
 Collings, John 296  
 Compton, Chris 107  
 Compton, Donna 289  
 Cooper, Kitty 65  
 Cooper, Renee **209**, 234  
 Cooper, Rhys 224  
 Cope, Simon 96  
 Coren, Richard ‘Richie’ 78, 87  
 Coutinho, Decio 14, 23  
 Coutts, James 257  
 Crane, Barry 49, 50, 51-53, 54, 65,  
 173  
 Cronier, Benedicte 198  
 Crossley, Bob 117, 119, 131, 286,  
 299  
 Crossley, David 117, 119, 131, 286,  
 299  
 d’Orsi, Ernesto 139  
 d’Ovidio, Catherine 197, 199-200  
 Dai, Jianming 206  
 Daigneault, Pierre 132  
 Damiani, Jose 80, 294  
 Darvas, Robert 51  
 Davis, Ed 170, 172-173, 181, 183,  
 187, 189, 192  
 De v Hart, Norman 51  
 Deas, Lynn 58, 65, 66, 67, 161, 168,  
 169, 178, 193  
 Del’Monte, Ishmael ‘Ish’ 96, 109,  
 Demuy, Vince 291  
 Desi, Robert 281  
 Deutsch, Seymon 32, 33, 46, 47, 93-  
 94, 107, 108, 275  
 Dinkin, Sam 225, 238  
 Doecke, Mike 257  
 Donati, Giovanni 229  
 Dong, John 226  
 Dong, Yongling 198, 206  
 Drijver, Bas 229  
 du Pont, Lea 168  
 Dufurat, Katarzyna 169  
 Duncan, Sandy 91  
 Dunitz, Mitch 181, 183, 192, 193  
 Dwyer, Kevin 257  
 Dyke, Kieran 210, 224  
 Edmonds, Jodi 165, 169  
 Eisenberg, Billy 14, 91  
 Eisenstein, Glenn 65  
 Ekeblad, Russell ‘Russ’ 48, 86  
 Elahmady, Walid 87  
 Erhart, Maria 157

Eythorsdottir, Hjordis 67, 193  
 Fallenius, Bjorn 48, 81, 86, 108, 109,  
 128, 275  
 Fantoni, Fulvio 78  
 Feldman, Jason 235, 238  
 Feldman, Mark 46, 48, 120, 299  
 Feng, Xuefeng 206,  
 Fergani, Kamel 236-237, 238  
 Ferm, Barbara 193  
 Fero, Jeffrey 46  
 Figueiredo, Mauricio 24, 144  
 Finkel, Lewis 67  
 Fireman, Phyllis 193  
 Fleisher, Martin 'Marty' 25, 26, 43,  
 48, 94, 109  
 Flint, Jeremy 31, 91, 123  
 Fonseca, Christiano 11, 14, 21, 23,  
 24  
 Forquet, Pietro 134  
 Forrester, Tony 31, 92, 107, 123  
 Fourcaudot, Marc-Andre 236, 238  
 Fraser, Doug 131  
 Fraser, Sandra 65, 131  
 Fredin, Peter 81, 109  
 Freeman, Jacob **225**  
 Freeman, Richard 'Dick' 47, 65, 85,  
 96-97, 108, 131  
 Frey, Richard L. 277  
 Friesner, Richard 107  
 Fuller, Kirstyn 'Kristy' 213, 224  
 Furunes, John-Egil 138  
 Gama, Vera 24  
 Garafulic, Sandra 22  
 Garner, Steve 108, 109, 179, 183,  
 186, 189, 192, 227  
 Garozzo, Benito 91, 134, 168  
 Gartaganis, Nicholas 132  
 Gates, Bill 190, 255  
 Gaviard, Daniele 197, 199  
 Gawrys, Piotr 33, 94, 168, 192  
 Gerard, Ron 85, 132  
 Gingiss, Helene 192  
 Ginossar, Eldad 108  
 Gitelman, Fred 48, 86, 104, 109,  
 110, 124, 126, 129, 132, 190, 235,  
 236, 238, 282, 291, 293, 299  
 Glasson, Joann 67  
 Glubok, Brian 107, 275  
 Gold, Sam 278, 283  
 Goldberg, Victor 107  
 Goldfein, Jerry 275  
 Goldman, Bobby 14, 47, 283-285  
 Goldstein, Abe 72, 75  
