

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR.

ONCE UPON a very long time ago I played the card game "bridge". I wasn't really a player, but rather a fanatic. How it all began is lost in the mists of time, but I can only assume that when off duty in the RAF, someone would occasionally try to make a 'four for bridge'. I remember little of my earlier bridge days, but there are two periods that I can still vaguely recall.

I was on a Liberator Squadron stationed in the then Ceylon at an RAF base called Kankasanturai (fortunately known as "KKS") near the northern town of Jaffna.

Most evenings I would be playing bridge, and when not flying I would be perfecting a new world shattering 'super-convention', which my most regular partner was willing to practice. It was written in a RAF notebook which was available for opponents to read, accept, reject, (normally) or whatever.

If we were refused permission to use it we *should really* have reverted to the standard ones, however we still managed to win most of the time. (Ah well!)

I still recall the flow of adrenaline when trying to 'squeeze' a good result, particularly if it also proved that my convention was working!

Unfortunately we had to return to the UK to replace our Liberators with Lancasters and during the move my 'super-system' was mislaid, and so lost to posterity! (That's life).

My other vague recollection was when I was posted to Nairobi. Here I became involved with bridge again, the difference being that there was no longer a "super convention" or partner to help me.

There were also frequent competitions. Anyone who has never competed may be surprised to hear that it could sometimes be a death-defying experience. A case of "take no prisoners". It would not be unusual for "dummy" to storm off in disgust for a walk and cool off, rather than strangle his partner there and then.

Post mortems were always carried out, and competitors could invariably be heard slanging their partners – (You \*\*\* idiot, you've just lost us another thousand points!). Feelings would run so high that the words "re-double" when slam bidding could sometimes be akin to a death wish!

Hoping to reduce the temperature, some wag (vicar perhaps?) put up a large notice

"Forgive them,  
for they know not what they do!"

What has brought these very ancient memories to life? A few weeks ago my wife joined the learner sessions at the local Bridge Club. At the time it seemed to be a good idea, as I was sure she would enjoy playing (eventually).

I knew that I would never play again as I last played in 1949 and remember very little of it, and with my present short-term memory loss, playing is virtually impossible.

*And then, a few weeks later, it happened* – "Why don't you come along, just to keep me company?"

And so, should you unfortunately find me at a learner session, please be merciful and read the (imaginary) notice hanging from my neck.

"Forgive me,  
for I know not what I do!"

G.S.