

Los Angeles Daily News

June 11, 2005

Bridge Builds Devotion Among Loyal Card Players

By Associated Press

Poker is the hot card game of the moment, but its fans have nothing on bridge players when it comes to devotion.

In a survey of bridge buffs, nearly half said if they were stranded on a desert island they'd rather have three fellow players than an expert who could help in their predicament.

According to the American Contract Bridge League, 42 percent of those polled would want three bridge players with them, compared with 19 percent who'd prefer Tom Hanks for the survival skills he exhibited in the film "Cast Away."

The late oceanographer Jacques Cousteau was chosen by 15 percent in the survey, conducted by Equation Research.

Bridge, which claims such high-profile aficionados as Bill Gates, once enjoyed widespread popularity. Six decades

ago, more than 40 percent of U.S. households played the game, according to the bridge league.

About 25 million Americans play bridge now, the 160,000-member league said. Participation in online league-sanctioned games has risen by more than 5,000 a month in the past year, up to 17,500.

The game can claim pop culture inroads, too, in TV series including "ER." In an episode of Lifetime's "Wild Card" drama, writer-producer William Schwartz of Los Angeles made a lead character, Zoe (Joely Fisher), a bridge player.

Another producer wanted poker but Schwartz talked him out of it, arguing that Zoe was smart and "should play something more intelligent," he told the bridge league.

