

Marked Cards



John Scarne, gambling expert, found plenty of them in use in crooked card games around Army camps. He tells you here how to spot this common cheating device the next time some wise guy tries it in a pay-day poker or blackjack session.

By ALLEN CHURCHILL Y3c
YANK Staff Writer

GAMBLERS call them "readers" and crooks call them "paper." To most GIs they are merely known as marked cards. To any pay-day bank roll, they are poison.

John Scarne, gambling sleuth and card expert, says that marked cards are right up there with crooked dice when somebody asks him to pick the most common cheating device in armed-forces gambling games. He estimates there are 100,000 decks of marked cards in the Army alone.

Marked cards are numerous because, like crooked dice, they're easy to get. Catalogs of marked-card merchants are widely circulated in the Army, Navy, and Marines. Usually the price of a pack is \$1.50. The crooked manufacturers sell so many that their packs cost only \$1 more than honest decks.

Markings on a card seldom indicate its suit. The suit is not important enough; only in pinochle is it worth knowing. What sharpers want to know is the number on the card, for doctored cards are most profitable in the one-card games—stud poker, blackjack and red dog. Reading the cards the other fellows have, and the back of the card that is about to be dealt, the smart boys have the game sewed up in their tight little pockets.

Sharpers operate so scientifically that when they can't work their own marked cards into a game—which naturally is what they always try to do—they mark cards during the game. This is far more dangerous than using cards already

marked, but it is a mighty common practice in the games servicemen play.

Let's see how it is done.

Nailing. Sticking his thumbnail into the side of a card, the sharper leaves a small identifying mark which can be seen at a distance like all expert markings. He puts this mark at precisely the same spot on both sides of the card. Why? So that no matter which way the card is held the nailing will be in the same place.

There is a reason for this. The important thing about nailing, as about all marking, is not that the card is marked. What is important is *where* it is marked. For, depending on the game, the location of the mark tells the number of the card. And that, as we have said, is all the sharper wants to know.

For example, in stud the low cards are not important enough to warrant marking, so marks are used to indicate high cards only. A nail near the top of the edges signals an ace. A mark a quarter of the way down indicates a king, and a mark near the bottom means 10. But in blackjack the same marks are used to denote the low cards, for they are the important ones to know.

It's as simple as that.

Waving is another example of play-as-you-go methods of marking cards. Here the experienced fingers of the gambler take a card and skillfully bend it over one finger and under the other, leaving an identifying bend or "wave." These waves, too, at the top, bottom or middle of a card, reveal the number.

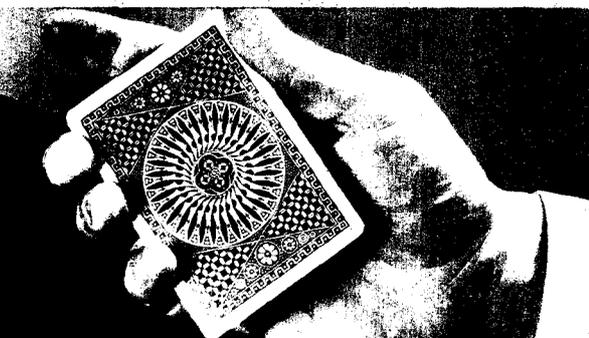
To catch nailing or waving, use the same method used to detect crimping, described in



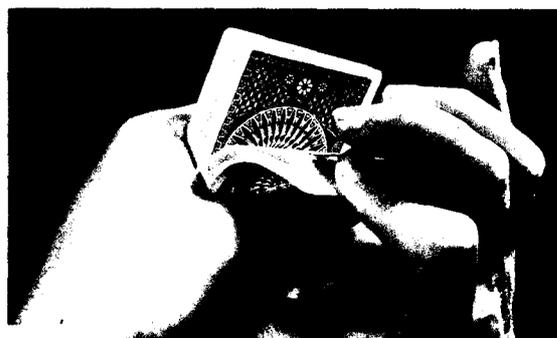
NAILING is one way of marking cards in the course of a game. Fingernail is stuck into the side of card. Here John Scarne marks a queen.



