

IF I ONLY HAD A HEART

Bridge over the rainbow



Alex Adamson & Harry Smith

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Master Point Press • Toronto, Canada

To our very patient wives,
Elinor Adamson and Alison Smith

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Preface

I have known Alex for more than thirty years. For part of this period, we were a regular partnership playing in most of the main Scottish tournaments and also traveling farther afield to events in Europe. We still play together occasionally.

We have discovered during that time a lot of interests in common both in the world of bridge and also more widely. We have similar views on many issues and similar tastes. In particular, we both read bridge literature avidly, keen to improve our own game. Through this wide reading, we each came across the genre of humorous bridge writing from the early days of S.J. Simon to the modern day, with its zenith in the wonderful works of Victor Mollo.

Over the decades, individually we have written bridge articles for magazines and newspapers. Many were serious, but some were humorous. We discussed the idea of a joint venture, and then Alex showed me an idea he had been working on for some time using characters from L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. We both thought the idea had mileage, but it was clear a lot of work was needed.

Then we were interrupted. I was appointed captain of the Scottish Senior Team at the 2012 European Championships in Dublin. When we won the bronze medal, we qualified automatically for the World Championships in Bali the following year. This was a major event in Scottish bridge. Scotland had been sending its own national team to major events since 2000, but had had no success whatsoever. There was huge interest in our forthcoming participation among the world's greats.

I decided to maintain a blog while I was in Bali. Alex and I discussed this and agreed that when I returned, we would see whether this could be developed into a book. The result was *Scotland's Senior Moment*, and with help from Brian Senior and Ray Lee, this was published in the summer of 2014.

Writing that book confirmed a number of things. First, we enjoyed working together. Second, it produced a better result than writing separately. We were forthright and frank in our appraisal of each other's work and, very importantly, neither of us minded being on the receiving end. The result was that no chapter in this or the previous book can be ascribed to either one of us. All are joint efforts and the result of much toing and froing.

We started producing the stories in this book as stand-alone articles shortly after we finished working on *Scotland's Senior Moment*, and by early 2015, we had about half a dozen ready and a number more in the pipeline. We approached Mark Horton with them and were delighted when he and the editorial board of *Bridge Magazine* decided to publish them. From the middle of 2015, they have been a regular feature in this journal, and in 2016 they began appearing in *Australian Bridge*.

Along the way, Ray Lee of Master Point Press, who had given us so much encouragement while producing the previous book, took an interest, and the result is that we are now able to offer to a wider audience the exploits of Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Lion, the Scarecrow, and so many others as they go through a year of playing bridge in the Over the Rainbow Bridge Club.

We hope you enjoy the result.

Harry Smith
Scone, Scotland
September 2016

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Prologue

Every town in every country in the civilized world has a bridge club. Every bridge club has its own distinctive character, and many a tale could be written about each one. There is a club, however, that stands out above all others, one where the unusual is the norm. A club whose membership contains a number of characters who would try the well-known patience and tolerance of any bridge club committee.

The Over the Rainbow Bridge Club has an interesting and unusual history, having been created by the merger of two long-standing clubs that had found it financially beneficial to share the same premises. Some years later, a full union was achieved over the dead bodies of certain individuals on both sides.

The cultural difference between the former clubs was heightened by one being a men's club, the Lollipop Guild, and the other a ladies' one, the Lullaby League. To be fair, most members welcomed the union, as it brought more opportunities for finding a partner worthy of their talents. The last bastion of opposition came from a group of married couples (generally one from each "partnership") who saw their last reason for being unable to play with their spouse callously kicked from under them. Dorothy's Auntie Em had been one such person, or perhaps it had been her Uncle Henry — with the passage of time, it was something on which they were unable to agree.

