

Like An H-Bomb

Playing Contract Bridge Has Struck at Louisburg Jr. College

SPECIAL NOTE: Some of the following material was borrowed from several bridge sources.

By **SAM SHIELD**

In the history of mankind, there seem to be certain phenomena, certain subjects and categories, which are apt to explode whole populations into frenzies of excitement. To name a few, there are children trapped in wells, religious persecution, invasions from Mars, escapes by long term prisoners, and — bridge. Each year this mad craze hits the campus of Louisburg College like an H-bomb and everyone succumbs to the radiation. Nobody seems to know who starts the fad each year, but the enthusiasm of the players keeps the game going at all hours of the day and night. Nobody seems to know about the history of the game either.

It has been said that bridge was invented in a mental ward in Constantinople, but to accept this theory is to deny the great progress made by Turkish psychiatry.

The game really started when a politician named Talleyrand once invited a young man to make a fourth at whist. Now do not ask me what whist is. The young man explained that he did not know the game, whereupon a shocked Talleyrand exclaimed: "Young man, you do not play whist? What a sad old age you reserve for yourself."

Whist, by Talleyrand, led to bridge whist, which led to auction bridge, which led to contract bridge, which led to murder, divorce, suicide, mayhem, and undone homework.

Essentially, you are playing whist when you play bridge. Contract bridge is a sort of high-falutin'

whist. In 1860, bridge-whist came to life. It was more complex than whist in that the dealer had the right to select trump instead of turning up the last card for trump. The person sitting to the dealers' left could decline his trump bid with one of his own, and hence bridge was started.

Now, of course, the Russians say they invented it as a pleasant diversion to occupy their time when they were not busy inventing the steam engine, the Norden bomb sight, and the pizza. The Russians played a game called "biritch," which some say could have been the origin of the word "bridge."

Gradually bridge replaced whist in England and America. Scoring was even more weird than it is today. When spades were trump, each trick counted two points, clubs were four, diamonds six, hearts eight and no-trump ten or twelve. Each trick above six counted towards game, and thirty points was game. You could double and redouble all night. In New York one night a bid of three no-trump was doubled and redoubled eight times. The original doubler made good his bid and the net penalty was 10,240 points. They voted on the spot that the number of doubles and redoubles be limited to one.

Finally on a cruise from San Francisco to Havana on the liner *Finland* Harold Vanderbilt and three companions played almost precisely the game of bridge that we do today. Vanderbilt announced that bidders would get toward game only what they bid. He changed the scoring system, raising the game requirement from 30 to 100, changing trick values to 35 points for no-trump, 30 for spades and hearts, and 20 for clubs and diamonds. The vulnerability factor was also added. By 1930 this new type of bridge almost totally replaced auction bridge.

The first murder attributed to bridge occurred in 1929 when Mrs. John Bennett shot her husband over a hand in which he was set. After the murder, the bridge mad United States put on a fascinating display of loss of balance. The consuming questions by the public were not about the murder, but about the bridge game. Ely Culbertson, who was considered the Goren of the "roaring 20's," wrote a book entitled, *How Bennett Could Have Saved His Life*. It explained how Bennett could have made the contract. By the way, Mrs. Bennett was acquitted.

Bridge is a physical game. No bridge player should sit down at the table unless he has gone at least ten rounds with a good aggressive boxer, or taken three tests in a row. Bridge is one of the wildest contact sports. Not only is there the danger of clobbering by one's partner, but there is the danger of what one might do to oneself in a moment of frenzy or depression.

In Chicago, a woman picked up a hand containing thirteen diamonds and won the contract at six no-trump (!) When she was set twelve tricks, her husband hit her with a cut-glass bowl and won a divorce.

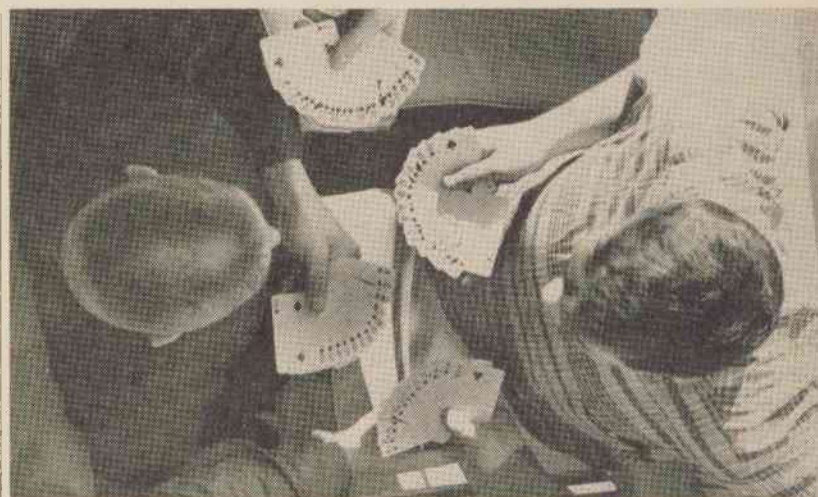
Another husband got a divorce when his wife doubled a four diamond bid, trumped her husband's ace lead, handed the opponents ten tricks, and failed to take her husband out of a one no-trump double, all in one night; and all in the same night he beat her up.

