When I Forgot the Blue Book

By Ely Culbertson

NO matter how sound the advice you may place in a book to guide the bidding of Contract hands, it is possible, as I recently discovered, in the stress of actual play, to forget just exactly what a bid represents when made by your partner as one of the responses to an Opening Forcing bid of two in a suit.

The above-mentioned discovery was made in an important match, my opponents being Messrs. Waldemar von Zedtwitz and Raymond Balfe. Fortunately, I was permitted to read the Blue Book then and there and determine from its pages what my partner's bid had meant.

"I can see no reason," remarked Mr. von Zedtwitz, "why a man who writes a book should not be permitted to read it, just so he doesn't delay the game too much."

In this view Mr. Balfe coincided, and so the Blue Book was sent for and I read there:

"The Culbertson Four-Five Notrump Slam Convention also applies to Forcing two-bids, but with the following modifications dictated by the logic of the situation: If the Responding Hand holds at least 2½ honor-tricks (not necessarily Aces or a King) he must bid four notrump—at once if holding no Raise or biddable suit, or eventually in any event. The five notrump is used by the Responding Hand only as a response to the Opening bidder's four-notrump signal, and shows two Aces. Both the four- and five-notrump bids are Forcing."

The hand in question was the following:

South, Dealer
Both sides vulnerable

	♠ K 9 6 ♡ A 9 ◇ J 10 9 8 5 ♣ K J 6	
♠ J 7 3 2 ♡ 6 5 3 2 ◇ 6 2 ♣ 10 9 4	North West East South	♠ 10 8 5 ♡ J 7 4 ◇ 7 4 ♣ Q 8 5 3 2
	♠ A Q 4 ♡ K Q 10 8 ◇ A K Q 3 ♣ A 7	

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
2 ♡[1]	Pass	3 ◇[2]	Pass
4 ♡[3]	Pass	4 N T[4]	Pass
7 ♡[5]	Pass	Pass	Pass

[1] I am one of a small minority of experts who prefer to make an Opening Forcing bid with this type of hand. Some prefer the Opening bid of one. Of course, the alternative of two notrump, as advocated by some theorists, is unthinkable.

[2] Obviously, the correct response.

[3] No occasion for hurry—once Forcing, always Forcing!

[4] This was the bid I did not understand. I had forgotten whether a bid of four notrump under these conditions showed 2-plus honor-tricks or 2½ honor-tricks. If it was a minimum of 2½, then the Grand Slam probably was makable. However, there could be combinations where 2-plus honor-tricks would not mean a Grand Slam. This was the moment when I asked my kind opponents to permit me to refer to the book. Their magnanimous assent followed.

[5] After reading what the Blue Book said, I did not have the slightest hesitation in making this bid.

The contract was, of course, made laid down.

This hand occurred, as I said before, in a very important match. To have made a slip here would have given my opponents an opportunity for a splendid laugh on me. If I could not follow the system which I had devised, who could?

Mid-West League Tournament

As this issue goes to press the second annual tournament of the Mid-West Bridge League is under way at the Hotel Blackhawk in Davenport, Iowa. The winning pair will be awarded the Tri-City Bridge Club Trophy, now held by Mrs. John Sebelin and Mrs. C. A. Frey; the winning team, the Hotel Blackhawk Trophy, now held by Mrs. Sebelin, Mrs. Frey, Mrs. Carl Lambach and Mrs. B. R. Creighton. Trophy cups will be awarded the top-score winners of each section and the holders of the trophies for 1933.

The event is being sponsored by the Tri-City Bridge Club, whose officers are: President, Mrs. J. H. Samuels of Moline, Illinois; Vice-President, Mrs. Joseph Shorey of Davenport; Secretary, Mrs. John Sebelin, Davenport; and Treasurer, Mrs. Marie Kennedy of the same city. The tournament manager is Florence Samuels Wright of Moline.