

SAINTS AND SINNERS

The St. Titus Bridge Challenge



DAVID BIRD AND TIM BOURKE

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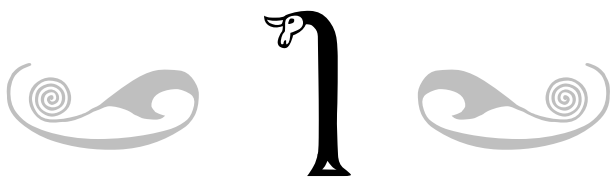
↑ INTRODUCTION ↓

This book offers you something new, a chance to compare your own efforts with those of the bridge-crazy monks of St. Titus. Each bridge deal is preceded by a quiz. To gain maximum benefit from the book, you may wish to pause at that moment and actually write down your answer. You can then read on to discover what happened when the monks played the hand. For those keen followers of the game who like to appraise their skills, an appendix is provided that awards a total of 100 points for each chapter's quizzes. Many of the deals are challenging and a score of over 50% on a chapter will be a creditable achievement.

The division of labor between Tim Bourke and myself will come as no surprise to our regular followers. I have written the stories and Tim has constructed a great majority of the hands. Indeed for many years I have been relying heavily on the splendid hands that he has provided.

The first chapter beckons. Have a great time and the best of luck with the quizzes!

David Bird



THE ST. TITUS INDIVIDUAL

The Monastery's individual championship was traditionally held on the first and second Thursdays after St. Bartholomew's Day. The Abbot had performed creditably in the previous year's event, finishing second behind Brother Paulo, and was hoping to go one better on this occasion.

'Don't forget that change we made to the Five-Card Stayman sequences,' the Abbot reminded Brother Xavier, as they crossed the quadrangle on their way to the cardroom.

Brother Xavier chuckled to himself. 'We'll only be playing one board together, Abbot,' he said. 'The chance of any of those sequences coming up must be 500-to-1 against.'

'Stranger things have happened,' retorted the Abbot. 'Oh yes, and remember what I said about those forcing passes at the six-level. We can't afford another slam-bidding disaster.'

The first round of the event saw the Abbot at the same table as Brother Aelred, the weakest player in the monastery. The Abbot had his

QUIZ 1A

N-S Vul. ♠ Q 8 2
Dir. West ♥ A K J
 ♦ A 8 6 5 3
 ♣ 5 2

♠ A K J 7
♥ Q 10 5
♦ Q 9 4
♣ A K 8

West	North	East	South
3♣	dbl	pass	6NT

West leads the ♣Q. When you play a diamond to the queen, West will follow with the ten. Plan the play. (West will show up with three spades and two hearts.)

[To Answers](#)

plan ready — two good ones when playing against Brother Aelred, then hope for the miracle of an average board when partnering him.

North-South Vul. Dealer West	♠ Q 8 2 ♥ A K J ♦ A 8 6 5 3 ♣ 5 2	♠ 9 6 3 ♥ 9 7 6 4 2 ♦ K J 7 2 ♣ 4			
♠ 10 5 4 ♥ 8 3 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 9 7 6 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ A K J 7 ♥ Q 10 5 ♦ Q 9 4 ♣ A K 8				
WEST <i>Bro. Lucius</i> 3♣ all pass	NORTH <i>Bro. Zac</i> dbl	EAST <i>Bro. Aelred</i> pass	SOUTH <i>The Abbot</i> 6NT		

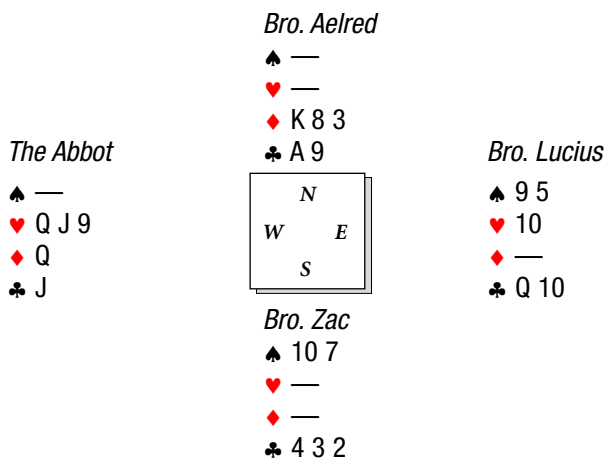
A crisp auction, which would have won approval at London's Portland Club, left the Abbot in 6NT. He won the ♣Q lead with the king and crossed to dummy with a spade. When he led a diamond to the queen, an ominous ten appeared from West. Three more rounds of spades were played, the suit breaking 3-3. Everyone followed to two rounds of hearts and this end position had been reached:

	<i>Bro. Zac</i> ♠ — ♥ K ♦ A 8 6 ♣ 5				
<i>Bro. Lucius</i> ♠ — ♥ — ♦ — ♣ J 10 9 7 6	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	<i>Bro. Aelred</i> ♠ — ♥ 9 7 ♦ K J 7 ♣ —
N					
W E					
S					
	<i>The Abbot</i> ♠ — ♥ 10 ♦ 9 4 ♣ A 8				

The Abbot could place West with seven clubs and therefore had a complete count of the hand. How could he deal with the 4-1 diamond break?

The Abbot gave a resigned shake of the head as Brother Zac ended at the helm. Why had Brother Aelred been assigned such a minor role on the board? Sitting vacantly behind the dummy was the only sound part of his game.