WAVING is another common way of marking as you go. Pressing card over and under finger leaves an obvious identifying bend or "wave."



DAUBING leaves smudge on certain place on back of card. Note smudge under Scarne's finger here. The paste comes from inside his pocket.



SCARNE RIFFLE is the way to detect Lines, Shades, Edges. Any doctoring of backs jumps out plainly in contrast when the cards are riffled.



PEGGING tells its own story. The sharper identifies his cards by pricking them, thus leaving marks which the fingers locate later in game.

YANK in a previous Scarne article. Square up the entire pack and look at the edges. Any nailing or waving will stand out like Betty Grable on a windy day.

Daubing means sticking a spot of paste on the back of the card. The daub leaves a slight smudge which the experienced sharper knows immediately.

Usually the sharper carries the paste for the daub in his pocket. With lightninglike motions his finger is dampened, dipped in the paste, then pressed on the card at the right spot. To detect daubing examine the backs of the cards.

Pegging, another marking method, gives signals to the fingers, not the eyes. When he pegs, the sharper appears at the game with thumb or finger bandaged. Usually it is the left thumb, which holds the pack most often. Through this bandage sticks the tip of a thumbtack that has been strapped to the thumb under the bandage. Using this sharp point the crook pricks the right cards in the right places. Usually he pricks only aces and kings. When the dealer feels either one on top of the pack he deals seconds to the other boys and saves the pegged card for himself or his confederate.

To detect pegging run a finger over the backs of the card. A peg will feel like a mountain.

Sanding also requires a bandage—for a slightly different purpose. Exposed through this bandage is a slit of the surface of a piece of sandpaper. By pulling the card's edge along the sandpaper the edge is made white-clean. When assembled with the other cards this newly cleaned edge stands out clearly.

SUCH are the ways in which cards are marked during games. Now take a look at professional methods of marking cards either in manufacture or before a game.

Shading. A section of the back of the card is worked over lightly with a brush, leaving a slight color over the identifying section. What is remarkable here is the small, almost infinitesimal, area spotted and the delicacy of the mark. Yet sharpers can see it across the table.

Line work. The finest possible lines are added to a certain section of the design on the back of the card. The innocent naked eye can hardly see a difference, but the experienced eye knows in a second what the card is.

Edge work. A slight belly is put on the border between the design and the edge of the card.

Cut-out. A chemical preparation, or a delicate knife, removes a minute section from part of the design.

Block-out. The same thing—almost. Parts of the design are covered with white ink, or the design is enlarged with ink similar to that used for the design. This is especially effective with cards that are reputed to be markproof: those that have an all-over, no-border design on the back. An example is the Bee card, the back of which is completely covered by a diamond design. Contrary to popular belief, such cards can easily be marked by making one diamond smaller or larger. This is done by blocking out.

To detect all these super-delicate markings, use the Scarne Riffle. It is based on the principle of the animated-cartoon books you played with as a kid. Holding one of these books tightly in one hand, you riffled rapidly through the pages. As you did, the figures seemed to move as in a motion picture.

Try this with any cards you think are marked by any of the methods described above. Hold the cards as Scarne holds them in the accompanying picture. Keep your eyes fixed on a section no more than 1/2-inch square. Then riffle. If the cards are marked, the doctored parts of the design will suddenly jump out at you.

Then you have to find the cards that jumped (for, remember, it is likely that only high or

low cards in the deck will be marked) and compare them with the others. When you have found out how it's done, throw the whole damn pack away where it can't be found.

So far we have discussed cards that are actually marked, either in the course of the game or before. How about markings that alter the actual size of the card?

Trims. This process is used on cards that have a border between the design and the edge. The border is trimmed—way down for low cards, say, and a little less for the higher ones. Or perhaps it is the other way around. Anyway, the amount of white space between design and edge is trimmed to less-than-regulation size, and the amount of the trimming signals whether the card is high or low.

