

How Great to Have an Expert Over My Shoulder

By Jerry Helms and Tom Trautmann

\$25, spiral-bound, 96 pages

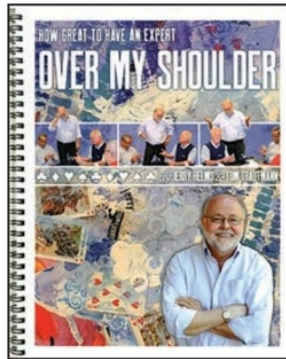
Reviewed by Paul Linxwiler

A conversational approach

The over-my-shoulder format is a popular one with bridge writers, as it allows the author to give a stream-of-consciousness description of the events at the table. Many of the top bridge authors prefer this storytelling device – Terence Reese was arguably the best ever at employing it – but Helms and Trautmann have found a new spin on the method, crafting a dialogue between a teacher (Helms) and

a student (Trautmann) on a set of 68 interesting deals. The result is a charming instructional book about bidding aimed at intermediate players.

Each of the examples discussed by Tom and Jerry (I admit that this made me giggle) begins with Tom presenting a hand he held from a recent game. Tom describes what happened in the auction until the critical point of the bidding is reached, and he then asks Jerry what he should have done at that juncture. Helms replies with a brief description of how to



think about not only the particular problem presented, but also related ones to help his student generalize his approach to the auction.

Tom usually reveals what happened at the table, with Helms giving an approving nod when Tom gets it right, or a wag of the finger when things go off the rails.

Each write-up is concise, and the problems presented are terrific challenges for intermediate players.

Available from jerryhelms.com