The Abbot led the ♥K against the spade slam. Brother Zac ruffed in the South hand and led the king of trumps to East's ace. When a heart was returned, Brother Zac threw a diamond from his hand and won the trick with dummy's ace. A club to the king was followed by a second round of trumps, bringing sad news of a 5-1 break. Brother Zac was not deterred by this. He cashed one more high trump, then played a diamond to the dummy's jack. The finesse succeeded and he proceeded to cash the ace of diamonds. This end position had been reached:



‘King of diamonds, please,’ said Brother Zac.

Brother Lucius had no answer to this. If he ruffed this diamond or any subsequent diamond, declarer would overruff, draw the last trump, and return to dummy with the ♣A. If instead he refused to ruff at any stage, declarer would simply discard all three remaining clubs and lead a plain card towards his trump tenace.

Brother Lucius tried the effect of throwing his two clubs but Brother Zac made no mistake. He played yet another diamond and Lucius had to surrender.

‘Very well played, indeed,’ said Brother Lucius. ‘That’s one to remember.’

How could one forget it, thought the Abbot. An outright zero when playing against Brother Aelred? If he hadn’t witnessed it with his own eyes, he would have thought it impossible.

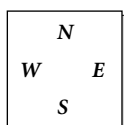
'I'm glad my 3NT bid worked out well,' said Brother Aelred. 'The alternative was to double 3♥, but we wouldn't score so much as the slam.'

The Abbot drew breath for some suitable barb, then, bearing in mind that he would have to partner Brother Aelred on the next board, thought better of it. Once more the players changed their seats. The Abbot opened 1NT on the North cards, shown below, wincing when he heard the 3♥ response. Surely if anyone in the world should use transfer responses, to allow his partner to play the hand, Brother Aelred was that person. He took the obvious precaution of suppressing his heart support but Brother Aelred was not to be denied.

East-West Vul.
Dealer North

♠ J 8 7 6 5 3 2
♥ 9 5
♦ —
♣ 10 9 8 6

♠ A Q
♥ K 10 2
♦ 9 5 4 3
♣ A 7 4 3



♠ —
♥ A J 8 6 4 3
♦ A K 8 6 2
♣ Q 5

WEST
Bro. Zac

pass
pass
pass
all pass

NORTH
The Abbot

1NT
3NT
5♥
6♦

EAST
Bro. Lucius

pass
pass
pass
pass

SOUTH
Bro. Aelred

3♥
4NT
5NT
6♥

QUIZ 1C

♠ A Q
♥ K 10 2
♦ 9 5 4 3
♣ A 7 4 3

♠ —
♥ A J 8 6 4 3
♦ A K 8 6 2
♣ Q 5

You arrive in 6♥ and win West's ♣10 lead with the ace. How should you play 6♥:

- (a) if you pick up the trump suit?
(b) if you have a trump loser?

To Answers

Brother Aelred surveyed the ♣10 lead uncertainly. Did Brother Zac hold the ♣K? If so, the lead could be run to his queen. Indeed, this would

be the only chance of making a trick with the ♣Q. Still, a player as good as Brother Zac would surely not lead away from a king. Perhaps it was better odds to rise with the ace of clubs and to discard the ♣Q on dummy's ♠A. Yes, he would try that. 'Ace, please,' said Brother Aelred.

Brother Aelred continued with the other black ace, disposing of his club loser. After a brief pause, to recover his strength, he crossed to the ace of trumps and led a second trump. Now, what was the right play from dummy?

The Abbot watched nervously, hoping that by some miracle Brother Aelred might guess the suit correctly. He very rarely did. Indeed, thought the Abbot, he could probably become one of the world's best guessers, merely by reversing each decision he took.

Brother Aelred stared at the dummy, apparently performing some complex calculation. 'Play the king,' he said.

When the queen fell from East, Brother Aelred beamed triumphantly across the table. He had a strange feeling that the Abbot had been apprehensive about the board they would play together. No need to be! Six Hearts bid and made, with an overtrick if the diamonds were 2-2. It was bound to be a top.

When Brother Aelred played a diamond to the ace, disaster struck — West showed out. There was a pregnant pause as Brother Aelred digested the consequences of this. 'No diamonds at all?' he said. 'Oh dear, that's very unlucky.'

East could not be denied two winners in the diamond suit and the slam was one down. The Abbot leaned forward suspiciously. 'What did you have in diamonds?' he demanded.

'In diamonds?' replied Brother Aelred. 'Ace-king to five, wasn't it?'

The Abbot grabbed the South cards. 'You had ace-king-EIGHT to five,' he exclaimed. 'The slam was cold! All you had to do was to play a diamond to the eight. If that loses, you can claim the rest.'

'It's double-dummy to rely on the queen, jack and ten all being onside,' replied Brother Aelred. 'My line was 100% unless the diamonds were 4-0.'

'Brother Aelred was no doubt allowing for the fact that it's pairs scoring,' said Brother Lucius, a twinkle in his eye. 'At IMPs, he would be there with a diamond to the eight, along with the rest of us.'

'Quite so,' said Brother Zac.

The Abbot glanced disbelievingly at his scorecard. How could they possibly have played only one round? He felt drained of energy already. It was always the same with these individual events. Drama at every turn and the results were completely outside your control.