Naturally the way to discover a trimmed card is to place it over an honest one. The trim will be smaller.

Sorts. If you want a full-time job for a rainy week end, or a rainy week, try making up a pack of sorts. When you are finished you will think that sorts are so much trouble nobody else would ever prepare a pack. But you will be wrong. One week spent on sorts brings months of winnings and many gamblers think it is worth while. Furthermore, sorts are the only marked cards that are not actually doctored. Hence they are the safest marked cards to use.

Sorting is based on the one flaw in Bee cards and others with all-over designs on the back. This flaw is the edge—the all-over design cannot run off the edge at precisely the same point on every one of these cards. There are bound to be variations along the edges; some will go off the edge high on the diamond design, others close to the bottom and many others somewhere in between.

Knowing this, the ambitious sharper buys at least 40, and probably more, identical packs of these no-border cards. Out of them he laboriously sorts one pack which can be read by the edges. High cards may be those sliced off high on the diamond design, and low cards may be the ones sliced off low. Or again it may be vice versa. But whatever the final markings, these cards are easy to read for the man who knows they are crooked, and hard to detect for the man who doesn't. All you can do, if you suspect sorts, is see whether the high cards have similar edges, and if the low cards are the opposite of the high.

Cards with over-all designs on the back can also be trimmed and made into fake sorts.

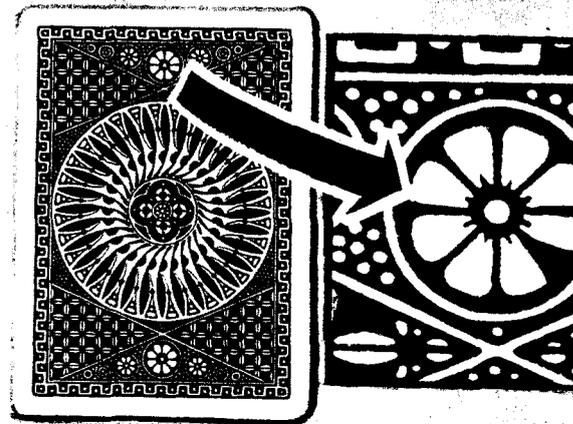
Luminous readers are so called because they are painted on the back with an invisible ink which tells what number the card is. The catch here, of course, is that the numbers are visible only when seen through special dark glasses or through a colored visor. The obvious lesson is never to play with guys who wear either—or, if you must, borrow them first and look at the backs of the cards yourself.

Pictures. Here's something else to remember. Don't play with cards that have pictures on the back. A beautiful scene may be a delight to your emotions, soldier, but such a scene can be reversed so that upside down it signals "high cards" and right side up "low." Or vice versa.

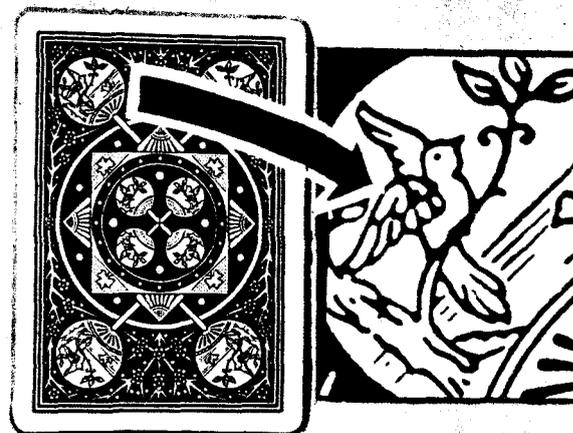
Indeed, the more obvious the trick, the fewer people catch it. And, if nothing else, sharpers are good psychologists.

There is only one rule Scarne can give you as an over-all tip for catching marked-card sharpers. Watch the guy who keeps his eyes glued to the backs of cards—the cards that are about to be dealt, the hole card in stud, the top of the deck in blackjack, the important card in any game.

