

## ■ González, Pancho

**Identification** Mexican American tennis player

**Born** May 9, 1928; Los Angeles, California

**Died** July 3, 1995; Las Vegas, Nevada

*Pancho González overcame racial prejudice to rise to the pinnacle of world professional tennis from 1953 to 1961.*

Richard Alonzo González was the oldest of seven children, born to parents who emigrated from Mexico during the early twentieth century. Affectionately nicknamed “Pancho” by a fellow competitor, he was largely self-taught and became the top tennis player in Southern California in 1943, only four years after taking up the game. However, his truancy from school inhibited his acceptance by the tennis establishment, and he eventually joined the Navy.

González turned professional after defending his U.S. Championship title in 1949. Possessing a blistering serve and competitive temperament, he nevertheless delivered a disappointing performance during his early career on the pro circuit, and he was dropped from competition. In 1952, he returned to elite play and earned a reputation as one of the game’s truly dominant players of all time. González won eight world professional championships (1953-1959 and 1961) and stayed competitive with the top players until he was in his mid-forties.

As professional tennis consisted of world tours and fierce competition among a select few, González was unable to participate in the grand-slam events again until the advent of “open” tennis in 1968. He is recognized as one of the top-ten players worldwide across three decades. One of the few athletes to be inducted into his sport’s hall of fame while still actively playing, González was a perennial fan favorite, both for his skill and for his fiery nature.

**Impact** González ranked in the U.S. top ten for twenty-four consecutive years (1948-1972). His determination as a boy to overcome obstacles was channeled into a competitiveness that earned him the admiration of all who witnessed his tremendous talent.

### Further Reading

Christopher, Andre. *Top-Ten Tennis Players*. Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Enslow, 1998. A book for young

adults that profiles famous tennis players, including González.

González, Doreen. *Richard “Pancho” González: Tennis Champion*. Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Enslow, 1998. Details his playing career.

González, Pancho. *Man with a Racket*. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1959. Autobiography.

*P. Graham Hatcher*

**See also** Connolly, Maureen; Gibson, Althea; Kramer, Jack; Sports; Tennis.

## ■ Goren, Charles

**Identification** Champion contract bridge player and authority

**Born** March 4, 1901; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Died** April 3, 1991; Encino, California

*By the 1950’s, Charles Goren was the leading expert on contract bridge and was popular for his world championship win in 1950.*

Charles Goren received his law degree from McGill University in 1923 and practiced law in his native Philadelphia until 1936, when he wrote his first bridge book, *Winning Bridge Made Easy*. One secret of Goren’s success was a new “point” system in which the top cards were given numerical values. Another was his own success at the bridge table. He won the world contract bridge championship in 1950 and more than two thousand other bridge trophies, including eight victories in the prestigious McKenney competition.

The rummylike game of canasta became popular during the early 1950’s, and Goren wrote guides to that game as well, but that game proved to be a passing fancy; Goren and the nation returned to contract bridge. To promote the game, he played with such celebrity amateurs as author W. Somerset Maugham (who wrote an introduction to one of Goren’s books) and President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Goren was also the master of ceremonies and commentator on the television show *Championship Bridge with Charles Goren* from 1959 to 1962.

During the 1960’s, however, Goren’s bidding system was supplanted by one created by Edgar Kaplan and Alfred Sheinwold, which used Goren’s point count system but had stricter requirements for bidding a suit. Goren was officially given the title of “Mr. Bridge” by the American Contract Bridge League in 1969.

**Impact** Goren developed a system that enabled average players to bid confidently, thus popularizing the game of bridge, and he served as its genial promoter during the 1950's.

#### Further Reading

Goren, Charles, and Jack Olsen. *Bridge Is My Game: Lessons of a Lifetime*. New York: Doubleday, 1965.

Goren's autobiography, which also includes secrets of his success with bridge.

Olsen, Jack. *The Mad World of Bridge*. New York: Holt, 1960. Details the game's popularity as well as Goren's contributions to it.

*Arthur D. Hlavaty*

**See also** Eisenhower, Dwight D.; Fads; Scrabble.

## ■ Graham, Billy

**Identification** American Protestant evangelist

**Born** November 7, 1918; near Charlotte, North Carolina

*As an evangelist, Billy Graham came to prominence during the early 1950's with his touring campaigns and his founding of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950, thus beginning his tenure as a major figure in American religious life throughout the next several decades.*

William "Billy" Franklin Graham, Jr., grew up on the family dairy farm. He experienced a religious conversion at an evangelistic meeting in 1934, attended Bob Jones College, graduated from the Florida Bible Institute, and was ordained as a Baptist minister. Later he earned a degree in anthropology from Wheaton College in Illinois, where he met his wife, Ruth Bell, daughter of Protestant missionaries to China. He was a pastor, an evangelist for Youth for Christ, and president of Northwestern Baptist Bible College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His message was fundamentalist, moralistic, and patriotic. An eight-week evangelistic campaign in his "canvas cathedral" in Los Angeles in 1949 made him a national figure when newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst ordered his

reporters to "puff Graham" and give him favorable coverage and promotion.

**National and International Prominence** In 1950, Graham established the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Hour of Decision radio program. A March, 1950, campaign in South Carolina received support from then-governor and future senator Strom Thurmond and prominent fundamentalists Bob Jones, Sr., and Bob Jones, Jr., who hosted two meetings. Graham enjoyed friendly relations with fundamentalists until a major breach occurred over Graham's tactics and his desire for a more inclusive focus, which included working with theological liberals in preparation for his New York City campaign of 1957.



*Evangelist Billy Graham preaching before forty thousand people at New York City's Polo Grounds in 1957. (AP/Wide World Photos)*