The Bridge Club
(A Joint Panel Abstract)

Spring 1996

Background:

Members of the Haverford Bridge Club were using the Skating House for regular get-togethers, meetings, hanging out, and as a place to host parties. Some of these parties were quite large and lasted late into the night. As a result of these parties, Professor Simon and his family, who live near the Skating House, were having trouble sleeping through the night. Efforts were made between the parties involved to eliminate the problem, but tensions still remained.

One night, Professor Simon and his family were disturbed by people shouting “Party!” from behind their house and from the direction of the Skating House. Professor Simon believed that these shouts were from members of the Bridge Club who were angry about his request that they keep their parties smaller and quieter. Professor Simon confronted the members of the club about having shouted at his home, and was told that nobody had been shouting at his house, and that what he had overheard were shouts resulting from card games and later from a drinking game. Professor Simon found the students’ story to be inconsistent with his own account of the events and moreover was concerned that the students were simply unwilling to admit that they had been yelling behind his house.

After discussing the matter with his department head, and with members of the administration, Professor Simon asked that Honor Council take up the matter. Honor Council discussed the case and reached consensus that it should be resolved by a Dean’s Panel. This option was chosen for several reasons: the large number of students involved, and because it was a social case where Professor Simon confronted the students as a neighbor and not as a Professor.

Summary of Proceedings:

A Dean’s panel was selected and instructed to discuss the incident in question. The members of the panel decided that because of the large number of people involved, the most effective way to begin would be to speak with the Bridge Club and Professor Simon separately. The panel decided to meet with Professor Simon first to find out what his concerns were, and what resolution he was seeking.

The following afternoon the panel met with Professor Simon and his wife. They were asked to begin by detailing the events surrounding the evening of the shouting and any issues they felt to be pertinent to the case. It quickly became evident that their concerns went well beyond that isolated incident. They wanted to discuss their concerns that the Bridge Club had been holding parties where under-age drinking was taking place, as well as the fact that they, as homeowners, were entitled by local ordinances to quiet in their home after nine o’clock at night. They felt they might have to start calling the police if these disturbances continued.

The members of the panel then tried to focus the discussion more directly on the night of the shouting. Professor Simon and his wife made it clear that they did not believe that the shouting had been part of a game inside the Skating House. They believed that members of the Bridge Club had come over behind their house and intentionally disturbed them. The two found this act of disrespect very upsetting and taxing on their lifestyle because they had a baby in the house. When asked what they hoped would come out of the Dean’s Panel, Professor Simon stated very clearly that what he wanted was for the students to respect the law, admit they had intentionally disturbed his family, and receive some assurance that they would not be disturbed again.

With these concerns in mind, the Panel met with the members of the Bridge Club. The meeting began with Ed speaking on behalf of the Bridge Club. He said that the group as a whole felt responsible for what had happened. He explained that the noise had begun as part of a drinking game and had not been directed towards the Simons. The problem, he said, began
when a small group had left to return to campus. The students had shouted at the Simons' house out of frustration with the series of altercations they had had over the course of the year. He said that they had not been thinking at the time, and did not think they would be heard inside the house. When asked whether or not the individuals who had done the shouting were willing to personally apologize, members of the group insisted that they wanted to take responsibility as a group, because the incident was something that grew out of the group's relationship with Professor Simon.

The Panel then asked what the students felt was the most appropriate way to address the concerns of the Simon family. They said that they had already decided not to host any more parties at the Skating House. They also wanted another chance to meet with the Simons to apologize for the shouting. And finally, they said they would be interested in creating a set of guidelines so that other groups would not have similar problems when throwing parties or holding meetings in buildings that are on the perimeter campus. As a whole, the club felt that they had made a lot of progress during the year in terms of managing the noise at their parties and wanted to pass along what they had learned to other groups.

The Simons responded that they were open to meeting with the club again, so a meeting was set up at the Simons' house. Initially, the meeting was a bit tense, and many issues were discussed that were not relevant to the specific shouting incident. However, progress was made and the students eventually saw the concerns the Simons were expressing. Many of the students were surprised by the proximity of the Simons' house to the Skating House. Seeing the Simons' baby also made a great impression on many members of the Bridge Club. As the discussion progressed, many members stepped forward and apologized for taking part in the shouting incident. Everyone contributed to the discussion as to what might be done to ensure that similar problems would not arise with other neighboring campus families/inhabitants. The Simons and some students also discussed the possibility of a public apology in the Bi-Co, since the problems between the Bridge Club and the family had become well known to many members of the student body, most of whom had sided with the Bridge Club members. Other members of the club felt that this would only draw more attention to the Simons' House and they feared that it would create further problems. The meeting ended with both sides feeling that progress had been made.

Panel Deliberations:

The panel was generally pleased with how the Bridge Club members had conducted themselves and the progress that was made during the meeting. They were concerned about how to address the shouting incident in and of itself, without involving other issues that were raised, but were not relevant to the incident in question. After further discussion, the Panel reached consensus on the following resolutions:

Resolutions:
WHAT ARE THE RESOLUTIONS???

Presentation of Resolutions: