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What is going on with Gerber? Last I heard, it was a baby food. Oh—and occasionally used at the bridge table.

Maybe once every thousand deals you need to ask for aces after partner's notrump bid. Because a raise to 4NT is usually invitational, you need an ace-asking device.

John Gerber invented his now oft-misused convention so that *after a 1NT or 2NT bid*, a jump to 4♣ asks for aces. The responses are: 4♦=0 or 4, 4♥=1, 4♠=2, 4NT=3.

Please read the the previous paragraph carefully. Notice the text says: "a jump to 4♣." It also says "after a 1NT or 2NT bid." Here are some examples of Gerber:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	4♣	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2NT	Pass	4♣	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♣	

For some reason, many of my students have gone wild with this convention. Almost every conceivable 4♣ bid is being used as ace-asking. The auctions above (the jump to 4♣ comes after a notrump bid) are proper. But, look at the following auctions where 4♣ should NOT be Gerber:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♠	3♦	Pass
4♣			

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	

I could list 100's more where I've seen players take 4♣ as Gerber. No! Stop, please! In the auctions above, 4♣ is needed as a natural bid. On the first auction, what is West to bid with say: ♠4♥AKQ87♦32♣AQ1072? On the second auction, what is responder to bid with, say: ♠KJ87♥53♦K2♣K10976*? What about all the auctions where 4♣ is needed as a control-bid, such as:

Opener wants to control-bid 4♣ with something like: ♠KQ9874♥A♦42♣AK43. He can't ask for aces with that hand, because his side could be off the ♦AK. He wants to make a control-bid in clubs and find out if his partner controls diamonds. 4♣ is NOT Gerber!!

It is normal expert procedure to have 4♣ available on numerous auctions for natural or control-bidding purposes. If you want to ask for aces, there are other ways. 4♣ should be Gerber only as a jump after notrump. I know this will fall on many deaf ears. Too many are in love with 4♣ as Gerber. For experienced players, Gerber should be only a baby food.

* note: 4♣ is forcing in this auction

FOOTNOTE: During the 2009 Regional at Sea I gave my "anti-Gerber" lecture. Director Harry Falk loved it and told me that next to Gerber on the convention card he used to write: NITLFY. What does it mean? Not In The Last Forty Years!

Gerber is not alertable.