



BY KEN MONZINGO

I often hear stories about everybody's "Aunt Lucy" who plays bridge and knows every card before the play begins. Of course, *nobody* - Aunt Lucy included - knows *every* card. But I can show you how to easily know *most* of declarer's 13 cards *before* the opening lead is made, and maybe all 13 of 13 very early in the hand - *before* you play.

Example: You hold: ♠Qxx ♥10xxx ♦Axxx ♣Kx

The bidding:

South	Partner	North	You
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Now's the time to ask yourself what you know. Those asleep, of course, know nothing. But you, using your mental blackboard, write out the following: "Declarer probably has no singletons or voids since he rebid notrump some cards in all suits." How many cards does declarer hold? Thirteen? - very good! What are they? You don't know? I know most of them!

Let's count his hand, remembering he has no singletons or voids. How many spades does he have, 0-1? No. Does he have 2? Yes, for sure! Does he have 3? Maybe. Does he have 4? No, he should have bid them if he's a good partner. How many hearts, 0-1? No. Does he have 2? Yes. 3? Maybe. 4? No, he would have raised partner. How many diamonds? 1-3? No! He has at least four - he must have a four-card suit *somewhere*, and he opened the bidding with 1♦. We've assumed he can't have four hearts or four spades (see above).

So can he have five diamonds? Maybe. 6? No, he would have rebid 2♦ with 6, or 7.

How many clubs? 0-1? No. 2? Maybe (3-3-5-2). Does he have 3? Maybe. 4? Maybe. 5? No, he probably would have rebid 2♣ if he were 2-2-4-5 (or opened the bidding 1♣).

What we now know for sure about Declarer's Hand Pattern?

		Truth	Maybe
How many does he have?	spades	2	3
	hearts	2	3
	diamonds	4	5
	clubs	2	3 or 4

Before the first card is led, we can already "see" 10 of declarer's 13 cards! The "truths." Now, if you pay attention to the opening lead from your partner, and, thinking in both *suit* patterns and *hand* patterns you should be able to locate one, two or *three* more. Let's say your partner leads the ♠2 (playing fourth-best opening leads).

You look at the dummy which has, 3-4-3-3 distribution. Now look at your hand pattern (above) which is 3-4-4-2. If partner has four spades, declarer has three! Spades are 4-3-3-3. Suddenly you know 11 of his 13 cards before the first card is called from the dummy. Now look at the club suit! Three in dummy and you have only two. Partner doesn't have five or he would have led one. The missing clubs are 4-4. Declarer is 3-2-4-4! You know all 13!

Maybe Aunt Lucy *was* truly an expert. Maybe she learned to count in hand patterns!