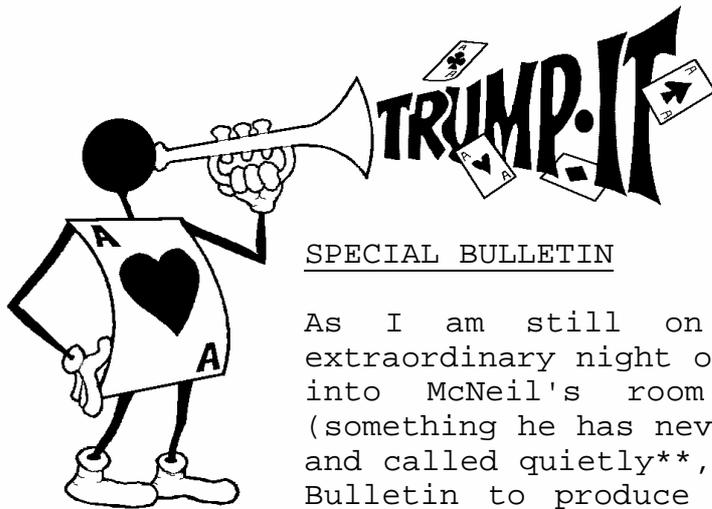


# ARANA CONTRACT BRIDGE CLUB



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## SPECIAL BULLETIN

As I am still on a high after the most extraordinary night of my book launch, I charged into McNeil's room at the crack of dawn (something he has never seen in his entire life) and called quietly\*\*, "Get up, McNeil, we have a Bulletin to produce today". One eye shot open and in his usual gruff way he bellowed "WHAT!! HAVE YOU GONE COMPLETELY MAD, VALENTINE, I'VE RETIRED, HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?" "Too bad", I stated, "You've got 10 minutes to get dressed there's pad and pen on the table, we are about to do a swan song for my club members". Feeling that I had lost his attention when he turned his back to me, I added "And by the way, I'm the Editor this time and as you would be a hopeless typist, you can have the title of Assistant Editor". Well, that gained his attention and I quickly made my exit before he had the opportunity of telling me how wonderful my idea was (after all I am very modest when it comes to getting praise for my good ideas).

He entered the kitchen 5 minutes later with a sort of dumbfounded look upon his face, speechless for the first time in his life. "It's O.K., McNeil, don't try and thank me just write up a few hands and as a special treat, I'll allow you a couple of paragraphs for an editorial".

When he had completed his two articles, he flopped back into bed, and said "Wake me when it's time for tea". Oh! McNeil, it's lovely to see that nothing changes, even when the roles are reversed.

\*\* [Roared like a b....y lioness. McN.]  
[P.S. Managed to slip in one footnote.]

On a serious note. It is impossible for me to put my thanks into words. I can only say that I never dreamed a book launch could be so perfect. To see so many friends gathered under one roof who were there to wish me well and the book a success, was overwhelming. I truly thank you all for being part of this very special occasion.

Judy Valentine  
Editor



(Eat your heart out, McNeil)

LAST THOUGHTS FROM DANIEL KEITH IN THE ~~ARENA~~ ARANA CLUB

Julius Caesar once wrote "I came, I saw, I conquered". Well, McNeil came, saw and was conquered! In fact, overwhelmed by the warmth, friendship, hospitality and sheer fun of your members. The launch of Judy's book was just sheer joy - I cannot remember such a fun night since Aunt Daphne caught her moustache in the mangle!

And how about J. Valentine, W.F.A. (World Famous Authoress!) Nervous? On edge? You had better believe it! She had four showers on Saturday, went to the hairdresser at least six times and made about 270 phone calls. It was a Ten Valium Day!! I helped matters of course, by looking mysteriously at my notes and laughing and saying to myself in a loud voice, "No - you shouldn't say that!" or "Well, it IS the truth" or "Maybe David will forgive her in time!" etc etc. By this time her outlook hovered between junket and jelly, when I delivered the knockout blow. "Listen to this" I said, "All good guest speakers start off with a joke - so I am going to break the ice with this one". Then I told her a blue joke which would have emptied an RSL Club at 2 a.m. What an effect!! She turned white as a sheet, collapsed onto the sofa, struggled for breath and finally gasped "McNeil - even YOU wouldn't tell that story in public - WOULD YOU?" "Why not", I shrugged, "they ARE your friends aren't they?" Well, with friends like McNeil, who needs enemies?

