

SECRETS YOUR BRIDGE FRIENDS
NEVER TELL YOU



by Cathy Hunsberger

Illustrations by Bill Buttle

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The Silent Majority Speaks

Cathy Hunsberger

Illustrated by Bill Buttle

ENDORSEMENTS

Cathy combines humor and insight as she shines light on a part of our bridge world that is seldom talked about. "Secrets" is informative and fun. **Marty Bergen**, Ten-Time National Champion, Author of "Points Schmoints!" and more.

Cathy Hunsberger mixes her positive life philosophy with a delightfully humorous explanation of bridge intricacies and challenges. A fine feast. **Claudia McDonald**, ACBL Accredited Teacher, Journalist, ret.

Cathy has been a bridge player for over 40 years. I have had the privilege of partnering with her in hundreds of games and tournaments at every level. In these pages, with humor and insight, she reveals the psychological aspect of this great and marvelous game of all games. Read and laugh. **Joyce Neville**, SLM and CEO, TAD Enterprises

This book is not just for bridge lovers. I don't play bridge but I found it amusing, entertaining, and full of the wisdom of life. My mother was crazy about bridge (her criteria for an assisted living facility was the quality of its bridge games). I have always been curious about the inner workings of the bridge circle, and enjoyed getting an insider's view of the fascination that takes hold. **Carol Chapman**, Author of "When We Were Gods"

DEDICATION

This collection of thoughts and observations is dedicated to my bridge partner of many years, Joyce Neville, who suffered with me through many revisions, and missed games, during its progress.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My poor family did not even whimper when I locked myself away day after day in my home "office". They did knock hesitantly from time to time when it was the dinner hour...I love them.

My proofreaders and editors were constant and ever-ready. Carol Chapman, Claudia McDonald, and Joyce Neville gave me vital input and kept me straight for many months.

My mentor and illustrator Bill Buttle encouraged, advised, nagged, and threatened throughout. This project would not have gotten off the ground without him. He showed himself to be an unselfish professional with the courage to help an unknown get a start.

My bridge friends in Unit 110 contributed many strange and humorous stories from their life's experiences. Among these were Chuck Sadowski, David Duhon, and Trish Richeson. Many others, reading articles I contributed to our Unit newsletter, urged me to get them into a book, and first planted that seed in my mind. Thank you all.

Brent Manley, Editor of the Bridge Bulletin, was the first to accept one of my articles for publication. He gave me the confidence to keep going, and while I know I was just one of many, I thank him for giving me a chance.

INTRODUCTION

It's All About You!

When we first enter the bridge world we are offered an abundance of lessons on every possible technique. We learn to bid, to play the hand, to defend. We are taught rules and learn statistical odds. We are advised that a steady partner will help us advance. We go to tournaments in search of red, silver and gold masterpoints. We enter a world of magic and wonder and excitement.

Along the way, we begin to have doubts, we become unsure of ourselves. The experts and pros seem like giants towering over us. The director seems intent on monitoring our every move. We hear conflicting advice from all sides.

Am I going crazy, you may wonder? Is something wrong with me? Does everyone go through these unsettling experiences, or am I the only one? Will I ever make Life Master?

These are questions we don't hear much about, that are whispered in the corridors and never acknowledged. Rest assured, they are universal. In this small book we lay bare the journey of an individual as he starts his bumpy ride into the bridge world. He passes from fresh-faced beginner, graduates to intermediate level, and finds advanced status within his reach. You will perhaps recognize part of your own journey. Most importantly, you will find you have never been alone.

Rest assured, all experts started as beginners. They just don't remember that far back.

1. The Magic of Successful Partnerships

THE MAGIC OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

"If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail." - Winston Churchill.

Bridge is a PARTNERSHIP GAME. This is the first tenet of bridge. It is the basis for all subsequent understandings, agreements and happy cohabitation at the bridge table.

Choosing a Partner

"Joint undertakings stand a better chance when they benefit both sides." - Euripides.

What should you look for in a partner? Ideally, you want someone you can be in sync with, whose mind set is similar to yours. You want a partner you can communicate with, argue with, laugh with, and in the end, start over with.

How does your mind work? Do you like a bid to mean the same thing every time? Are you very literal? Very creative? Do you like to experiment? These are factors that should influence how you choose your partners, how you approach the game, how you complete your convention card; these factors are often overlooked.

If you want a simple game, a light hobby, a straight-forward convention card, you are not going to be happy with someone who takes the game very seriously, wants to try any and all conventions, and analyzes each deal to the nth degree.

Know yourself and choose your partners wisely.

Choosing a System

"Interdependency requires lavish communication." - Max Dupree.

You and your new partner must decide on and learn the language with which you are going to communicate. Go over your convention card thoroughly. Ask questions.

Which are the best conventions? They are the ones that suit you, your personality, your game, your approach to the game. They are the ones you and your partner agree on, and DISCUSS THOROUGHLY.

