

## Introduction

Welcome to Intermediate Place, where all the tens, nines and eights go to relax and tell bridge stories after a hard day at the duplicate table. Since cards live in a strict social order where an ace always beats a king, a ten a nine, and a three a deuce, they are very conscious of their rank. As a result, they have formed three social clubs: the Royal Honors Club for aces, kings, queens, and jacks; Intermediate Place; and the Sevens and Under Public House.

Intermediate Place is quite cozy, but roomy enough to accommodate all of the intermediates plus everyone from the Sevens and Under Public House on special occasions. Its center is dominated by a horseshoe-shaped bar surrounded by tables and chairs. In the roomy kitchen, delicious food is cooked for any intermediate who might be feeling hunger pangs after a hard day at the bridge table. Next to the bar, a large blackboard has been provided so that the regulars can diagram bridge hands and auctions. Friendly and hospitable bartenders and waiters serve orders quickly and efficiently. The jukebox has a nice selection of golden oldies, blues, and jazz classics. It is no wonder that intermediates feel so much at home here.

This book is set entirely in Intermediate Place. Readers will hear the tens, nines, and eights tell bridge tales in their own voice and in their own way. A great number of bridge players have forgotten about this important group of cards, but listening to their tales of triumphs and tribulations will surely change many views.

The regulars at Intermediate Place feel that bridge buffs frequently discriminate against them. When a hand is evaluated, for example, only the honor cards are counted. Even a lowly jack is worth one more point than any of the intermediates.

And yet, these middle cards add a richness to a bridge hand that gives it much more trick taking potential. Just take a look at the following four hands:

1. ♠ A84	2. ♠ A109	3. ♠ A54	4. ♠ A108
♥ KJ8	♥ KJ10	♥ KJ2	♥ KJ9
♦ Q98	♦ Q109	♦ Q43	♦ Q105
♣ AK96	♣ AK109	♣ AK42	♣ AK98

All four hands count in at the exact same 17 high card points, yet even a beginning bridge player will know that hand # 2 is the best of the lot; hand # 4 next best; # 1 is third best; and # 3 is the worst of the lot. This is clearly because hand # 2 has a wealth of intermediates, while hand # 4 is not too far behind # 2, but has more nines than tens. Hand # 1 has more eights than nines or tens, and hand # 3 contains absolutely no intermediates. So why are tens, nines, and eights so overlooked? Could it be laziness on the part of the average bridge player? Perhaps, but it should come as no surprise that the most successful bridge players always pay the greatest of attention to the middle cards, and in so doing, gain many wonderful results at the table.

It is my hope that readers will never look at eights, nines, and tens in the same way after reading this book. And this is nothing but good. Intermediates hate being ignored and undervalued. They are there to serve any bridge buff who chooses to see their value and use it. Now it's time to take a magical tour of Intermediate Place. Your bridge will undoubtedly improve. The little intermediates will make sure of it.