

Bridge is Like a Beautiful Mystery



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Time for a Joke

A man is driving his five-year-old son to school for his first day. Suddenly the boy shouts out “Daddy! Daddy! Look at those moo cows in that field.”

His father says, “Hang on, you're a big boy now, you must use adult names. It's a cow, not a moo cow.”

The boy is quiet for a while then suddenly shouts out “Daddy! Daddy! Look at those baa lambs in that field.”

“I've told you,” the father replies. “You're a big boy now, you must use the adult names. It's a lamb not a baa-lamb.”

He drops the boy off at school and returns later to take him home.

“How did your first day go, son?” he asked. “What did you do?”

“We did some sums and we all read a story,” the son replied.

“Oh,” said his father. “What was the story called?”

The son replies, “Winnie the Shit!”

The Bennett Murder Trial



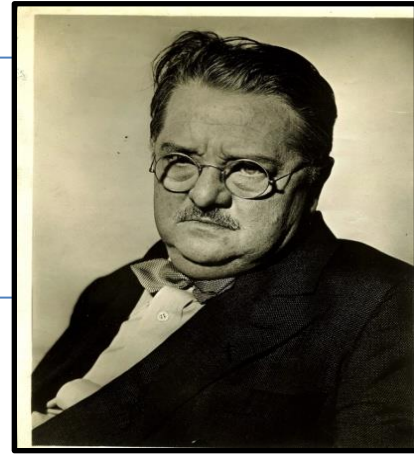
Playing bridge is like going to a special gym for the mind. It's as addictive as golf and can be learned in a week, or studied for a lifetime. One facet that separates bridge from most other games is that one shares one's fate, win or lose, with another person. Partnership emotions run the full gamut, from adoration to sympathy, from support to skillfully applied "one-upsmanship." The pastime has been likened to teaching your spouse how to drive while on amphetamines.

In 1929, the Bennetts of Kansas City, Missouri, invited the Hofmans to their home for an evening of rubber bridge. After a heated discussion over a hand, Myrtle Bennett went to the bedroom and retrieved a pistol. She chased after her husband and fired twice through the bathroom door, missing him both times. Mr. Bennett then rushed out into the living room and to the front door. His wife caught up with him and shot him two times before he could open it. The second shot was fatal, adding new meaning to the bridge term "drop dead bid."

Surprisingly, a diagram of the bridge hand was entered as evidence at Myrtle's trial. She claimed to the court that she had bumped into a chair, causing the gun to go off accidentally. Myrtle was found innocent, despite the two bullet holes in the bathroom door and the two in Mr. Bennett.

Myrtle Bennett – Years After the Trial

Along with Dorothy
Parker, Edna Ferber,
Harpo Marx,
Robert Benchley,
etc.



Alexander Woolcott, a former prominent member of the “Algonquin Round Table” and notable columnist and critic for the New York Times, wrote about Mrs. Bennett in her post-acquittal years in his 1934 collection *While Rome Burns*:

“Myrtle Bennett has not allowed her bridge to grow rusty, even though she occasionally encounters an explicable difficulty in finding a partner. Recently she took on one unacquainted with her history. Having made an impulsive bid, he put his hand down with some diffidence. “Partner,” he said, “I’m afraid you’ll want to shoot me for this.” Mrs. Bennett, says my informant, had the good taste to faint.”

The Barry Crane Murder: Unsolved



Barry Crane, the contract bridge expert who won more titles than anyone else in the history of the game, was found slain in Los Angeles in 1985. He was 57 years old and by profession was a television producer and director (“Mission: Impossible,” “Mannix,” “The Six-Million-Dollar Man,” “Hawaii Five-O,” “Bionic Woman,” “Police Story,” “Trapper John, M.D.,” “Chips” and “Dallas.”)