There are an amazing number of ways to play every convention. Don't just ask, "Do you play Gerber?" Once you agree to play Gerber ask your partner *how* he plays Gerber. Does he play straight Gerber, does he play it only over NT, does he play 1430 mini-maxi Gerber, etc. Almost all partnership misunderstandings arise from lack of thorough discussion.

Remember too, you are creating a unified system, something that works and flows together, that meshes. Check for duplications. Do you have two bids for the same hand type?

Does the card seem more than you can handle right now? Too much too soon is a common source of misunderstanding and friction. You want partnership rapport, not necessarily every convention in the book.

Keeping a Partner

"One beam alone, no matter how stout, cannot support a house." - Chinese Proverb.

One factor that should remain constant is flexibility. A convention card is only a piece of paper. A system is not written in concrete. It can be amended, changed, modified. It can be screwed up in a ball and thrown away.

If a system or convention isn't working for you and your partner, change it, try something new, experiment. Ask an expert, read a book, take lessons.

If you are a serious student of the game, keep a log with all your bidding agreements. Upgrade it regularly. Go over it with your partner at least once a month. Constant memory enhancement helps reduce misunderstandings. Ask if you are both happy with this system. A happy partner is one of the keys to success.

Misunderstandings

"Do not speak - unless it improves on silence." - Buddhist saying.

And finally, when misunderstandings do occur - as they inevitably will - keep calm and cool. Ask yourself what you would want your partner to say to you if you had just made that same stupid bid. After all, you both have the same goal in mind. These misunderstandings can be good learning tools and engender illuminating discussions. A "bad" bid can lead to bigger and better things. You may even thank your partner for his or her mistake!

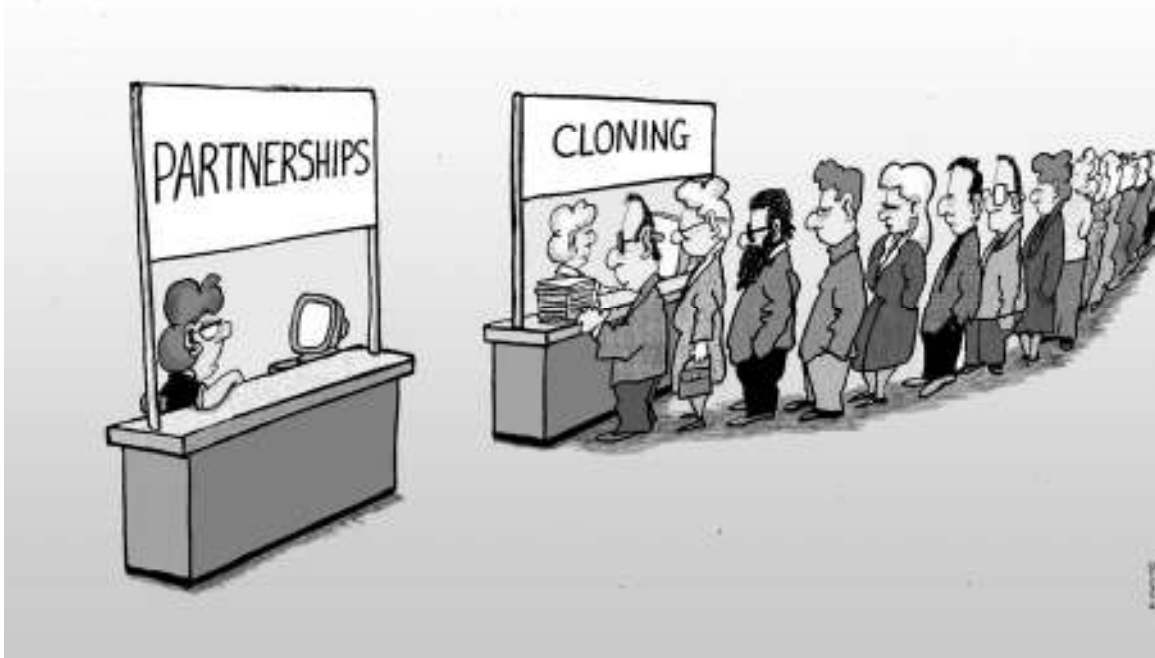
End Result

"Success is not a destination, it's a journey." - Zig Ziglar.

So, partners, discuss your goals, learn your own special bridge language. Be flexible and open-minded. Use

your misunderstandings to lead to even greater understandings. You will have a fun time at the bridge table, with ever increasing success.

"Bridge is a partnership game." - Don Harrison (my first bridge teacher).



2. The Search

THE SEARCH

"Seek, and you shall find..." - Luke 11:9.

This is a true story. It unfolded as written, although you may shake your head in disbelief. Afterward, I recognized this experience might have bridge relevance as well. You must judge for yourself.

Have you ever taken a teenager out looking for a cheap car? It can be quite an adventure. In fact being in a teenager's company for any length of time can, in itself, be quite an adventure. One fine summer's day my then teenage son Stephen and I set out on such a search.

