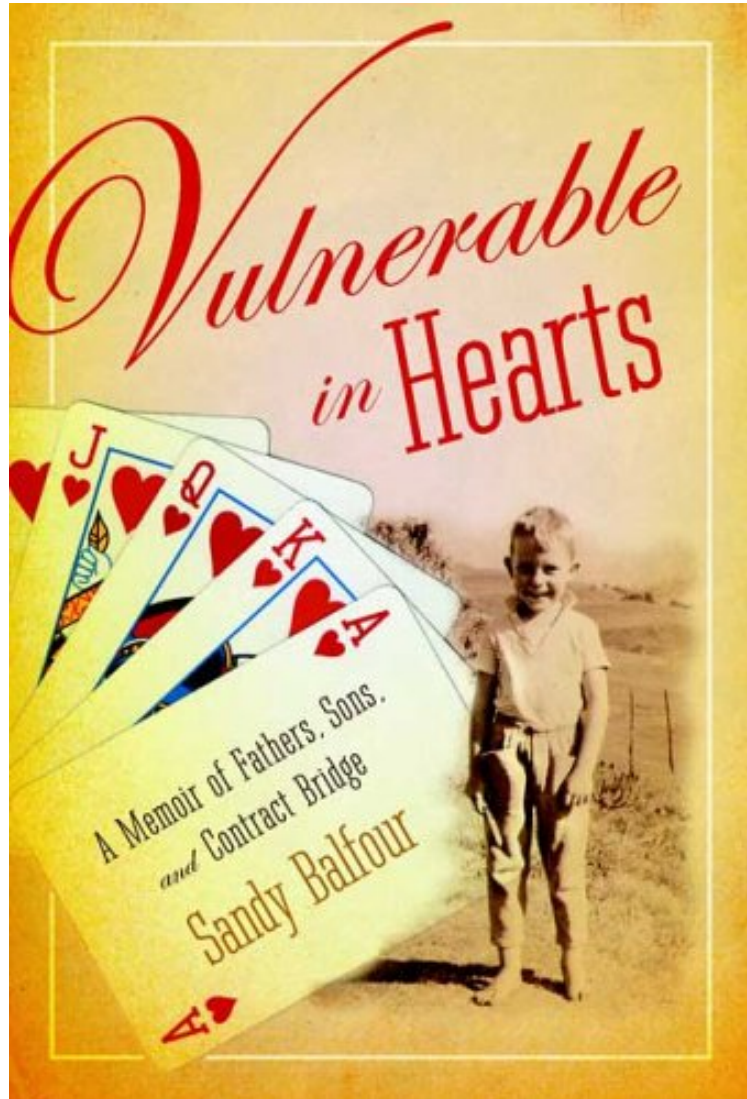


[FREE] Vulnerable in Hearts: A Memoir of Fathers, Sons, and Contract Bridge

Vulnerable in Hearts: A Memoir of Fathers, Sons, and Contract Bridge

Sandy Balfour

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Sandy Balfour : Vulnerable in Hearts: A Memoir of Fathers, Sons, and Contract Bridge before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vulnerable in Hearts: A Memoir of Fathers, Sons, and Contract Bridge:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. However there are several good anecdotes,By C.S.KurupThere are almost no bridge hands in the book. However there are several good anecdotes,3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Grand SlamBy Ginna in CvilleYou don't have to be a bridge lover to enjoy this story of a young man's

experiences in pre World War II Scotland, England and South Africa. But it helps! As the author's father says "Everyone likes bridge, they just don't know it yet." I highly recommend this wonderful memoir. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A sweet deal, well played. By T. Burket Sandy Balfour's family memoir, with emphasis on his father, is a charming and unusual book, and an easy read at only 200 pages. Bridge was the anchor for Dad's life, which otherwise was a disappointment in several ways, compared to his potential. Dad could shine at the bridge table and let his personality come through. Lessons in bidding, playing the hand, and relating to your partner and opponents also were proxies for life. The title comes from a comment near the end: "to be alive is always and everywhere to be vulnerable in hearts," recounted as he waited for father's imminent death. The title is simply a wonderful play on words and suited for a memoir that combines the complex game of contract bridge and similarly complex life in general. To some degree, to understand bridge is to understand the father. The book opens and closes with the death of the author's father. In between is a combination of the author's memories, a recounting of his father's life, and the history of contract bridge. The connection, besides the importance of the game in his father's life, is that contract bridge was invented the same year as his father was born. Father and his brothers were shipped from Scotland to South Africa as youths in advance of World War II, presumably to avoid service. Father ended up serving anyway and returned to South Africa permanently, although never completely leaving his native Scotland. The history of bridge, blended with the story in small doses as well as more extended sections, was very well done. I will assume it is accurate. It flows briskly, with a nice mixture of overview and detail, aided by several colorful personalities, such as Culbertson, and big names, such as Goren. Knowledge of bridge is not required, although it is helpful. I have played a little, so that the re-telling of various hands and the evolution of different bidding systems was not foreign. Players will no doubt enjoy some specific hands shown and speculate on what they might have done, just as in a bridge column. My only slightly negative comment is that the book lacks for action; not a lot happens. Perhaps some more anecdotes would have been appropriate. The family wasn't quite interesting enough, as presented, to take the book to the next level. I highly recommend the book for readers looking for an unusual memoir, and especially for bridge fans of middle age and beyond who can appreciate the bonus view of contract bridge over their own lives.

Contract bridge the version of the game we play today and Sandy Balfour's father were both conceived in 1925 and thrust, blinking uncertainly, into the fractured world of 1926. But while Balfour's father was the child of a bank clerk and a schoolteacher and was born in a modest apartment in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, the game he came to love had an altogether more distinguished lineage.

From Publishers Weekly Auction, bid, contract. Dummy, insult, misfit. Sacrifice, slam, trump, vulnerability. Contract bridge boasts perhaps the most resonant terminology of any card game, and its complexity has entranced its fans for decades. As the title of this somber account suggests, its metaphorical resonances can be appropriate in a familial context, too. Born in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, in 1926 (roughly coincident with the origins of contract bridge), Balfour's father, Tom, emigrated as a teenager to South Africa, where he later worked as an engineer. A stern figure, Tom saved his boldness for the bridge table. Sprinkling colorful anecdotes from and citing experts like Ely Culbertson, Milton Work, Alan Truscott and Zia Mahmood, Balfour plumbs the history of bridge for insight into his father's elusive makeup, his displacement from his beloved Scotland, his passion for Robert Louis Stevenson, his military service, his professional disappointments and his alcoholism (he died in 2003). The author of a memoir about cryptic crosswords (*Pretty Girl in Crimson Rose* [8]), Balfour has a knack for expressing his emotions in the jargon of arcane pastimes. While bridge may be forbidding for nonfanatics, the emotional heart of this memoir is not. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. An intricate braiding of bridge and family history, tournament derring-do, rigorous intellect and searing emotion, all rendered in humorous, lapidary prose. What a book. James McManus, author of *Positively Fifth Street*