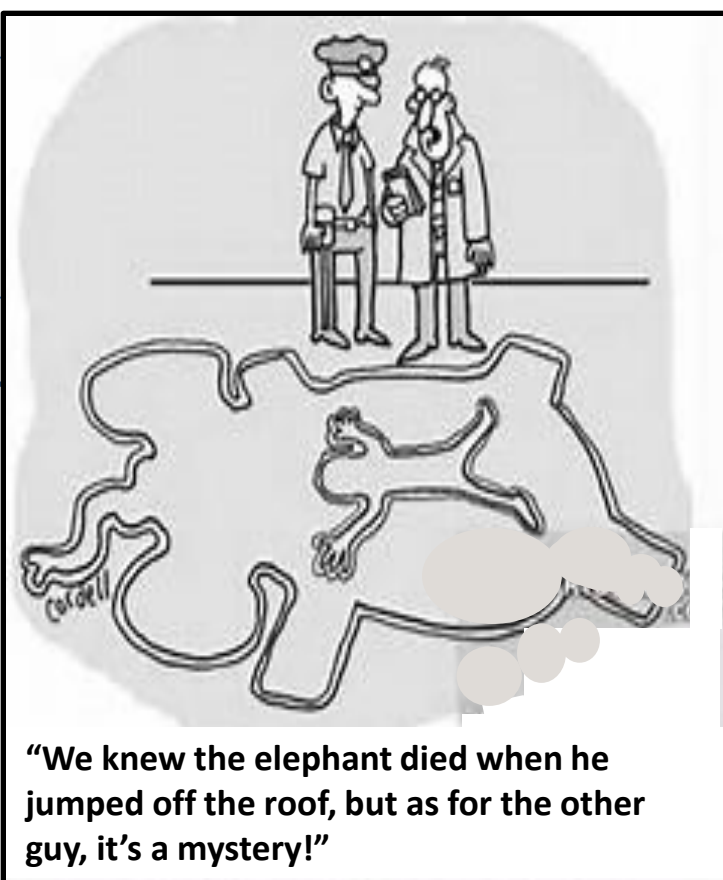
He was found bludgeoned shortly before 3 P.M. in the garage of his luxury town home in Studio City, a neighborhood of Los Angeles. The police said he was apparently killed in the apartment and dragged to the garage.

Lieut. Ron LaRue of the police said that no motive for the killing was apparent and that no arrests had been made.

Mr. Crane had just competed in Pasadena, Calif., at a regional tournament that had become the nation's largest. His team had reached the final in the Knockout Team Championship, and one of his favorite partners, Kerri Shuman of Los Angeles, agreed to play in his stead for the final match. The Crane team won.

Mr. Crane, as an amateur in a game dominated by professionals, had outdistanced everyone. His career total of master points reached 35,000. His nearest challenger had fewer than 24,000.

The Plot



<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1D	Pass	1H
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	???	

Vul: E-W
Dir: East

South
♠ AJ92
♥ 8
♦ J104
♣ Q10984

Let's Look at the Clues

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1D	Pass	1H
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	???	

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To solve the mystery, first answer these questions:

1) What is East's likely shape and strength?

Since East opened 1D and rebid 2C, he showed five diamonds and at least four clubs. His delayed heart support (temporizing) confirmed three cards in that suit, and therefore has a singleton or void in spades. His jump to 3H showed extra values, a hand worth 15 to 17 playing points.

Let's Look at the Clues



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Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
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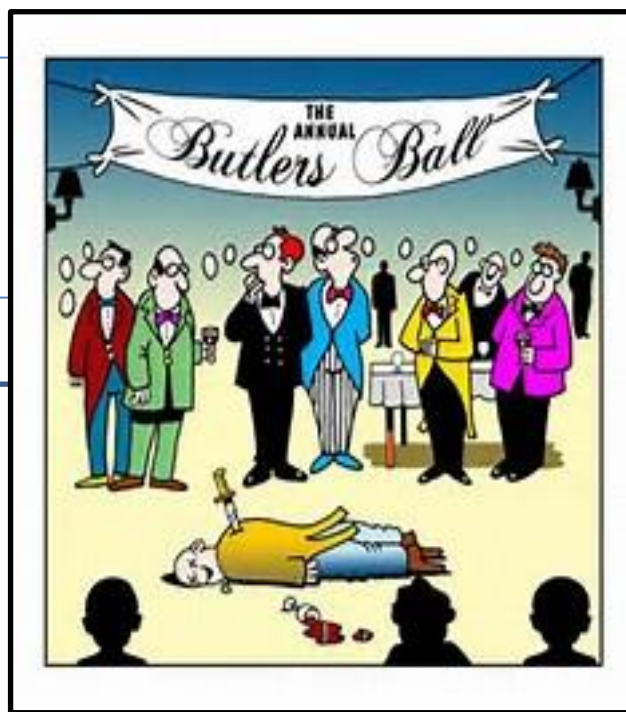
South
♠ AJ92
♥ 8
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2) What is West's likely shape and strength?

