

Will Geer, my dear departed buddy, was a fine classical actor (although you may remember him best as Grandpa on *The Waltons*). One day, sitting in my home in Ann Arbor, Will decided he would like to plant a Shakespearean garden on the campus of the University of Michigan. The University was pleased to give its blessing, and Will did it. Next to every specimen he planted, he installed a quotation (occasionally, a slight misquotation) that corresponded to a reference by the Bard to that particular plant. I guess it probably had been done before, but I thought that was cool.

I receive many quotations from readers. Two old friends, Ed Simons and Lou Dardi, have an especially good feel for quotes that might have amusing (or even serious) bridge ramifications. Lou often even goes so far as to supply entertaining bridge interpretations for many of them.

It's astonishing how much bridge wisdom can be found in the words of the pundits from unrelated worlds. For example, a recent episode at the table caused me to revive an old tip: **"Psychs are a tricky practice. Psyching is kind of like frying bacon in the nude. You run the risk of getting burned."** Sir Walter Scott, not known as a bridge player, put it more succinctly: **"Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive."** We actually said the same thing! Sir Walter was immortalized for *his* words. I crashed and burned for not heeding mine.

How about this one? I wrote, **"A comfortable partnership is precious. Cherish it; nurture it. Like freedom, youth or bladder control, such partnerships are among those priceless things that we don't fully appreciate until they are lost."**

Here we have choices. Samuel Butler wrote, **"A friendship (read partnership) is like money, easier**



Zeke Jabbour
jabbour@adelphia.net

made than kept." Or maybe you prefer Henry Ford: **"My best friend (partner) is the one who brings out the best in me."**

Note the brevity of those statements — and the length of mine. I've forgotten who said that **"Brevity is the soul of wit"** (it must have been the Bard), but I think I'm getting the idea. So, here's a shorter tip inspired by overhearing a ridiculous tongue-lashing fraught with false analysis: **"Be kind to your partner. If you can't be kind, have the decency to be right."** Personally, I'm partial to the sign in George Will's office which says: **"The flogging will continue until morale improves."**

Another short one: **"Simplify. I'm told that the road to hell is paved with good conventions."**

An anonymous somebody topped me with, **"Better to understand a little, than to misunderstand a lot."**

I'm getting into this now. My tip: **"Face it, bad play is sometimes rewarded. If an opponent lucks out after doing something that you deem stupid — get over it. If you happen to get away with a dumb play, be thankful, but remember not to confuse**

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brilliance with a bull market. Just give a respectful nod to the bridge gods and get on with it."

Winston Churchill: **"The greatest lesson in life is to know that even fools are right sometimes."** Bill Arlinghaus confronts that lesson with one of his own. He carries a pick-up slip with these words: **"It's only a game."** Space for one or two more. If you like these, I've got a million — just takes a little encouragement.

My tip: **"Don't confuse defeat with failure. It is not failure if you did your best. It is not failure if you learned something. It is especially not failure if you enjoyed the process. Whatever happens, don't cry. There's no crying in bridge!"** Tom Hanks cuts to the quick (in *A League of Their Own*): **"There's no crying in baseball!"**

Finally, my paramount bridge tip has always been: **"Counting, in all its phases, is the most important technical skill that one must develop in order to play winning bridge. But I gotta tell ya', it ain't easy."**

To my knowledge, Albert Einstein never touched a deck of bridge cards, but observe how he complements that tip in this incontestable observation: **"Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."**

Now why does his tip sound so much more profound than mine?

One of the most quoted men in history, Ralph Waldo Emerson, complained, **"I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."**

To which I would reply, **"I know this: You win some and you lose some."** □