Judy has often said how much she enjoys teaching her "friends at the club". After meeting you all, I can understand why. It just has to be the happiest, friendliest club in Australia. I can't begin to tell you how happy it made me to meet so many of you and be part of the fun. I would like to think that maybe, just maybe, I'll get up to Brisbane again sometime but being a realist have to concede the odds are about the same as winning the lottery. Nevertheless I am going to give it my very best shot.

Thanks once again for all the happy memories.

Keith (nothing but the truth!!) McNeil

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PLAYING WITH A FAMOUS AUTHORESS by (unknown, starving, in  
a garet), Keith McNeil

OR

WILL YOU BE MY VALENTINE?

Here in Brisbane to help launch Judy's excellent book, I reminded her that we had played together twice before (admittedly in weak events) for two wins. "Why don't we play in the Australia-Wide Pairs?", I asked. "If it were a handicap event I'd play", she snorted, "since you would be my handicap".

Ignoring this unjust cut with my customary grace and dignity, I exercised the guest's prerogative to INSIST and thus we found ourselves at the Corinda Bridge Club where the locals had gone out of their way to ensure our comfort, reserving a car space near the door (since I'm too old and feeble to walk very far on my 1½ feet) and finding us a North/South seat, plus showing us the usual warm hospitality of Queenslanders.

We had discussed our system en route, but I somehow had the feeling that while Judy bulldozed her way ruthlessly through roundabouts, stop signs and red traffic lights, that the symphony of a dozen carhorns had blotted out most of the McNeil wisdom. Here are some typical triumphs and disasters (Judy, South McNeil, North).

First of all a complaint to the organisers.

BOARD 4

<p>A 8 K 10 Q 9 8 6 4 3 J 6 2</p> <p>10 9 4 Q J 9 7 2 10 5 A 7 5</p>	<p>K J 6 3 A 8 6 4 2 K 10 9 3</p>	<p>After East opened a thin 1H Judy doubled, West bid 2H and I bid 3D which was passed out. On the heart ace lead I made 9 tricks for +110. Since E/W are cold for 3H for -140 this should have been a good score. Wrong! Only 56 points (or % since the maximum is 100). Seems wrong to me.</p>
<p>Q 7 5 2 5 3 A K J 7 Q 8 4</p>		

Another classic injustice occurred on Board 10, where my thoughtful play cost us 14 points. This was the hand -

BOARD 10

<p>A K J 6 A 9 K 8 6 J 7 5 4</p> <p>Q 8 5 4 J 5 3 Q 10 5 4 8 3</p> <p>7 K 8 6 4 2 9 3 A K 9 6 2</p>	<p>10 9 3 2 Q 10 7 A J 7 2 Q 10</p>	<p>Judy, her morals eroded by my company, opened 1H on the South hand, an action with which I thoroughly agree. I responded 1S and she rebid 2C. Thinking about a slam I trotted out the old fourth-suit bid of 2D and Judy showed a 5-5 by rebidding 3C. Now I was in my usual place - at the crossroads! My clubs made a club slam look a bit fragile, and I did not want a diamond coming through my king in 4H (correct, as it happened, since in 4H we lose two diamonds and a trump) so I settled for 3NT and got a boot out of the barrier when the lead was a spade into my AKJ. I wanted to set up the clubs without letting West in for a diamond lead, so</p>
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after calling for a low club from dummy, I astutely ducked the club 10, keeping East on lead. This is clearly the best play in theory, but in practice it cost a trick as the suit unkindly split 2-2 and 630 was worth only 58 while 660 would have attracted 72!