Our first tip was on a truck being offered by "Sam", a sweet man of 80-some years. He explained over the phone that he bought older vehicles and restored them, for something to do, and for a bit of extra cash. He assured us this was a great deal. He directed us to a used car lot on the side of the highway, where the owner allowed Sam to park his bargains. We arrived with high expectations ... which were squelched entirely at first glance. Stephen stood staring mutely, finally glancing at me with evident despair, while Sam rattled on about the truck's virtues. We both knew with certainty that at any speed over 35 mph this beauty would fall apart bolt by bolt. That is, if the tires didn't burst first. Or it didn't rust away before we even got started. Sensing our hesitation, Sam urged us, with a hopeful air, to drive the truck. He didn't propose we drive it on the road, but there was a graveled space behind the car lot that would do nicely, he suggested.

More to make him happy than anything else, Stephen drove the car in circles around the field. Stephen then confessed that he just didn't feel comfortable with a shift, and we left Sam looking a bit deflated. Like the tires. However, I'm sure he soon perked up, and went on to putter with his next bargain.

We approached the next prospect with somewhat dampened enthusiasm. We met the owner at his farm, and hopped on his dune buggy to bump out to the south 40 where the car was abandoned, uh, I mean parked. The car looked fairly decent at first glance, paint intact, no rust - dare we hope? Then we opened the driver's door. There were wires running everywhere, in every direction, some not seemingly connected to anything. Getting gingerly in, Stephen suddenly jumped convulsively. "That wire's hot!" he yelled. Not exactly comforting. The owner then admitted that the car did need a little work (an understatement). He helpfully offered to let Stephen work on it there at the farm. He showed us a large concrete apron in front of a major tool shed. A tool shed that was crammed from stem to stern with every kind of miscellaneous tool and part imaginable. Unfortunately, there was no organization, just massive piles and heaps everywhere. As we moved rapidly away, mumbling about wanting to see a few more offerings before making a decision, Stephen eyed the owner's daughter. Now that, he commented, was *really* hot. Stephen conceded he might need to come back for a second look or two at the car after all.

A new day dawned. Next on the list was a Cadillac, described as a real jewel. We ventured out with extreme

caution. We had both put in a day's work, and the weather was viciously hot. The site was in a wooded area; mosquitoes swarmed everywhere. As we wound up the drive, we were totally unprepared for what met our eyes. A rich assortment of cars, trucks and vans of every description and condition filled the yard. A young woman, looking rather at sea, stepped out of her mobile home to greet us. We had spotted a likely van parked a few cars back from the Cadillac, and asked, tentatively, if that were for sale. She said it was, but there was no way to get it out for a test drive. Hmm. We turned our attention to the Cadillac. It turned out a tire was soft and the car was absent a battery. Stephen removed the battery from the owner's car, using his coke to loosen the connectors, and eventually got it into the Cadillac. He pumped up the tire. By that time his shirt was sopping wet and we were both red with bites. Stephen was feeling slightly resentful for having to share his coke with battery connectors. We climbed gamely in, however, and, with semi-high hopes, turned the ignition. When it fired right up, we looked at each other in triumphant surprise - until we realized our view was rapidly dimming in a huge cloud of white smoke! This was not just a little puff. Anyone driving by might have thought there was a forest fire. We naively hoped (or was it wishful thinking) that this was because the car had been parked for so long. We decided to drive it a few miles. The smoke followed us all the way. We drove carefully back, praying we wouldn't get ticketed for polluting the air. We quickly decided this was not The Car.

Desperate, we called the shifty-eyed owner of a Jimmy 4x4 we had seen parked on Main Street. It was clean and

respectable looking, but we had been leery because the odometer was broken, and while the claim was 200,000 miles, who knows? Further, it was displayed at the home of a friend of the owner's. The owner himself lived in the next county. Perhaps the owner wanted to remain anonymous after the sale? Fortunately, it had been sold that morning. We had once again been saved by the Universe.

Yes, Stephen did finally get his car. That week the local paper came out with a new listing - a little Toyota. The owner had purchased it for his girlfriend and had worked on it long and hard. His honey then decided it was too small, and wanted something else. What can a guy do? We ran over to see it. We held our breath. It was actually as described (!!). It had a live battery. It had decent tires. It had a working motor. Nothing fancy, but after what we'd been through it looked like a dream. It was a stick shift, but after a couple of erratic and entertaining circuits of town, Stephen had his wheels. The search was over.

And what has this adventure to do with bridge (I know you are wondering)? I was reminded of our first search for a bridge partner. As we investigate, we find an assortment of characters. Some players poke along, like a worn-out old truck, and fall apart when the action gets too fast and furious. Some put up a good front, but can get really hot and fired up over any little thing (they evidently have a loose wire - or two). Some are glamorous, the Cadillac type, but operate in a cloud of smoke, seemingly oblivious to everything around them (except the mirror). Still others have played so long (200,000+ miles