

Who should star in 'Off the Cuff'?

Got a suggestion for an individual? The Eccentric can highlight in *Off the Cuff*, an occasional feature that focuses on ordinary people with extraordinary flair for fashion? If you know an Observer & Eccentric area resident with a distinctive clothing sense, give us a call at 644-1100, Ext. 243.

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Harry Fishbein a man of legend

THE BRIDGE CROWD



WOODY BOYD

One of the gregarious comics and totally entertaining giants of contract bridge history was the professor of legend, beret-headed Harry Fishbein. This is my second column on him, and maybe not my last, for there is a wide library of wonders about his accomplishments and contributions.

My business brought us together. It was '69 and I was hired for BDO Advertising which handled the Detroit Division of Chrysler. We were enjoying the glories of our clients' long and successful sponsorship of Grocho Marx's "You Bet Your Life."

TV was relatively new and everyone was looking for new program opportunities. Somehow we convinced Desoto to sponsor a major duplicate bridge tournament. The ninth Bermuda Bowl was being staged in Manhattan and we arranged for late Sunday night coverage of the event's final 16 boards.

The famous Italian Blue Team was defending its third world title, a spectacular event it subsequently dominated for 22 years. Fishbein's fine team represented North America, and even though shrouded in national glory, it was no match for the Roman Internationalist who brushed its competitors' courageous effort aside and ceded it to oblivion.

My first meeting with Fishy will remain a Tiffany centerpiece, for it was as rare as a 20-carat stone from the depths of South Africa. He and his wonderful partner Eddie Piner, an exceptional performer too, were the proprietors of the famous Mayfair Bridge Club on W. 67th St.

I arrived late one afternoon intending to talk TV, Desoto and the coming event. Harry would have none of it. He quickly acknowledged that he thought he still owned a '59 Packard roadster that was garaged somewhere in Long Island, but his only real interest was his club, bridge and its participants.

What an evening! I got unstuck at 3 a.m. the next morning after Harry's before-bedtime breakfast. There was pain on his face when I left him, but I was due at 385 Madison at 9 a.m. He couldn't believe business preceded pleasure. In spite of my dilapidation, a trip to Fishy's world was a wonderful occasion. I'm only sorry Grocho never had the pleasure as a spectator in his major and Harry was probably as good a storyteller as the comedian.

Many of Harry's great moments are memories held by his closest friends. Lenny Harmon, Milton Petrie and the late Lee Hazen and Charlie Solomon, but today's comes from his wonderful partner, Eddie Piner.

The mish-mash of mingled-origin people who passed through the portals of the Mayfair was complex. One who did so often was the rapper, but many knew danger, stone-faced quiet Rubin Shriber. Harry and Eddie knew the bulge in his breast pocket was more than a wallet full of fifty's.

Ruben's beat was the Brooklyn waterfront, but he considered him-

self a master at bridge and came to Manhattan three afternoons a week to play in the Mayfair nickel game. On this occasion he had drawn a young hot-shot named Buddy Lott who never hesitated to berate his partner's play. As Eddie said, the situation was code red, and he and Harry were fearful of the outcome.

S	Buddy	N	Ruben
-	1A	DBL	2A
-	-	DBL	3A
4♥	DBL	DBL	-
Passed out			

N/S Vulnerable

▲ Q J 10 9
▼ A 3
♦ A 7 5 3
♠ A 5 4

B	N	R	U
U	D	B	B
D	B	B	B
Y	S	N	

▲ 8 7 6 5 2
▼ Q 10
♦ J 4
♠ Q 10 8 7

▲ 4 3
▼ J 9 5 4 2
♦ 6 2
♠ K 6 3 2

W. led S. Q

As you can see, the bidding was paleozoic and should have been punished. Declarer's major problem was getting to his hand. He won the spade king in dummy and immediately played a small trump towards his hand. Ruben was caught napping and played his 10, declarer's jack and Buddy's ace.

On the spade continuation, dummy won the ace and played the trump king and diamonds from the top, losing only three aces. Buddy started howling at trick (6) and by (12) he could be heard all over Manhattan.

Harry was at the table in a second, for Ruben wasn't known to be merciful, and he quickly removed the hot shot in hopes of saving his life. Eddie, on the other hand, slipped into Pilot's spot, spewing soft-spoken small talk as he dealt the next hand.

Not once did he look to Ruben whose hands were at the ready, as his murderous eyes tracked the departed. Later he was heard to ask, "Does that punk have any insurance?" Needless to say, Buddy Pilot never darkened the Mayfair's door again once Harry suggested it could be his last deal. Within a year, Ruben was never seen again either. Eddie suggested he may have lost interest in bridge or something more vital.

Woody Boyd teaches local bridge classes and is a life master. He lives in Bloomfield Township. To leave a message for Boyd, from a Touch-Tone phone, call 553-2647, Ext. 1853.

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Kathryn Scott

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