 Gordon, Diana 65, 125, 286  
 Gordon, Mark 109  
 Gowdy, John 132  
 Grainger, David 48, 244, 253, 291  
 Granovetter, Matthew 'Matt' 90,  
 107, 294  
 Granovetter, Pam 67, 169  
 Granville, Richard 92, 107  
 Graves, Allan 110, 117, 129, 131,  
 132, 179-181, 193, 286, 295, 299  
 Greco, Eric 48, 87, 88, 290  
 Greenberg, Gail 154, 164, 168  
 Greenspan, Jon 65  
 Grossack, Adam 109, 239, 244, 246,  
 247, 248, 254, 257  
 Grossack, Zach 89, 109, 233, 244,  
 246, 248, 257  
 Grue, Joe 40, 43, 48, 88, 94, 109  
 Gruver, Nancy 65  
 Gu, Ling 61  
 Guiver, Harold 51  
 Guoba, John 132  
 Gwozdinsky, Margie 58, 65, 108  
 Haase, Gerald 113  
 Hackett, Justin 183  
 Hamilton, Fred 85  
 Hamman, Bob 14, 15, 26, 30, 31, 46,  
 48, 57, 65, 79, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 93,  
 101, 107, 109, 129, 190, 227, 229,  
 238, 282, 289, 290, 291  
 Hampson, Geoff 48, 87, 88, 125,  
 290, 291  
 Hanna, Nader 132, 227  
 Hanui, Jose 65  
 Hardy, Max 272  
 Hargreaves, Mike 132  
 Harrison, Shane 224, 233  
 Hawes, Emma Jean 154  
 Hayden-Truscott, Dorothy 154

Heitner, Paul 60  
 Helgemo, Geir 37-38, 78, 86, 137, 231  
 Helness, Tor 37-38, 78, 86, 138, 231  
 Henbest, Maxim 224  
 Henner, Christal 86, 193  
 Herrington, Gaye 192  
 Hiller, Scott 243  
 Hinden, Frances 224  
 Hobart, Arno 132, 299  
 Hoffer, Fred 132  
 Holzhauer, James 64  
 Hu, Jihing 206  
 Hu, Mao Yuan 206  
 Huang, Shan 291  
 Huang, Yan 200, 206  
 Huang, Ye 206  
 Hudson, Alex 257  
 Hult, Simon 214  
 Hung, Andy 213  
 Hunt, Allison 257  
 Hurd, John 243  
 Ivatury, Uday 193  
 Jacobs (Pattison), Ella 213, 224  
 Jacobs, George 87, 108,  
 Jacobus, Marc 86, 87, 131  
 James, Neil 117  
 Janitschke, Jan 131  
 Janitschke, V Craig 131  
 Janz, Ricardo 17, 24, 138, 144  
 Jeng, Andrew 257  
 Jeng, Richard 257  
 Jenkins, Sandra 202  
 Joel, Geeske 193  
 Johnson, Perry 47  
 Johnston, Brad 247, 249, 257  
 Jolly, Christian 239, 248, 249-250, 257  
 Jones, Peter 132  
 Jourdain, Patrick 60, 107  
 Kalita, Jacek 229  
 Kamil, Mike 48, 107, 109, 132, 153  
 Kantar, Edwin 'Eddie' 14, 86, 195, 240, 242, 277, 278  
 Kaplan, Adam 212, 214, **239**  
 Kaplan, Edgar 107, 277, 278, 296  
 Kaplan, Elizabeth 277  
 Kaplan, Todd 239, 241  
 Karpin, Fred 278  
 Kasle, Gaylor 33, 47, 86, 93, 107, 108  
 Katz, Richard 85, 118  
 Katz, Ralph 87, 88, 108, 109, 118, 283, 289, 290  
 Kazmucha, Danuta 169  
 Kearse, Amalya 66, 193  
 Kehela, Sami 122, 278, 292, 295, 299  
 Keller, Brenda 65  
 Kelsey, Hugh 51, 92, 227, 278  
 Kennedy, Betty-Ann 65  
 Khutorsky, Nir 238  
 Kirr, Martin 132, 238, 299  
 Kleinman, Danny 242  
 Klingler, Ron 278  