West will have five hearts to proceed to game, and either three or four diamonds. The secret here is that West could not hold more than four spades, since with five spades and five hearts he would have responded 1S first and rebid his hearts later.

This means your partner (North) holds at least four spades and did not have enough HCPs to enter the auction.

Let's Look at the Clues



<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1D	Pass	1H
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	???	

Vul: E-W
Dir: East

South
♠ AJ92
♥ 8
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3) Will the opponents make 4♥?

The opponents are highly likely to make 4♥ (-620), since your partner couldn't bid. He rates to contribute only one or two tricks, maybe in the trump suit. You have one defensive trick (A♠) and they have a five-card diamond suit as a source of side tricks.

One More Joke

How to Avoid Mixing Your Metaphors

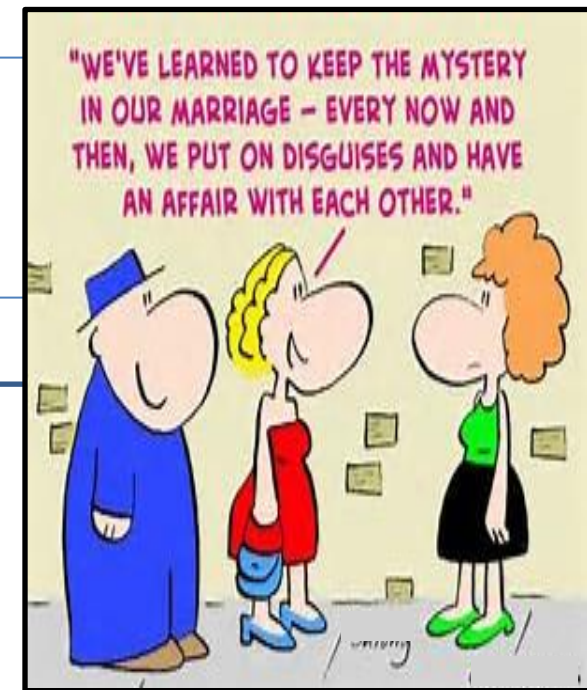
It's not rocket surgery.
First, get all your ducks on the same page.
After all, you can't make an omelette
without breaking stride.

Be sure to watch what you write
with a fine-tuned comb.
Check and re-check until the cows turn blue.
It's as easy as falling off a piece of cake.

Don't worry about opening up
a whole hill of beans:
you can always burn that bridge when you come to it,
if you follow where I'm coming from.

Concentrate! Keep your door closed
and your enemies closer.
Finally, don't take the moral high horse:
if the metaphor fits, walk a mile in it.

Let's Look at the Clues



<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1D	Pass	1H
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	???	

Vul: E-W
Dlr: East

South
 ♠ AJ92
 ♥ 8
 ♦ J104
 ♣ Q10984

4) How will you fare in 4♠?

You will probably lose 1 heart, 2 clubs, 2 diamonds and maybe a trump trick.

You can ruff three of your partner's hearts in your own hand (the short side of trumps).

Down two or three doubled (-300 or -500) versus -620 if they play in 4♥.

Who could blame North for not bidding his ratty spade suit with such a weak hand and a worthless K♦?

Mystery Solved!



Elementary, my dear Watson!

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1D	Pass	1H
Pass	2C	Pass	2D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	???	

North
 ♠ K8763
 ♥ 10852
 ♦ K7
 ♣ J5

Vul: E-W
 Dlr: East

West
 ♠ Q54
 ♥ AKJ63
 ♦ 832
 ♣ 107

East
 ♠ 10
 ♥ Q94
 ♦ AQ965
 ♣ AK62

Solution: Your favorable vulnerability should compel you to bid 4S!

South
 ♠ AJ92
 ♥ 8
 ♦ J104
 ♣ Q10984

The opponents will make 5H vulnerable (-650). You'll go down 2 doubled (-300) in 4S.

Playtime