Harry Meacham of Wilkesboro, North Carolina, weary of holding bad hands all night, swore he would kill the next person who dealt him a bust. Meacham was as good as his word. On the next deal he picked up a ten-high hand and shot himself.

Louisburg College is 176 years old, and from what I have found out, bridge is the biggest fad to hit the campus every year. Not only are we the oldest junior college in the nation, but we are the oldest continuing bridge playing college in the United States. I don't know, but maybe even England too.

Now let us look at how bridge is played at Louisburg. The beginner at bridge would have the experts rolling in laughter. There are hundreds of ways to cheat at bridge, all of them inefficient, but the beginner seems to think that some sort of system can be set up.

DO YOU PLAY??



What to bid???

Especially at bidding. The beginner is usually confused at the process of bidding and sometimes wonders what his partner has meant by a certain bid, or if the opponent's partner understands what he has bid.

Bridge, I have observed, is refreshingly free from pure cheating. But it is wildly rampant with coffeehousing. The other day two couples were playing bridge in the girls dorm, and one player announced, "Well, I bid a spade, but I really shouldn't," thus telling everybody that she had twelve points and no rebiddable suit. In another game, the bidding was as follows:

- South: One heart.
- North: One spade
- South: Two hearts!
- North: Two spades.
- South: Three hearts!!!
- North: Four clubs.
- South: I bid the fourth and last heart!

Equally lacking in malicious intent, but equally informative, are the bids which are described as "the hesitating pass, the hopeless pass, the brisk pass, the disgusted pass, the reluctant declaration, the firm declaration, the uncertain double, the belligerent double, and the angry rescue bid."

Among the more conventional signals, is the remark of one player that he never holds any cards, to which one of the others of the opposite gender replies cleverly: "Unlucky at cards, lucky at love." The player who first made the remark can be counted on not to hold a good hand. Or, "I really don't know what to do." This indicates a moderately good hand. The person who takes no part in the conversation whatsoever can be counted on to hold the best hand. And if this person happens to be an L.J.C. coed, it is safe to assume that she holds five honors or all four aces.

Women seem particularly inclined toward coffeehousing, but this may be excused on the grounds that women are not usually good bridge players and therefore need every bit of help they can get. (Female bridge players say the same

about males; they can write their stories, and I'll write mine.)

One play a girl made the other day really got me. She was defending and holding a bare king of trump, and to make matters worse, it was finessable. The queen of trump was lying in the dummy for all to see. Well, the player groaned and said, "Probably got a hundred honors in your hand too." Obviously this leads declarer to believe that the king of trump is in the other hand. It's simple when you understand it. Every girl at Louisburg who plays bridge understands it. Recently one evening I overheard this bidding sequence by four girl bridge players. By the way it's abridged.

"The girls dorm is really going to be nice. . . . Yes, I've got my room all picked out. . . . Pass. . . . Mine will be on the third floor. . . . Yep, so you can see the boys' dorm better. . . . Say, have you heard the latest about Jan and Moe. . . . Pass. . . . No, but I hope it's good. . . . I heard something about one diamond them too. . . . Something about them breaking up over the holidays I think pass. . . . She really got on him about the dance. . . . Two diamonds. . . . Well, he's nice about some things. . . . Pass. . . . Yeh, they all are when they want something five diamonds. . . . Pass. . . . You say that again pass. . . . Lovely dummy, Alice. The diamonds are solid, but I'll lose a club and two hearts. Down one, and whose deal is it next?"

The solution is to play bridge as a GAME. Nobody will look down on you if you play badly. Play bridge for fun and relaxation and to take your mind off of school. Do not play it to prove anything. Do not get excited. Keep your temper. Remember it is supposed to be fun. Got it now?

- All right, your deal.
- No, no, clockwise.
- Face down for heaven's sake.
- Face down!
- Deal four hands, you dope!
- Face down!!
- Can't you deal any faster?
- Not on the floor—!!!
- Well, of all the stupid, idiotic, insipid. . . .



Back to class you go!!



Togetherness . . .



Anywhere and any old time