Like every other bridge club, the Over the Rainbow Bridge Club has its own set of events, with many quirks and peculiarities. Some players believe that the events could be better organized and that the committee should be doing a far better job — not, of course, that they would consider joining it themselves, as that would remove one of the pleasures of membership: sniping from the sidelines. One thing they know for sure is that their Club is far superior, in some undefined way, to those round about, and especially to those in the country's capital, Emerald City, a well-known hotbed of people with an inflated view of their own importance.



tin man



SCARECROW



DOROTHY



LION



auntie
em



uncle
henry



hank



hickory



zeke



wicked witch
of the
west



IRRITABLE witch



unpleasant
witch



glinda



the
WIZARD



honorary chairman
of the
LOLLIPOP GUILDS



mayor of
munchkinland



ada

CISSY



shy the
munchkin

Dorothy is one of the most popular members of the Club, despite her relative youth. She gets on well with all the members with whom this is possible. She is a good player, though perhaps not as technically proficient and logically incisive as her regular partner. His coldness and heartless insensitivity have earned him the nickname of the Tin Man. He speaks disparagingly of the lesser members of the Club. Many of these people actually have names, and indeed Dorothy knows most of them, a fact that is lost upon her partner as superficial and irrelevant. Most members consider the Tin Man to be the best player in the Club, something he is willing to confirm if asked.

Resplendent in a thick mane of hair and much admired by the lesser members of the Club (at least, those who do not check the scores) is a gentleman known to all as the Lion. He has a veneer of confidence, exuding bonhomie to all, but when he comes up against the better players, his courage often fails him. Partly to cover up his failings and partly to show up well in comparison, his regular partner is undeniably one of the worst players in the Club. With his unkempt, straw-colored hair growing out of his head and ears at all angles, he is generally known as the Scarecrow. Though he knows that he is lacking in the brains department, he is constantly trying to improve himself and feels honored and reassured by the presence of the Lion opposite him.

Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Lion and the Scarecrow often play together as a team in various Club events, achieving a fair degree of success. One of their main opponents is a group of ladies who live outside the town, at the four points of the compass. In this team, the strongest personality and best bridge player is a most unpleasant character known as the Wicked Witch of the West.

She takes great pride in being malevolent and can find a reason for antipathy towards men, women, old, young, tall, short, blonde, brunette... indeed everyone. Dorothy attracted her ire more than twenty years ago simply by moving to the town, buying a house in the east end that the Wicked Witch's sister had expressed interest in. For reasons unexplained, the

sister has not yet been able to find a suitable property in the area.

The Wicked Witch's teammates are two other obnoxious characters, christened by the Tin Man as the Irritable Witch of the South and the Unpleasant Witch of the North. They are a well-matched partnership. Both enjoy creating chaos at the table, upsetting opponents and each other. They each bid with the primary aim of ensuring that the hand is right-sided, which means their partner lays down dummy. The Wicked Witch struggles to keep partners but is often to be seen playing with the glamorous Glinda: beautiful, well-dressed, successful in business, pleasant to everyone, she has everything going for her — apart from bridge ability. As a contrast to her teammates, she is known as the Good Witch.

Living on a farm outside town are Dorothy's Auntie Em and Uncle Henry, among the few surviving stalwarts of the two original clubs. Em is a dangerous opponent: her bidding lacks sophistication but not aggression. She has an excellent nose for the game and plays the hands well. Her direct style applies to conversation as much as bidding. Uncle Henry is, by necessity, less talkative and knows that he is not in her class as a bridge player.

Part of the duties of their farm workers is to make up a four in the farmhouse and in the Club's team events. The best players among the farmhands are Hickory and Zeke. Hickory is very able in all aspects of the game. Indeed, he is so good that Auntie Em respects him — not a common occurrence. Zeke is a good card player but likes to ensure he makes his contracts. This leads him into competition with the Lion for the title of the Club's worst underbidder.

There are many other players of varying degrees of competence in this very successful Club. Now and again a visitor will appear; the local rule is that such a player is considered a shark until proven innocent.

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True or False?



Like most bridge clubs, the Over the Rainbow Bridge Club holds its main championship at the end of the season. Unlike other bridge clubs, the Over the Rainbow Bridge Club doesn't know when its season ends.

When the Lollipop Guild and Lullaby League Bridge clubs united thirty years ago, this proved to be something of a tricky issue, as they ran to different calendars. The men of the Guild had for some decades met in a golf club. The ball and stick game had to take precedence in the summer months, and bridge was allowed to come to the fore again as fall took hold. They had considered May as the end of their season.

