

Oswald Jacoby was a relative newcomer. Then aged twenty-nine, a Brooklyn by birth, he had been to high school at Erasmus Hall in the old Flatbush part of Brooklyn. At the age of fifteen he was already showing signs of his prodigious memory for figures – he was captain of both the chess team and the maths club. After school he went to Columbia University but quit after two years to become an actuary. He joined Metropolitan Life and became, at twenty-two, the youngest actuary to qualify. Indeed so well did he do out of his actuarial business that he was able to retire six years later in 1928, thinking he had enough money to last him the rest of his life. But the Wall Street Crash put paid to that and he was forced back into work.

He first got into serious bridge in 1926 when he went to play at the

Knickerbocker Whist Club with Dr William Lamb, the principal of Brooklyn High School in the Thursday night Duplicate game. It was the first time he had played Duplicate, but despite the presence of some of the Auction bridge 'greats', such as Whitehead, Lenz and so on, they won. He went back again the next week with a lawyer friend, Fred Payne. They found themselves playing in a different section, among unfamiliar faces. Jacoby asked the tournament director George Reith why they were not playing in the first section again since they had won last week. Reith told him this *was* the first section. At the tables were Culbertson, Sims, von Zedtwitz and so on. Jacoby recalled that Sims watched him play a series of hands in this tournament and, when a group of them went out to eat afterwards, told him that he was the best natural player he had ever seen. It was the beginning of a long friendship and Jacoby was indebted to Sims for the way he helped him to better his game in the early stages.

Jacoby first played Contract in 1928 when he was in Palm Beach. He was invited to the house of Jules Bache, a well-known stockbroker, whose daughter insisted on playing the new game of Contract. From that moment on Jacoby was taken by the possibilities of the game. His first introduction to tournament Contract came in 1929 through George Reith, who rang him up and asked him to be his partner for the first Goldman Pairs event held at the Eastern Championships, of which Reith was in charge. They won and from then on Jacoby's reputation grew.

Lenz and Jacoby had never played in a tournament together but they had practised in private. When their partnership was announced, Culbertson immediately warned his *Bridge World* readers that Jacoby suffered from a 'chronic weakness for the so-called psychic bid'. It was an essential part of Jacoby's armoury, as he himself admitted. Culbertson called the psychic the 'boomerang' of bridge: 'Thrown accurately at the enemy, it produces havoc in their ranks, but, should it go wide of the mark, it returns, frequently causing even more damage to one's own side.' Lenz was to understand the full import of this remark during the match in which Jacoby made thirteen psychic bids in all, one or two leading to severe partnership misunderstanding at crucial points.