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www.ibpa.com

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1546340545@qq.com

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+1 212 366 4799

barryrigal@mindspring.com

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david.stern.bridge@gmail.com

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+91 98214 53817

dilipgidwani@hotmail.com

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+31 655 680 120

e.ettinger@chello.nl

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+64 9 232 8494

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brentmanley@yahoo.com

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+1 519 981 9248

thorpe.katie@gmail.com

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richardjfleet@gmail.com

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davidharris@ntlworld.com

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Maureen Hiron, Gamesperson Extraordinaire



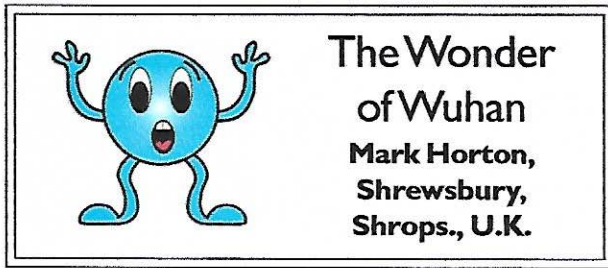
Zippy (R.I.P.) at home in Málaga with staff member Maureen Hiron

Bridge players are often very accomplished in fields other than bridge. IBPA member Maureen Hiron, best known to us as the former bridge correspondent for *The Independent* and the *Irish Independent*, is much-better known in the world at large as a games inventor and hospital charity organiser. As the author of over 70 published games, Maureen's games have won three *Mensa Select Awards* as the best board game of the year and numerous other awards. Five of Maureen's new games (*Kivi*, *Colo Rolo*, *7Ate9 Multi*, *Grabolo 3D* and *Der Lila Wal*) debuted at Essen Spiel 2019, the world's biggest games fair, held annually every October. Over 200,000 games enthusiasts attended the fair this year, a record. Maureen was quite startled when she arrived for a meeting in Essen with Europe's largest games company, Ravensburger Spieleverlag. Upon arrival, Philipp Sprick, the head of Family and Adult Games, introduced her to a new colleague as follows: "This is Maureen Hiron – the world's top female games inventor of all time." That was quite an accolade. We asked Maureen to tell us how she got started in games development – here's what she had to say:

"Back in 1973, a large lump of the school in which I taught detached itself and landed on my head. This put me into early retirement – and nearly killed me. Then, suddenly, on April 1, 1982, apropos of nothing in particular, *Continuo* flashed into my mind. Such a simple concept. All players, regardless of age, could play together – or even play solo. My husband Alan and I formed a

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Address all IBPA Bulletin correspondence to: JOHN CARRUTHERS
1322 Patricia Blvd., Kingsville, Ontario, N9Y 2R4, CANADA
Tel: +1 519-733-9247 email: ibpaeditor@sympatico.ca



Bulletin #9 at the 2019 World Bridge Championships carried an announcement about IPBA awards for play in online events. A candidate deal was dealt in a Robot tournament during those Championships – and the declarer was in Wuhan! Simon Stocken had invested US\$1.35 to play in an ACBL Robot tournament. This deal soon appeared...

Board 2. Dealer East. NS Vul.

♠ A 8 7 4 3 2
♥ A K
♦ K 3
♣ A J 10

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

1. Natural, game-forcing
2. RKCB
3. 2 key cards + ♠Q
4. Kings?
5. No

Stocken (no mean poker player) decided to go 'all in' by bidding seven notrump. He knew that his partner must have a little more than the king-queen of spades and the ace of diamonds. If that something were in diamonds, there would probably be a play for all the tricks.

West led the ten of hearts.

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

Dummy was a little disappointing. Simon won with the ace of hearts and cashed five rounds of spades and the red kings to reach this position:

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

When Stocken cashed the last spade, West had to part with a club and the now redundant eight of diamonds went from dummy. East could comfortably part with a club, and then threw a heart when a diamond went to the jack. However, when declarer played the ace of diamonds from dummy, East became the second victim of the non-simultaneous double squeeze. East had to throw a club and declarer played a club to the ace, felling the outstanding honours and promoting the club jack to glory.

Maureen Hiron (cont'd)

company, and five months later *Continuo* went on sale in the U.K., soon becoming Britain's top-selling game. Now, *Continuo* and its siblings have sold over six million sets around the world. A string of other successful games followed. Whilst I invented the games, Alan play-tested them. The partnership worked very well as I proofread his bridge writing."

In 1990, due in large part to her charity work for London hospitals, Maureen was voted 'Londoner of the Year' in London Electricity's Brightening up London awards. The following year, the Hiron moved to southern Spain. However, when Alan died in 1999, Maureen's idyllic world came crashing down. She took over from Alan as Bridge Correspondent to *The Independent*, and soon added the *Irish Independent*. One or the other of the Hiron was Bridge Correspondent to *The Independent* from the its birth in 1986 to its going online in 2016.

Maureen's other great love is music. She can get a tune out of almost any instrument (embouchure instruments excepted). During her college days, Maureen wrote a kid's operetta which she called *Cats*. (Yes, also based on T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*.)

On a Caribbean cruise in 2011, Maureen and Sheyla Bonnick of Boney M became friends (Boney M were the cabaret performers and Maureen was the bridge lecturer). Maureen and Sheyla collaborated on an album, *Look Beyond*, in a new musical genre Maureen called matzar, music written in modes rather than keys. The album has enjoyed international success and acclaim.

Maureen is indeed a Renaissance woman.