Books of the year *by Derrick Browne*

For the first time, the International Bridge Press Association Master Point Press Book of the Year has joint winners: *Right through the Pack Again* by Ron Klinger and *North of the Master Solvers' Club* by Frank Vine.

The four other contending books were *Wielding the Axe – the Vanishing Art of the Penalty Double* by Augie Boehm, *The Setting Trick – Practical Problems in Bridge Defense* by Ian McCance, *The Devil's Tickets* by Gary Pomerantz, and *Frank Stewart's World of Bridge* by Frank Stewart.

The original book *Right Through the Pack* by Robert Darvas and Norman de Villiers Hart dates to 1948 and was rated number two in a celebrated list of the world's best bridge books. It features each card telling its own story, an approach repeated in Julian Pottage's 2006 book *Back Through the Pack*.

Klinger's book uses the same device, overlaid onto stories of the Old Master, who appeared in a long-running series of articles by Klinger in *The Bridge World* magazine. In the final of those articles, the Old Master was about to die. In this book, the cards try to inspire him to stay alive: "What if we try to remember a special occasion where each one of us had an important role to play?"

Here is Klinger's story of the club four.

It makes you feel so important when you are the vital card on a deal, said the club four. I had a special role to play when the Old Master was faced with this problem:

Dealer East, both vul.

	NORTH S Q8643 H AKJ D A2 C A62	
WEST S AJT9 H T98 D J8754 C 3		EAST S K72 H Q762 D QT96 C 75
	SOUTH S 5 H 543 D K3 C KQJT984	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			3C
Pass	6C	All pass	

Knowing that the Old Master's 3C opening vulnerable was expected to have seven tricks, North had four winners to bridge the tally to eleven tricks. There was potential for an extra trick in hearts, possibly a ruff in diamonds and maybe the spades would be useful. Bidding 6C entailed risk, but then, that is what bridge is all about: Do you have the courage to take the risks?

West led the H10: king – two (low encourage) – three. The Old Master immediately played a low spade: two – five – nine. West returned the H9, taken by the ace and a low spade was ruffed with the CK. The Old Master continued with the CQ and then the CJ to dummy's CA. A third spade was ruffed, this time with the C8. Have you noticed how the Old Master was keeping me intact? said the C4. This was now the position:

	NORTH S Q8 H J D A2 C 6	
WEST S A H 8 D J875 C —		EAST S — H Q7 D QT96 C —
	SOUTH S — H 5 D K3 C T94	

The D3 went to the ace and the S8 was ruffed with the C9 and that set up the spade lady. Now my turn came, said the club four. Had I been played any sooner or used for ruffing declarer would not be able to reach dummy. I was the access key. The C6 won and the SQ allowed the Old Master to pitch the losing heart.