 Klukowski, Michał 166  
 Knowles, Tim 224  
 Kokish, Eric 'The Koach' 4, 15, 32, 110, 111, 112, 115-129, 131, 132, 179, 188, 226, 227, **276**  
 Kolesnik, Alex 229  
 Kolesnik, Emma 191  
 Kolesnik, Finn 98, 225, 227, 229, 230, 233, 234, 238, 251, 257  
 Konstantinovskiy, Elias 65  
 Korbel, Dan 291  
 Kraft, Beverly 276, 282, 287  
 Kranyak, John 244  
 Kristensen, Ben 249, 257  
 Kurlander, Norman 116  
 L'Ecuyer, Nicolas 238  
 Lair, Mark 24, 47, 65, 96, 109  
 Lall, Hemant 46, 48, 107, 109  
 Lall, Justin 243  
 Lambardi, Pablo 144  
 Lamprey, Chuck 261, 275  
 Lan, Yia 61  
 Larsen, Kyle 39, 46, 47, 48, 181  
 Lasocki, Krzysztof 33, 94  
 Lauria, Lorenzo 108  
 Lavee, Daniel 225, 226, 227, 234, 235, 236, 238

Lawrence, Mike 31, 46, 196, 210-211, 278, 283-288, 294  
 Lazard, Sidney 14  
 Lebi, Robert 132, 299  
 Lebowitz, Larry 109  
 Leckie, Sam 91  
 Ledeen, Michael 168  
 LeDentu, Jose 278  
 Lee, Roger 89  
 Letizia, Marinesa 65, 178, 192, 193  
 Lev, Sam 86, 107, 166, 168, 192, 275  
 Levin, Bobby 47, 48, 57, 65, **71**, 108, 109, 169, 188, 290  
 Levin, Jill 83, 84, 86, 87, 147, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162, 163, 164, 168, 169, 170, 186, 189, 193  
 Levine, Mike 231, 232  
 Levitin, Ilya 148, 153, 167  
 Levitina, Irina 49, 55, 66, 67, 87, **147**, 192  
 Levitt, Evelyn 65  
 Lewis, Paul 299  
 Li, Darwin 233  
 Li, Yongchuan 206  
 Libman, Tomer 215  
 Lien, Owen 257  
 Lillie, Harold 85, 123  
 Lin, Amber 109  
 Linz, Rama 65, 85  
 Lipsitz, Bob 117  
 Litvack, Irving 110, 113, 122, 124, 129, 131, 283, 287  
 Liu, Yan 206  
 Liu, Yi Qian 194, 197, 198, 199, 200, 206  
 Lodge, Steve 92, 107  
 Lorenzini, Cedric 41, 48  
 Lowenthal, John 107  
 Lu, Yan 200, 206  
 Luba, Harrison 233  
 Ludewig, Bernie 286  
 Maas, Anton 29  
 Machado, Pinheiro ‘Pinheirinho’ 11  
 Madala, Agustin 109  
 Mahaffey, Jim 169  
 Mahmood, Zia 40, 41, 46, 63, 75, 86, 87, 89, 90, 93, 94, 96, 97, 101-104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 183, 193, 227, 275, 288, 289, 290, 294  
 Maksymetz, Bryan 132, 227  
 Mancuso, Renee 192  
 Manfield, Ed ‘Eddie’ 29, 46, 270  
 Manfield, Melanie 109  
 Mariscal, Laura 65  
 Markey, Phil 224  
 Marriot, John 257  
 Marston, Paul 58  
 Martel, Chip 3, **25**, 59, 86, 87, 93, 94, 107, 108, 109, 181  
 Martel, Jan 25, 36, 39, 43, 46, 47, 48, 94  
 Martin, Phillip 107  
 McAllister, John 246  
 McCallum, Karen ‘Kate’ 49, 54, 55, 59, 61, 65, 66, 67, 160, 162, 168, 169, 174, 177, 192, 193, 222, 224  
 McDonough, James 131  
 McGrath, Francesca 215, 216, 224  
 McMahan, John 216, 224  
 McOrmond, Gordon 132  
 Meckstroth, Jeff 29, 47, 48, 52, 74, 75, 85, 86, 87, 88, 103, 107, 263, 275, 282, 289, 290, 291  