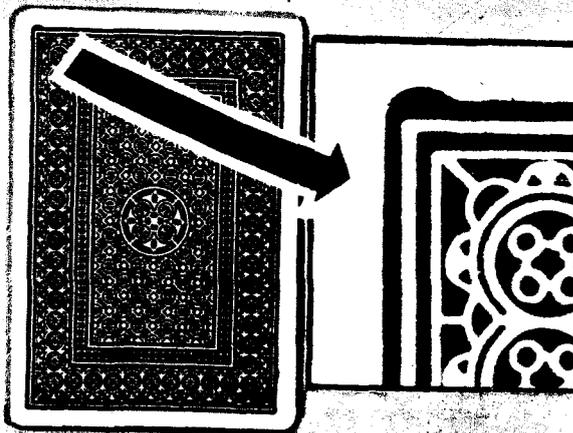
Another guy to watch out for is the man who takes a long chance and wins, who seems to raise too often and too well.



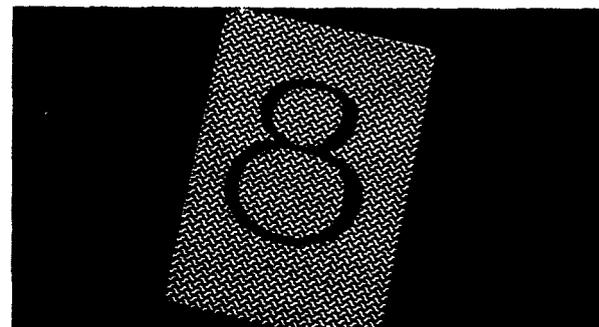
BLOCK-OUT. Part of the white in one petal of the daisy is filled in, indicating number of card.



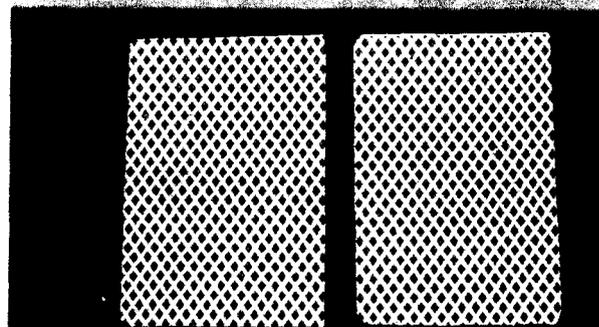
LINE WORK. Here a fine line is added or extended into the white surface around bird.



EDGE WORK. A slight bevel or "belly" on edge of design indicates ace. Lower means lower card.



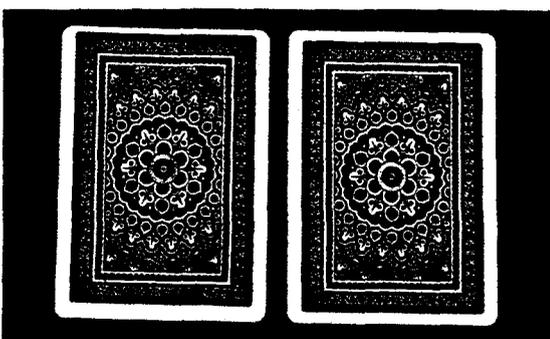
LUMINOUS READERS look like this when they see you through certain colored glasses. The card seems to disappear; the number stands out.



PAGES. The sharper who's seen you through these glasses will know you're a sharp.



SANDING is a delicate operation. Edge of card is rubbed over sandpaper. Then it is held up to the light to see if any white is visible in places to be marked.



TRIMMED cards have a border that is cut down for low cards and a little less for the higher ones.