The ladies of the League had met in a church hall, which was out of bounds to them during December and early January, as it was required for a sprinkling of festive events such as the nativity play and the pantomime (Auntie Em's Aladdin is still talked about today, with growing incredulity). They had followed the formal rather than the sporting year and had considered November to be its conclusion.

The new committee considered various options. At one stage, the idea of running the championships in February or August, exactly halfway between the two dates, was receiving a lot of support. Neither side would lose face: the two dates were equally unsuitable to both sets of members.

Attractive as this made it, compromise was never an option for certain members of each of the previous clubs. So the Over the Rainbow Bridge Club now has two club championships. One runs on Mondays from September to May with each pair counting their best twelve scores. The other takes place on four Fridays in November, with two nights of qualifying and two for the final and consolation events.

This November, two results from the qualifying rounds stood out. Last year's winners, Dorothy and the Tin Man, had won by a distance with scores of 63 percent and 69 percent. This surprised no one, except for the Tin Man — he was disgusted with their opening effort, which was so low as to be within the reach of many players in the Club on their best days. On the other hand, the Lion and the Scarecrow had somehow sneaked into the final with a miraculous average of 52 percent. The latter were also last year's winners, but of the consolation event. The main final was new ground for the Scarecrow, a disheveled man whose brain seemed equally disordered. He was delighted to make it into the big league. He attributed their success to the number of bridge books he had read since the previous year, combined with the confidence exuded by his partner.

Truth be told, the Lion, for all his bluster, was a coward at heart and would have felt happier as a moderately big fish in the shallower pond. However, he acknowledged his partner's compliment, his large mane of hair bouncing up and down. "King of the table — that's me! Oh dear, I see we are starting against the stars tonight. Let's see if we can't bring them back to earth with a bump."

He gulped back his fear, and then noticed that the Scarecrow had a book hanging out of his pocket. "*Falsecards* by Mike Lawrence," he read, and winced.

"Oh, it's very good. I'll be looking for opportunities to use them tonight," the Scarecrow enthused.

The Lion whipped it out and put it under the leg of a wobbly table. "Yes, very useful, indeed. I'd really prefer you to concentrate on playing true cards. Believe me, you are a natural when it comes to the false ones."

A few minutes later, they were seated and ready to begin, the Lion and the Scarecrow sitting East and West, respectively, while the Tin Man had the South seat.

“Strong notrump, five-card majors,” barked the Lion.

“Weak notrump, four-card majors,” replied Dorothy.

Dealer West. N/S vul.

♠ A K J 6 4	♠ Q 10 9 3	♠ K 8 7 5									
♥ 9 8 5 3	♥ 10 4	♥ 7 2									
♦ J 8 4 2	♦ A K Q 10	♦ 7 6									
♣ —	♣ 5 4 2	♣ A 10 9 8 3									
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	♥ A K Q J 6										
	♦ 9 5 3										
	♣ Q J 7 6										

They waited for the Scarecrow to bid. After a couple of minutes, the Lion snorted. “You do know it’s you, don’t you?” The Scarecrow turned red, stammered something indistinct, and opened One Spade.

“Thinking about the last hand, I expect,” suggested the Tin Man, a tall angular fellow with a voice like a rusty gate and personality to match.

Dorothy passed and the Lion bid Two Spades. The Tin Man elected to bid Three Hearts rather than double. After some thought, Dorothy raised to Four Hearts.

It had been a short auction:

West	North	East	South
<i>Scarecrow</i>	<i>Dorothy</i>	<i>Lion</i>	<i>Tin Man</i>
1♠	pass	2♠	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

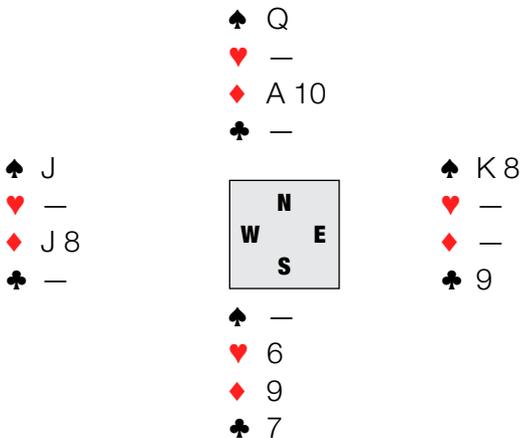
The Scarecrow led the ♠A.

