

## **Voodoo Bridge!!!! What???**

How many people here are familiar with Mel Brooks' movie Young Frankenstein ?? It's one of my most favorite movie of all times. Well there is a scene where Gene Wilders playing Frankenstein tells Marty Feldman, who plays Igoire...that his name is pronounced Fronkensteen. Feldman replies, "you are putting me on." When I told people that I am giving a lecture on Voodoo Bridge, I got the same response....

## **So what is Voodoo? And how is it related to bridge?**

Voodoo is a spirit and spell religion that arose in Haiti by enslaved west African people through a process of syncretism between several West African traditional religions and French Roman Catholicism. In 1781 more than ten thousand people fled

Haiti to New Orleans because of the slave rebellion which is how it got to me.

Because I was born and raised in **New Orleans** so Voodoo is in my blood for better or worse. When I have to describe something that is a bit like you say in Texas, **Out in the weeds** or as the Brits say, “**read the tea leaves**” then I lump it all together under the Voodoo moniker....

So .... What does Voodoo have to do with bridge? Isn't Voodoo is all about sticking pins in dolls and casting magic spells.

Bridge is science and math although there are some for whom bridge is a religion...

**BUT** Isn't bridge is all about Suit distribution, counting points, counting losers, winners. Right? Well what about body language, facial expressions and temperament ? Does that play a part? You betcha it does. And many players just ignore this aspect!

**That is what this talk is about all the things you cannot see or count mathematically but instinctively know something is going on there. This can help you locate cards and improve your scores.**

## **ABOUT ME**

I have been playing bridge for about 50 or 55 years or so albeit with a 20 year hiatus to raise my children. I moved to Austin in 1973. I still visit New Orleans frequently because I have a lot of relatives there and old friends I used to play bridge with.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

I've been a photographer for about forty years so I know something about visual literacy. I photograph people or things

about people. My educational background includes a undergraduate degree in photojournalism from St Edward's University and a Masters degree in art photography from the university of Texas in Austin. I have work in museums and permanent collections in Paris, **NOT TEXAS**, France, New Orleans and Austin, plus many private collections. I've published three books on photography.

The last job I held, before I retired was Photography director for the Texas House Of Representatives. When people asked me what I did for a living my standard reply was **I shoot politicians for a living.** As you can imagine they Invariably they had some suggestions.

The thing about photographing people and politicians is they almost to a person produce what I call is a **fake face. DONT SAY THAT FAST! That is** anytime a

camera is pointed at them they assume people want to see themselves as **they** wished for people to see them which isn't themselves. So the trick to making good photographs of people is to make them look like their real selves. Because when the average person views a fake face they often intuitively have a negative reaction, often not necessarily cognitively.....This is tricky because some people especially politicians are pretty good at making fake faces.

So Here's the deal. You see you have about twenty facial muscles and these are the only ones in your body that are attached directly to the skin. Only mammals have them. No doubt that nature intended them as a communication aid as a form of non verbal expression.

For example if I said to you, oh I love to do that, or I said OH I LOVE to do that !!!! — you would instinctively know the difference, Right??? Even though they are the same words...These muscles can make your face do amazing things...Think about that,,, American Sign language utilizes body language and facial expressions as an integral part of their language.

**AND** much of the time those muscles reveal things about you without you even realizing you are expressing or what you are expressing. **HOWEVER** you are giving what poker players call **TELLS**.. Tells are unintentional physical or verbal cues that give away information about a hand. A trembling hand, rapid breathing, or nervous laughter are all examples of tells. A well-practiced poker face can help mask these tells, preventing opponents from exploiting them.

## **POKER FACE**

IF you only get one thing from this lecture today let it be this. Develop a habit of being a Poker Faced player. I have some hand outs that can help develop Poker Face. Play all your cards and make all your bids devoid of emotion like plain vanilla the same way every time. Show no emotion. If you are playing against someone whom I call a **popper**, some one who pops their cards for slams them or plays their cards quickly. Slow em down and do your **poker face**. That might very well disturb and distract them.

One of the highest compliments I ever received was from a world class bridge player who complained that he couldn't read me. He was an fast card player. (Which in my opinion is an intentional way

to distract you from the game.) He had a situation wherein he had a two way guess for a finesse. He kept popping his cards and I kept my poker face. He eventually went wrong. I had the card he needed and my partner who was oblivious also had a poker face..The pro said I couldn't read you. I hope that today will help you pay close attention to what's going on with you and around you...

## **What is a Poker Face?**

A poker face is a stoic and enigmatic expression that hides a player's emotions and intentions during a game. It involves maintaining a neutral demeanor regardless of the cards a player holds or declarer plays at the table. The primary purpose of a poker face is to prevent opponents from gaining insight into your hand or potential strategy through non-verbal cues.

The concept of a poker face is not limited to facial expressions alone; it also encompasses body language, verbal cues, and overall composure. Skilled poker players master the art of concealing any signs of excitement, disappointment, or anxiety that may give away their hand's strength their intentions.

So what does this mean? For example, It means don't do these things!

**Pull cards out and put them back**

**Pull bids in and out of box**

**Shuffle around in your chair**

**Sigh**

**Oh**

**Show disappointment or glee**

When a player has a weak hand, a convincing poker face can make opponents believe that they hold certain

cards leading them to go wrong on finesses....

## **Reading Opponents:**

Professional bridge players often try to read their opponents to gain insights. By maintaining a consistent and unreadable poker face, you can make it challenging for opponents to decipher whether they are holding certain cards or not.

## **Psychological Warfare:**

Bridge is as much a psychological battle as it is a game of cards. A strong poker face can create a psychological advantage over opponents, making them second-guess their decisions and often leading to more favorable outcomes for the player with a composed demeanor.

Now for certain none of this is 100% but I do believe if you pay close attention to the bidding, play and body innuendos it will pay off in spades....OKAY! **bad pun** but if you know me you'll already know how much I love bad puns

Now lets look at some hands and see if we can tell when you can read your opponent's body language, context actions, bids or card play.....