Poles Fight Back



SGT. WLADYSLAW, RADIO OPERATOR

SGT. JACEK, TAIL GUNNER

By Sgt. WALTER PETERS
YANK Staff Correspondent

A POLISH BOMBER STATION IN BRITAIN—If it is not a well-established fact, it is at least a well-authenticated rumor that the Polish Air Force is having a wonderful time these days. You hear stories of the men's laughter echoing through the fuselage of Wellington bombers 13,000 feet above Berlin. You hear stories of Polish pilots, sent out to light fires with incendiary bombs, stooping down till the flames touch their wing tips—just to see what damage they have done.

One of Hitler's proudest boasts was that he smashed the Polish Air Force in 1939 before it could even get off the ground. He didn't. He only smashed the machines. The spirit of that air force was unconquerable, and today, operating from British airfields, the Poles have more, bigger and better bombers than they had in Poland.

More than 10,000 Polish airmen are serving in conjunction with the RAF, and they have dropped more than 11 million pounds of bombs on Berlin, Hamburg, Essen, Dusseldorf, Cologne and a lot of other places. For a smashed air force, the Poles are doing right well for themselves.

The strangest thing about the Polish Air Force is that almost every man in it escaped from Nazi-dominated Europe. They tell a story about one group which made its way through Italy to Africa, thence to Gibraltar and finally to Britain. All the time they were dressed as old men and old women.

Another Polish Air Force story concerns a night before a raid when the boys had some fish

for dinner and the fish wasn't particularly good. "It must have been feeding on German bodies in the Channel," Flight Officer Andrzej says. Anyway, a few minutes after leaving the base, the men began to get very nauseated. They held a short conference over the intercom and decided that a bellyache was not going to deprive them of the privilege of bombing a very important target, so they kept on following their group.

Some got to the climax of their sickness over the North Sea and others over Germany. All but the pilot. He didn't start puking until they were almost over the target.

He yelled for the navigator to take over. "For God's sake, why?" the navigator asked. "I've got this stuff all over me," the pilot answered.

The navigator took over without another question. He knew the pilot wasn't being demure or hygienic.

"Think if we were shot down," the pilot said later. "Those Nazis might think we got sick because we were scared of them, and what kind of an impression would that make?"

Most of the men in one group had been over enemy territory 10, 20 and even 50 times. The group captain himself has been over on 20 sorties. The GC is very modest about his own exploits but gives high praise to two Americans in his squadron.

One of them is Sgt. Bronislaw Godlewski of Chicago, described by the GC as "one of the bravest men I have ever met."

Godlewski is 19 and he enlisted with the Poles just before Pearl Harbor. Recently Air Vice Marshal Stanislaw Ujejski awarded him the *Vir-*

tuti Militari and the Cross of Valor. Since last January the kid has made 10 operational flights over enemy targets.

The last time was over Essen, one of the most heavily defended of all the Nazi industrial strongholds. After they dropped their bombs, they were attacked six times by Jerry fighters. A hundred slugs from Nazi machine guns smashed into Godlewski's turret. But he kept his grip on the tail guns and at the same time directed the pilot in taking the proper evasive action. When they landed, the kid's buddies found him unconscious in the turret, badly wounded. It took them a half hour to release his wounded hands, so tightly were they gripping the handles of the machine guns. Both his hands had to be amputated.

All the men have a tremendous respect for the ground crews who service their planes. Flight Officer Andrzej was telling me about one of the Polish mechanics.

"I was just getting ready to go on an operational flight over Cologne one day," Andrzej said, "when I saw him hurriedly patting the chute in the pilot's seat. 'Co ty robisz?' ('What are you doing?') I asked him. 'I have been looking for something I lost,' the mechanic said. Later, when I was returning from Cologne, I looked under the chute and found a silver crucifix. The next day I went to look for the mechanic to thank him.

"That's all right," he said. "I've been leaving that crucifix under your chute on every one of your operations. My mother gave it to me just before I escaped from the Germans. She said I would never have bad luck if I kept it close to me. I thought you could use a little luck."



SGT. STEFAN, RADIOMAN-GUNNER



FLYING OFFICER STASINK, PILOT



SGT. FRANEK, PILOT



SGT. STANISLAW, GUNNER