N A B C SUMMER 2009 – WASHINGTON DC
Thinking (10) bridge - By Eddie Kantar

Dealer West Vul E-W	♠ J 5 3 2 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ A J 10 ♣ 6 4 3		WEST 1 NT All Pass	NORTH Pass	EAST 3 Club	SOUTH 3 Heart
♠ A K Q 8 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ K 7 5		♠ 10 9 ♥ 8 ♦ Q 4 3 2 ♣ Q J 10 9 8 2				
	♠ 7 6 4 ♥ K Q J 9 3 2 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ A		Opening Lead : ♠A			

Bidding commentary: There are several ways to sign off in a minor after partner opens 1NT. East-West were using jumps to 3♣ and 3♦ as signoffs. Others use the jumps as invitational and others as slam tries! What does this tell you? It tells you that you and your partner must discuss your methods for responding to 1NT with long minors.

Defensive commentary: West starts with three high spades, East discarding the ♣Q, showing a sequence in clubs headed by the queen. West plays a fourth spade to kill dummy's established jack, and South overtrumps when East ruffs.

 Play commentary: As declarer, the key card to find is the ♦Q, and there is no rush to play diamonds. As much information as possible (points and distribution) should be gleaned from the other suits before attacking diamonds, a suit that can be finessed in either direction. South drives out the ♥A. West wins and exits safely with a club to your ace. After drawing trumps, you have the following information at your disposal: West started with 9 high-card points in spades, 4 in hearts and the ♣K (based on East's discard of the ♣Q) for a total of 16 HCP. That's enough. If West had the ♦Q, he would have 18 HCP and would have been too strong to open 1NT.

Play East for the ♦Q. Had the HCP count been inconclusive (either player could hold the ♦Q), try to work out the distribution, eventually playing the opponent with the greater original length in diamonds for the queen. For example, if the opponents were playing a 16-18 point notrump range, you couldn't be sure who had the ♦Q. However, the count would tell you that East started with four diamonds and West three. The odds are now 4-3 that East has the ♦Q.