

1) How did you start playing bridge?



In good Jewish tradition, mum taught us that the ‘family that plays together, stays together’ so I recall whist, rummy, Newmarket, black twos with siblings in my infant years. Chess dominated my junior school pastimes, though I won a book token at A level spent on ‘1066 and all that’ ‘Improving your Chess’ and ‘Complete Book of Bridge’ so obviously showing a dormant interest at that time

2) How long have you played bridge for?



45 years a slave. After University (late 70s), I played at the local Eagle and Child club run by a Mr & Mrs Metcalfe who must have been at least 100 years old, and visited Manchester BC duplicates. I recollect my one game with the formidable Mrs Hinchliffe who afterwards told Jeff Morris to get her a proper partner next time! I had several regular partners including an organised social group with Alan Jones, Barbara Lewis, Kevin Comrie where I share Kevin’s recollection of the lady at our club premises - the

‘Bird in the Hand’ at Flixton!

My addiction was fully realised on a field trip with the Comries, when apparently looking at a field I asked Celia ‘Is that mud, or top of nothing?’ **(Journalists note: I would have laughed at this, bridge related puns are always hard to slip into real life)**

And I recall a harrowing session at Brighton, when my partner described my manner and performance as ‘lower than pond life’. For some reason, I have not played with that partner much since. I also recall my only ever two games with Jason Hackett, winning the EBU Club masters and then coming bottom in the following year!

3) As Chairman of MCBA what would you say was the best part and the worst part?



Complimentary entry to many Manchester games and free food and drinks at the annual Chairman's conference. My tenure was quiet between Congress creation and before P2P though there was friction when we lost £1000 on the Congress one year and our treasurer forecasted imminent bankruptcy. Thankfully, the Congress has prospered since.

More challenging was being Secretary and priding myself on getting the minutes out in 24 hours while the information was still contemporary.

4) Who would your perfect game of bridge be with?



It would be held at Clifdale Lancaster in the Drawing Room with Jackie Pye, Michael Newman (sadly no longer with us) and David Barton. Michael would bring great bridge knowledge, keenness and courtesy, David would bring a calm, reserved temperament while never bidding, and Jackie would keep me guessing on her tricky calls and Ace underleads. And if the bridge wasn't so good, we could recline to the Conservatory for an excellent afternoon tea.

Obviously, Senior Kibbitzer would be MB

(Journalist note; I assume he means the late Martin Braid) with his wit, charm and knowledge, Junior would be Raymond Semp chiding me for missing the octagonal squeeze. And TD Roy Higson can remind us how he once made 3 tricks from Jxx opposite Qxx in an international match and of Raymond Brock barricading the exit door after a game to pinpoint all Roy's errors on the paper travellers.

That's Face to Face bridge, but online it would be Alec Smalley, Peter Jones and Alan Nelson. That way I could chat to my opponents what a crazy, bonkers, off the planet action they have taken and they would never know.

5) Who is your favourite partner? Who do you play most of your bridge with?



My favourite partner is the player currently sitting opposite. **(Journalist note - that would be no-one then)** Of course, Jackie Pye is my real favourite. **(That's better!)** At the table, she is unemotional, fun to play with, rooting for me, disciplined, a pleasant person, polite to opponents and ethical. I recall our early battles in Lancaster against the Morecambe Club/Diamond system. You asked what 1C meant, and they would reply "we're not telling

you - otherwise we are going to ask you what all your bids mean". I recall the Corn Cairdis at Dublin when I stupidly took her out of a making 4S and went down 3 doubled in 5 clubs. She rushed off later to tell her hero John Armstrong, and Brian Callaghan who explained that either Jeffrey had gone totally barmy or he was following the adage 'Never let a woman play a hand' (which still appears on the convention card of a former London partner of mine). **(Journalist's note: This is not an adage and never has been).** It would be good to cite Forrester as a favourite but I only played one hand with him as dummy when his partner left the table.

6) What is your most interesting hand?



Hard to say, but I recall my most interesting bridge discussion. I set off to Brighton to play with Sid Travers while Dave Audley was driving and stated my preference for 2nd highest leads. Sid had long played top of nothing or third down in his 50 years bridge and I recall his endless protestation about leading the 5 from 853...we started this exchange at Didsbury, and despite some suggested compromise at Oxford, 229 miles later outside the Grand Hotel, Sid insisted he would stick to the 8 or 3.

7) Do any of your family play bridge?



My sister learned at Abraham Moss and the MSB school and reached a reasonable standard but her club appearances stopped after one visit to Besses, however she still plays a regular online duplicate on BCL with an Irish friend which is a partnership of maybe 20+ years.

8) You have travelled a lot over the years especially to wherever. What are your favourites trips to go on?



I enjoyed Killarney a couple of times and recall one trip when we broke the suitcase with the weight of Waterford Crystal on the return. I had a strange time at Cino Del Duca constantly mixing my Roi and Valet. **(Journalist note: Cino Del Duca is a famous French tournament, Roi is King and Valet is the Jack, for those used to English style playing cards they can be confusing. Well if Your name is Jeff Smith at any rate)**

Then there was Amsterdam where Royce enjoyed his last days of freedom before marriage. The Maccabi where Sid can still recall smashing the Serbs and London trials where he psyched Boris Schapiro out of the auction.

My driving expertise and directional sense has sometimes turned these trips into adventures such as the one mile trip to get onto the M62 from a Liverpool match taking over an hour, and a recent nightmare return from Birchwood to Prestwich over an hour and a half!

9) What was your most memorable league match?



The most recent was a 30-0 win against Cheshire Cheeses with Leslie Klein on fire and a 0-30 loss against Grasshoppers when David & I failed to bid any significant game/slam. Also the Higson Cup Final two years ago, my only ever game with Irving Blakey when Joy was indisposed. I have a few less happy memories, notably winning a Round 6 Gold Cup match until we sat out and teammates returned with 0-53 in that set. Or failing to play K from K10xxx when partner led 8 from

Q98 thus letting Rob Sheehan make 3N which cost the Hubert Final a couple of years back – that one still hurts.

12) And finally I believe you once played against Ronald Reagan



Yes in 1981 – he has Axx facing xx in 3NT and the King was led. He needed to do a hold up play to make it but famously told the world ‘he forgot to duck”. **(Journalist note: The defender on lead was John Hinckley Junior)**

13) And what is the first thing you will do once life returns to normal?



Get to Brackman's delicatessen so I can actively choose the pletzels, challah and apple pie, and have a haircut since I do recall Michael Byrne once described myself & David Adelman as the strongest bald partnership in Manchester (maybe Rodney will challenge that). **Journalist note: I was only being (im)polite.**

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