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Dorothy Hayden Truscott
A Sterling Example of Defense

By: Phillip Alder
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Dorothy Hayden Truscott, who died on Tuesday, was one of the greatest female bridge players of all time.

North
♠ 8 7 4 3
♥ 6 2
♦ K J 10 4
♣ 5 4 2

West (D)
♠ K J 9 6 5 2
♥ 10 7 4 3
♦ A 8 6
♣ —

East
♠ A Q
♥ Q
♦ Q 9 7 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 7 6

South
♠ 10
♥ A K J 9 8 5
♦ 5
♣ A K Q J 3

Both sides were vulnerable. The bidding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 ♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>4 ♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
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She learned the basics when she was 7, watching her mother play and occasionally taking her father's cards when he had to prepare drinks.

Truscott had a stellar bridge career, highlighted by 11 world championship medals: four gold, one silver and six bronze. She also won a gold medal as a non-playing captain. She captured more than two dozen national titles, starting in 1959.

Her main strengths as a player, apart from technical skill, were being an excellent partner, never criticizing the person sitting opposite her and having an impassive demeanor. I played many times with her, and whenever I laid down my dummy, I gained no clue about our contract's chances. Alan Truscott, the bridge columnist of The New York Times from 1964 until his death last year — and Dorothy's husband as of 1972 — was the antithesis of this. As soon as I tabled my cards, I knew whether the contract was laydown, touch-and-go or no-play.
Dorothy Truscott taught math for one year. This experience helped her become a top bridge teacher, and she used that aptitude in two excellent books, "Winning Declarer Play" and "Bid Better, Play Better."

Truscott invented DOPI and splinter bids. DOPI stands for Double = 0 and Pass = 1. When an opponent overcalls a four-no-trump Blackwood bid, the replier doubles with no aces and passes with one. A splinter bid, which is an unusual jump to show a singleton (or void) in the bid suit, a good fit for partner's suit and at least game-going values, was also devised independently by an Englishman, David Cliff. Both DOPI and splinters are used by almost every pair in the tournament world.

Truscott, who was 80, was a World Grand Master and became a member of the American Contract Bridge League’s Hall of Fame in 1998.

She had two particularly famous partnerships. The first was with B. J. Becker, with whom she won three national titles. She also played with him in the 1965 Bermuda Bowl world team championship, becoming only the second woman to represent the United States in that event. (Helen Sobel had played in 1957.) This Bermuda Bowl was notorious because Dorothy Hayden (as she was then), Alan Truscott and Becker accused a British pair, Terence Reese and Boris Schapiro, of illegally signaling by varying the number of fingers they placed in front of their cards.

In women’s events Truscott was most successful with Emma Jean Hawes, winning those four world titles and nine national championships. They defended beautifully on the diagramed deal. After Hawes (West) opened with a weak two-spade bid, South jumped to four hearts, keeping his club suit hidden.

Truscott (East) won the first trick with her spade ace and shifted to the club ten, West ruffing South’s ace. West continued with the spade king, declarer ruffing and drawing trump in three rounds. At this point Truscott knew that South had begun with 1-6-1-5 distribution. If he had the diamond ace, the contract was unbeatable, but if he had a low diamond, West might duck declarer’s diamond lead toward the board, hoping that South had two diamonds and would be forced to guess the suit to make his contract.

To stop this from happening, Truscott discarded her diamond queen. Now when declarer led his diamond, West stepped in with her ace and played a high spade. South ruffed and ran winners, but he had to lose the last trick to East’s club nine. The defenders took one spade, one diamond, one club and one club ruff.

Truscott was a wonderful ambassador for the game, touring the world and charming everyone she met. A memorial service for her will be held at approximately 11 p.m. next Saturday, after play finishes for the day at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago, the site of the Summer North American Bridge Championships.