

# A Final Column

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It is tough to write one's final column. But I must pay particular tribute to Alan Truscott. We first met in 1971, when I was 19. Ceri Evans and I won a junior event in London for which the prize was a trip to New York to play in the Fun City Regional. Alan organized our tour, including arranging for us to be invited to a Long Island country club where all the local bridge experts were given the run of the club, then, after a huge buffet dinner, we played in a duplicate with a club member. (Evans and I finished second and third, causing a small stir.)

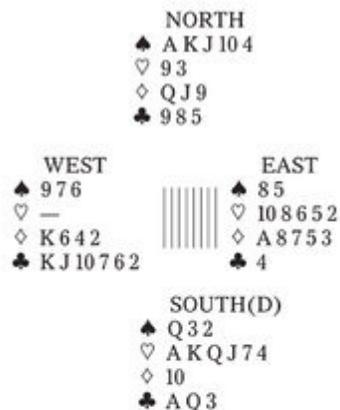
Alan took us to the old New York Times building off Times Square, where we saw his archaic typewriter. In those days, the paper was typeset by hand.

Those initial experiences and the hot weather made me want to return, which I did several times. Then I moved to the United States in 1985 for a job that turned out not even to pay the rent. But when the word went around, many people came to my rescue. Dorothy and Alan Truscott let me live with them for some nine months, when we had bridge evenings with top New York players like Edgar Kaplan, Dick Frey, Andy Bernstein and the husband and wife Tom and Estee Griffin.

Frey put me in touch with George Rosenkranz, a collaboration that resulted in a close friendship and several books, and Kaplan gave me a job at The Bridge World, which continues today.

Alan always assumed that I would take over this column, but when I moved to Florida because my teaching career had expanded greatly, he thought that was that. When he had to go in the hospital in early 2005, however, I covered for him. And with email and the Internet, it really did not matter where I lived. Don Caswell, then the editor, persuaded the powers that be to take me on.

After Caswell retired, Neil Genzlinger became my editor. They were both bridge players. But when Genzlinger was reassigned, for the last few years I have had several editors who do not play bridge. This has been interesting for them and me. In tough circumstances, they have done a great job.



North and South were vulnerable. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♥
2 N.T.	3♠	5♦	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the diamond deuce.

As a player, I won several junior titles and the English national team championship, the Crockford's Cup. But sadly I have not won a national title in the United States, getting close three times. I do have a few interesting deals. The one in the diagram occurred many years ago at the Beverly Bridge Club in Manhattan.

West made an unusual Unusual No-trump overcall with 4=6, not 5=5, distribution. Then, against my six-heart contract, he led the diamond deuce. East won with his ace and shifted to the club four. How did I continue?

I judged that if West had a spade void, he would have led a high diamond as a suit-preference signal. So I became worried that the trumps were breaking badly. I won with my club ace, played a spade to dummy's ace and led the heart nine. East, thinking that it could not hurt, covered with his ten. I won with my ace and noted West's discard. I returned to dummy with a spade to the ten, played a heart to my seven, drew trumps and ran the spades. Plus 1,430 was a cold top.

If East had played low smoothly under the heart nine, I would have put up my ace and gone down like everyone else. When you have a card surrounded like that, it will almost always be wrong to cover. Now we bring down the curtain on this column after 80 years, but my syndicated column will continue. I would like to thank my editors; the players who sent me deals; the hundreds who wrote to me (I will answer all of you); the thousands who wrote to the paper asking for the column to continue, which has been so heartening to me; and Alan Truscott, without whom none of this would have happened.

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