Partner had sternly admonished me about overbidding when vulnerable, so when I picked up -

Q 7 6 5 3           and heard RHO open 1D, my first thought was to bid  
K J 6 4 2           2NT, showing in our system, 6-10 points with at  
9                    least 5-5 in the majors. Then I noticed that we  
Q 8                   were vulnerable and they were not, so I passed. In  
                      a twinkling they were in 3NT with me on lead. Since  
God grants small miracles more often than big ones, I led the  
heart 4 in preference to a spade and good old Judy produced the  
ace and returned one for five tricks and 82 big points to the  
good guys. The official commentary pointed out that if North  
shows his distribution, East/West will probably play and make  
5D. Seeking some small crumb of praise from partner, I said  
"Good thing I didn't bid 2NT partner". "I hope you didn't even  
THINK about it vul", was the stern retort. "Of course not", I  
murmured weakly.

The next hand I opened a Weak No-Trump on a good looking 13  
points (all vul), next opponent doubled and Judy redoubled. When  
everyone passed, I thought we had got our lines crossed and  
maybe the redouble was for take-out, but no - it was the  
opponents who mucked it up. Good old partner had 12 big points  
and with two overtricks, that was +1600 for our first 100.

Then came this little charmer,

Q                   with the opener on your left bidding 1H passed  
8 4                 around to you. Having no idea what or how high to  
A K Q 9 8 3       bid, I decided to double and defer the agony until  
K Q J 10           the next round. Opener found an amazing pass on  
                   AK42 AQ109762 104 void, Judy bid 2C and I took  
the bull by the horns and bid 5C, which duly made 12 tricks when  
opener took the heart ace and returned the suit, hoping to give  
partner a ruff. Judy held - 963 K3 J62 A9653 and 420 was  
worth 92 points.

Then, discipline led to a bad result. Partner opens 1S and you  
hold

A Q 5 3 2           Past experience has told me that the best bid on  
3                    this shape is a direct jump to 4S, but mindful of  
10 8 7 5 3        partner's lectures when vulnerable, I bid only 2S.  
10 8                This let them in to bid hearts and over our 4S,  
                      they saved in 5H which was doubled but brought in  
only 300 points for a lousy 32 points. We had exactly 10 tricks  
in 4S. Curses!!!

Later on, holding two aces, I heard the opponents scream into 7H. Since one of my aces was the heart Ace, I was able to double with some assurance of success (and 100 points). Then came the hand I enjoyed most that night. Most people know my deep loathing and utter contempt for the weak two bid which, in my opinion, is effective only 10% of the time and that against rabbits. On Board 18, opener bid 2S and Judy bid 3C (natural - not strong enough to double). After grave consideration I wrote 6C on the bidding pad and I kid you not - every vestige of blood drained from Judy's face!! Not surprising, although she well and truly had her bid, clutching K 103 J1083 AKQ532 and saw the spade ace led.

All was well, since I had - void A65 AKQ754 10864 and she made all the tricks for 88 points. Judy displayed an almost touching faith in partner when she held this monster.

A K 7 3            She opened 1H, heard 2D from me, reversed into 2S  
 A Q J 5 2           and then heard 3D from me. Since we were vul  
 Q 9 8                (again) she knew (?) I must have my bid, so she bid  
 A                     6D. This time it was my turn to turn a whiter shade  
                       of pale, since I had only -  
                       Q J 10 A J 7 6 5 4 3 8 6 2

but even though I guessed wrongly by letting the diamond queen run to a singleton king, there were still 12 tricks for 78 points (92 if I dropped the diamond king).

Then, for the first time in about 30 years, I did EVERYTHING right on this little lot.