 Mello, Roberto 14, 17, 23, 24, 138, 144  
 Meltzer, Rose 39, 47, 48, 66, 181, 193  
 Meredith, Adam ‘Plum’ 113  
 Meyers, Jill 45, 49, 56, 66, 67, 161, 162, 164, 168, 169, **170**  
 Mihov, Vladimir 81  
 Miles, Marshall 51, 266  
 Milgrim, Glenn 87  
 Mill, Justin 257  
 Milner, Reese 48, 86, 109  
 Mittelman, George 110, 121, 125, 126, 129, 131, 132, 244, 276, 279, 286-287, 295, 299  
 Mohan John 168, 173, 181, 189, 192  
 Mollo, Victor 3, 242, 278

Molson, Janice Seamon 66, 67, 169, 186, 192, 193, 204  
 Molson, Mark 107, 125, 129, 132, 295, 299  
 Montin, Randi 66, 161, 168, 170, 178, 189, 192, 193  
 Morgan, Jacob 193, 227, 229  
 Morse, Dan 31  
 Morse, Jo 176, 177  
 Moskovsky, Ellena 213, 224  
 Moss, Brad 43, 46, 48, 86, 94, 104, 109  
 Moss, Sylvia 67  
 Munson, Kitty 65, 66  
 Murray, Eric 122, 132, 295, 296, 299  
 Murthy, Ravindra 46  
 Nagy, Peter 19, 90, 277, 283, 296  
 Narasimhan, Hansa 87, 193  
 Nardin, Michael 92, 107  
 Nehmert, Pony 175  
 Newman, Peter 224  
 Nickell, Nick 42, 82, 84, 87, 88, 96-98, 101, 102, 107, 109, 254, 286, 288, 289, 290, 292, 296, 299  
 Nilsland, Mats 128  
 Nugit, Trudi 65  
 Nunes, Claudio 78  
 O'Rourke, Lou Ann 87  
 Oikonomopoulos, Ioannis 257  
 Ornitz, Ruth 240  
 Osberg, Sharon 66, 174, 177, 192, 193  
 Osborne, Graham 224  
 Pachtman, Ron 108  
 Palmer, Beth 58, 65, 66, 67, 109, 161, 162, 168, 169, 178, 193  
 Passell, Mike 24, 85  
 Pattison, Ella see Jacobs, Ella  
 Pavlicek, Richard 86  
 Pender, Peter 30, 46, 278  
 Pepsi, see Pszczola, Jacek  
 Perlstein, Lila 168  
 Perron, Michel 35  
 Peterson, Linda 65  
 Pettis, William 109  
 Piafsky, Don 132  
 Picus, Sue 60, 66, 168, 174, 177, 192  
 Pincus, Carol 192  
 Pollack, Rozanne 60, 66, 275  
 Porto D'ave Filho, Adelstano (Adel) 9, 11, 12, 23  
 Friday, Tony 91  
 Pszczola, Jacek 'Pepsi' 43, 48, 89, 94, 109, 169, 229  
 Quinn, Shawn 68, 168, 181-182, 192, 193  
 Quiroga, Alejandro 22  
 Radin, Judy 61, 66, 169  
 Radin, Michael 275  
 Rajadhyaksha, Pratap 109  
 Ran, Jingrong 194  
 Ranson, Nicholas 'Nico' 216, 224  
 Rapee, George 14, 107  
 Ravenna, Pablo 22, 24, 144  
 Rayner, John 132  
 Rebattu, Max 29  
 Reese, Terence 51, 112, 278, 296  
 Reinhold, Bud 75, 83  
 Reus, Sharyn Linkovsky 276, 287  
 Reynolds, Jane 224  
 Richman, Bobby 281  
 Rigal, Barry 157, 289  
 Rimstedt, Mikael 214, 229, 257  
 Rimstedt, Ola 214, 229, 257  
 Robinson, Steve 46, 67, 117, 131, 299  
 Roche, Michael 132  
 Rodrigue, Claude 107  
 Rodwell, Eric 29, 47, 74, 75, 85, 86, 87, 88, 92, 95, 98, 102, 103, 107, 109, 242, 263, 264, 275, 282, 289, 290, 291  
 Rombaut, Jerome 253, 254  
 Rombaut, Leo 253  