“Looks like Three Notrump might have been better,” commented Dorothy, laying down dummy.

After collecting the first trick, the Scarecrow switched to a trump. The Tin Man won it in dummy and played a further three rounds, on which both dummy and the Lion parted with a club and a spade.

The Tin Man now turned his attention to clubs. Entering dummy with a top diamond, he led a club to his queen. The Scarecrow reached out to discard a small spade. Then a look of horror came over his face. Closer inspection of his ♠K revealed it to have what could only be described as clubbish tendencies. Quickly, he placed it on the table. There seemed nothing to do but play back a diamond.

The Tin Man went up with the king and played another club. The Lion rose with the ace, and the Scarecrow (after examining his cards carefully) threw a spade. The Lion continued with the ♣10, won by declarer’s jack, while both the Scarecrow and dummy shed spades. With three tricks to go declarer needed the rest. This was the position:



The Tin Man tabled his hand and pushed the ♥6 into the middle. “The defense has made the situation crystal clear. Let us consider the missing cards: to wit, three spades, two diamonds, and one club. The club is known to be in the Lion’s hand. There are three spades yet to be played. Clearly, from

the bidding and lead, the Scarecrow has king and another and the Lion has the last one. That being the case, the diamonds are split one each. What, you may ask, if the Scarecrow has all three outstanding spades and the Lion a club and two diamonds? Clearly, this is very unlikely, since nobody would voluntarily raise the Scarecrow on a doubleton. Even so, this presents no problem. I will play my last heart. The Lion, in order to hold onto his last club, will have to discard one of his diamonds.”

The Tin Man was now in an exuberant mood. “You were quite right, partner: Three Notrump would have been easier, but even our friends here couldn’t fail to take their four top tricks. I fancy our 620 will score very well.”

He paused to accept their surrender. The Lion’s eyes glowed angrily. “I’m sure you’re right, as usual, but would you mind playing it out?”

The Scarecrow threw the ♠J, and both dummy and the Lion followed suit, throwing spades. The Tin Man next played the ♦9, to which the Scarecrow followed with the eight.

“The Scarecrow’s last card is the king of spades,” said the Tin Man, “and so the jack of diamonds is about to fall. Play the ace, partner.”

Dorothy did so, and the Lion, with his chest puffed out, detached the ♠K from his hand, slowly lowered it towards the table, and with a look of contempt at the Tin Man, turned it over.

“I think the last one is mine,” said the Scarecrow, revealing the ♦J. He looked apologetically round the table. “I’m terribly sorry I didn’t have the king of spades. I can see why you thought I had it — I thought so myself to start with, and then when I realized it was my bid, I felt I had better say something in case you thought I had been thinking.”

The Lion chuckled. “Don’t worry, partner, no one would have accused you of that. Misplacing your king was a fine bit of falsecarding.”

The Tin Man started to splutter. Dorothy tried to calm him down.

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Somehow it's no surprise to find that everyone in the Land of Oz is a keen bridge player, even the Scarecrow and the Tin Man. The Lion, of course, is a congenital underbidder, and all four Witches (whether East, West, North or South) are deliciously subversive. Aunty Em likes to get her own way most of the time, and the Wizard is a visiting expert from Down Under...

Delightfully witty, with entertaining hands, these stories began appearing in 2015 in *BRIDGE Magazine* (UK) and *Australian Bridge*.



ALEX ADAMSON (Linlithgow, Scotland) has played bridge at an international level, most recently for Scotland in the 2016 World Bridge Games. He is the author of a number of books on local history.



HARRY SMITH (Scone, Scotland) has represented Scotland in several European Open and Senior Championships, and captained the Senior Team to a European Bronze Medal in Dublin in 2013. The story of the subsequent World Championship in Bali is told in *Scotland's Senior Moment*.



BILL BUTTLE (illustrator) is a retired dentist who lives in Northern Ontario. His 'Out of Hand' cartoons appear monthly in the *ACBL Bulletin*, and two collections are available from Master Point Press.