BOARD 24

<p>A J 10 9          K 8          Q 7 4 2          A 8 3</p>	<p>4 3          6 3 2          J 10 9          Q 9 7 6 4</p>	<p>Sitting North, I opened 1NT (12-14) and Judy bid 3NT, remarking as she put the dummy down - "I hope I've got enough for you to make it!"</p> <p>Majestically ignoring this cheap sally, and delighted to get a club lead which saved me locating the queen I did the first right thing by leading the</p>
<p>Q 7 6 5          Q J 10 9 5          A 5          5 2</p>	<p>K 8 2          A 7 4          K 9 6 3          K J 10</p>	

diamond 3 and playing the queen. Now a low diamond back saw me duck the diamond 10 and watch West's ace clatter down. The heart queen was returned and I took the king and played the spade jack. With my hand concealed, most East's would cover with the queen if they had it (Zia's Bols Tip) so I went up with the king and hooked spades twice to land 12 tricks and 92 points. This gave me a chance to admonish partner "Didn't you even think about a slam?", I asked, "After all, I was playing the hand!"

The hand that Judy enjoyed the most (which says a great deal about her character) was Board 22.

J		East opened vul 1S, Judy
A 7 6 3 2		found the book bid of
Q 7 5 3		pass, West passed and I
A Q 3		had no problem in
4 3	K 9 6 5 2	reopening with a take- out
10 8 5 4	Q J	double, which Judy, full
8 4 2	K J 9	of sadism, blood lust, and
J 7 6 2	K 5 4	female power, converted to
A Q 10 8 7		penalties by passing.
K 9		
A 10 6		She led the club 10,
10 9 8		covered by the jack and my
		ace and I remembered to

lead a trump. Poor old East fel by covering and from there it was downhill all the way. "Down 1400", exclaimed the merciless Valentine to me "thank goodness you made one good decision tonight and did not bid 2H".

With partners like that - who needs enemies?

P.S. We scored just under 2000 points which I reckon is about 65%. Not enough to win the overall Australian competition, but maybe sufficient to keep our local record intact.

(Editor's Comment - Because McNeil is staying until Tuesday to enjoy the Valentine hospitality, he decided that as he still owed Lindy Ward a favour for pushing him around Expo in a wheel chair, (only a saint would have agreed to do this and you all know I'm no saint), he would clear the slate by having a game of bridge with her at the QCBC Club Rooms. I quickly reminded him that indeed it added to the debt, not cleared it!!

Maybe I can persuade Lindy into getting her revenge by giving me an article for our "Trump-It" covering McNeil's blunders. Maybe not - it is only a four or five page newsletter and I do not wish to write another book at this stage.)

#### FINAL THANK YOU TO MY OLD SOUL MATE

For 15 odd years McNeil and I have enjoyed sparring with one another and this newsletter could not be an exception. In hindsight, can you think of a more appropriate person to launch my book. I can't. The man has class. Who else would have launched my book by throwing it in the air towards me? Who else would have produced the black nightie? No one except McNeil.

I believe he made the night special, not only for me, but for all of you and through this "Trump-It" I want to say a b...i...g thank you from all at the Arana Contract Bridge club.

And from me - Thank you, my old soul mate.

This article has not passed through the editors hands so please excuse any errors.

I had an article written on the Australian Pairs but McNeil seems to have stolen my thunder - so - instead I would like to use the Trump-It to try to thank Judy for the honour she bestowed upon me on Saturday night by dedicating her book to me.

She said and I quote - "without whom there would be no book" - not that I'm calling her a liar? But, this is not true. "The Book" has been there within Judy for a long time and would have been written - MAYBE - I just helped it to happen a little sooner than she had planned. For me, and I use a McNeil quote, "I consider it an honour and a privilege to become a small part of it". I also want to thank Judy for her sharing of McNeil? I spent much time in his company while he was here and now know why he is so special - mind you some (many) of his jokes leave a lot to be desired?

As "Aranians", to quote Adrienne, we have been very fortunate to have hosted such a great Book Launch in the presence of such honoured guests. The attendance of club members at the fabulous and a great tribute to a very special lady. I know "The Book" will sell and without a doubt the second edition will soon be in print.

THANK-YOU JUDY AND CONGRATULATIONS ON A JOB WELL DONE.