 Romik, Pinhas 168, 192  
 Roncarelli, Mimi 278  
 Rose, Irving 123  
 Rosenberg, Magy 86  
 Rosenberg, Beverly 192  
 Rosenberg, Debbie 48, 66, 86, 89, 90, 100, 108, 109, 160, 162, 163, 164, 167, 168, 169, 193

Rosenberg, Kevin 233, 234, 244, 248, 249, 257  
 Rosenberg, Michael 33, 43, 46, 47, 48, 86, 87, 88, **89**, 167, 180, 249, 275  
 Rosenkranz, Edith 65  
 Rosenkranz, George 85, 263, 275  
 Rosenthal, Andrew 98, 109, 230  
 Rosner, Warren 275  
 Ross, Hugh 30, 31, 46, 47, 181, 278  
 Ross, Jim 278  
 Roth, Al 278  
 Rubens, Jeff 278  
 Rubin, Ira 'The Beast' 123  
 Rubin, Ron 85, 86, 107  
 Russell, Cliff 85, 275  
 Sadek, Tarek 87  
 Saelensminde, Erik 39  
 Salomao, Jeovani 144  
 Saltsman, Barbara 131  
 Sampaio, Claudio 23  
 Sampaio, Fabio 23  
 Sanborn (Shuman), Kerri 3, **49**, 85, 147, 148, 159, 160, 161, 162, 168, 169, 170, 173, 174, 177, 192, 193  
 Sanborn, Stephen 'Steve' 49, 64, 66, 67  
 Sanders, Carol 65, 192  
 Sanders, Tom 75  
 Sarniak, Anna 169  
 Schafer, Walter Jr 193  
 Schermer, John 299  
 Schippers, Elly 59  
 Schleifer, Meyer 71  
 Schoenborn, Michael 132  
 Schulle, Kay 66, 170, 174-175, 177, 189, 192  
 Schwartz, Richard 47, 86, 108  
 Seamon, Bill 'Billy' 72, 73, 85  
 Seamon, Michael 86  
 Seamon-Molson, Janice see Molson, Janice Seamon  
 Sellden, Goran 130  
 Sementa, Antonio 41, 48  
 Sharif, Omar 105, 191  
 Shay, Joseph 86  
 Sheehan, Robert 31  
 Sheinwold, Alfred 'Freddie' 27, 30, 262, 266  
 Shen, Qi 194, 200, 202, 203, 206  
 Shenkin, Barnet 90, 91, 107  
 Shi, Hoajun '(Sylvia)' 67, 169, 206  
 Short, Brian 91,  
 Shuman, Kerri see Sanford, Kerri  
 Shuman, Mike 51  
 Shunta, Cameron 'Cam' 243, 257  
 Silver, Joey **110**, 275, 276, 278, 279, 285, 286, 299  
 Silverman, Neil 46, 47, 86, 108  
 Silverstein, Aaron 109, 256  
 Silverstone, Victor 91  
 Simon, Carol 65, 66  
 Sion, Steve 85  
 Slaner, Luella 264, 275  
 Smederevac, Jovi 222, 224  
 Smith, Marc 153  
 Smith, Matt 215, 224  
 Smith, Curtis 85  
 Smith, Ron 47, 85, 87, 169, 227  
 Smolanko, George 224  
 Smolen, Mike 117, 131, 173, 299  
 Sokolow, Tobi 66, 67, 178, 192, 193, 204  
 Solodar, John 74, 75, 85, 107  
 Soloway, Paul 47, 73, 86, 96, 101, 142, 173, 289, 291  
 Somma, Jim 239, 240  
 Sonsini, Barbara 66, 169  
 Sontag, Alan 47, 63, 86, 109  
 Spector, Warren 48  
 Spooner, Andrew 215, 224  
 Sprung, Jo Ann 192  
 Stamatov, Jerry 81  
 Stansby, JoAnna 47, 48, 67, 162, 163, 164, 168, 169, 193  
 Stansby, Lew 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 40, 46, 47, 48, 86, 87, 93, 94, 107, 108, 181, 193  
 Stauber, Allan 131, 261, 275  
 Steiner, George 132  
 Steiner, Carlyn 193  
 Stewart, Fred 79, 275  
