This deal was a bit of a bidding challenge for West. After a 1♠-1♣; 2♦ start, West has a great deal of slam interest but no convenient descriptive bid available. The book bid is probably a forcing 4♠, which will surely get the partnership to slam on this deal as East has a super max 2♣ bid with outstanding controls. However, one can picture plenty of other 2♠ rebids (Kx AJ Qxx KTxxxx) where slam is not so great. You never want to be in 5 of a minor when 3NT is making at matchpoints. West might improvise with a forcing and ambiguous 2♦, after which East should jump to 3NT and show an excellent 2♣ rebid in context (denying three ♠ or four ♥ in most expert partnerships). With that, West should bid 4♠ (forcing!) and either via cuebidding, Blackwood or both the partnership should get to the laydown 6♠.

You might infer from the above comments that I really liked the East hand, and I decided to upgrade it to a 15-17 NT at my first turn. Aces, kings and tens are undervalued, and even though the hand is very suit oriented, it is always a good idea to get the general nature of your hand across in a single bid when possible. My partner was not certain that we would be on the same page about the meaning of a jump to 4NT after Stayman (it is quantitative in standard inviting 6NT, but occasional partnerships often have a mix-up on these types of sequences), so she made a direct (and conservative) 4NT call in response to 1NT. Even though I only had 14 HCP, her failure to use Stayman was encouraging (partner should have some stuff in the minors), I had great controls and a source of tricks in clubs. Jeff Goldsmith, whose wonderful website is linked on our club site, has a fun section where he lists his "Imperious Rules of Bridge." (http://www.jeff-goldsmith.org/bridge/rules.html). Rules 39 and 40 suggested I needed to accept this invitation, so I bid 6♠ over 4NT and we found slam.

One last piece of advice is to have an understanding with partner what bids mean along the way after a quantitative 4NT as it can't hurt to have some understanding there. Pass and 6NT are easy, but do five level bids show aces and accept, or suggest a potential better strain? The latter will either be a five card suit or a strong four card minor; you can assume that Stayman would have been employed if partner had a four card major. I've run across people playing the ace-asking way, but I strongly recommend the latter meaning as the better agreement so you can play in a suit when you have a fit, and try 6NT otherwise. Gerber is always there to ask for aces if need be.