 Strasberg, David 72

Strul, Aubrey 48  
 Sukoneck, Ron 86  
 Sun, Ming 164, 198, 206  
 Swanson, John 172, 173  
 Tan, Sheldon Kieren 238  
 Tanton, Philippa 278  
 Taunay, Roberto 23  
 Tebha, Anam 247, 248, 257  
 Thompson, Ben 209, 212, 218, 219, 220, 221, 224  
 Thompson, Jamie 215, 224  
 Thompson, Jenny 224  
 Thomsen, Signe Buus 255  
 Thomson, Matthew 224  
 Thomson, Robert 275  
 Thorpe, Katie 132  
 Todd, Robert 246  
 Toma, Marco 20, 22, 24, 133, 144  
 Tommasini, Stefano 22  
 Touchtidis, Stelios 192  
 Travis, Lauren 213, 224  
 Truscott, Alan 3, 152, 154  
 Truscott, Dorothy see Hayden-  
 Truscott, Dorothy  
 Tucker, Judy 168  
 Tutty Judi 224  
 Utegaard, Helen 192  
 Van Der Pas, Marijke  
 Van Oosten, Sibrand 225, 226, 232-  
 233, 234, 238  
 Van Prooijen Ricco 230  
 Verhees, Louk Jr. 86, 230  
 Versace, Alfredo 41, 48, 108  
 Vianna, Eduardo 20, 24  
 Villas-Boas, Miguel 20, 24, **133**  
 Vogt, Waltraud 175, 176  
 von Arnim, Daniela 65, 66  
 von der Porten, Ron 46  
 Walsh, Rhoda 65, 192  
 Wang, Hongli 163, 194, 198-201,  
 206  
 Wang, Jianxin 200  
 Wang, Liping 194, 195, 206  
 Wang, Nan 200, 206  
 Wang, Ping 206  
 Wang, Weimin 206  
 Wang, Wenfei 'Rose' **194**  
 Wang, Xiaojing 200  
 Wei, Kathie see Wei-Sender, Kathie  
 Wei-Sender, Kathie 66, 168, 178  
 Weichsel, Peter 47, 71, 76, 86, 108,  
 181, 193, 227, 230, 238  
 Weigkricht, Terri 157  
 Weinstein, Howard 108, 193  
 Weinstein, Steve 47, 48, 71, 72, 78,  
 80, 82, 86, 87, 88, 275, 290  
 Weir, Colin 91  
 Welland, Roy 48, 86, 87, 98, 108  
 Wenneberg, Bjorn 130  
 Willard, Sylvie 198  
 Willenken, Chris 87, 89, 108, 109  
 Williams, Stephen 224  
 Wilson, Deana 224  
 Wiltshire, David 224  
 Winestock, Sheri 190, 202  
 Wittes, Pam 168, 192  
 Wold, Eddie 65, 66, 85, 87, 156,  
 169, 231, 263, 275  
 Wolff, Bobby 15, 30, 31, 46, 107,  
 282  
 Wolfson, Jeffrey 'Jeff' 47, 86, 107,  
 108, 109  
 Wolpert, Darren 235, 238  
 Wolpert, Gavin 274, 291  
 Wolpert, Jenny 87, 193  
 Woolsey, Kit 27, 29, 46, 48, 109,  
 227, 229, 238, 299  
 Woolsey, Sally 48  
 Wu, Shaohong 206  
 Xie, Ziqiu 206  
 Xu, Haomin 206  
 Xu, Michael 233  
 Yan, Ru 198, 206  
 Yekutieli, Asaf 247, 249, 257  
 You, Jianyong 206  
 Zeitak, Aviv 238  
 Zhang, Yalan 156, 206  
 Zhang, Yu 194, 206  
 Zhao, Jack 56, 206  
 Zhao, Martin 226, 238  
 Zhou, Yong Mei 206  
 Zhu, Bo Han 225, 226, 228, 233, 238



Zhuang, Zejun 206  
Zimmerman, Pierre 78  
Zmuda, Justyna 166, 169  
Zmudzinski, Adam Artur 32, 48, 94,  
108  
Zuckerberg, Debbie 107  
Zuo, Xiaoxue 206  
Zur-Campanile (Albu), Migry 109,  
168, 192, 193

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