

1) How did you and Irving start playing bridge?

Irving started playing in 1961 whilst at Liverpool Uni- John Hill (fine player – later partnered Peter Morley and Grattan Endicott) the team captain, erroneously believing Irving knew what he was doing invited him to join the Uni team (flying by the seats of their pants he tells me, they won all their matches that season!)

But being an impoverished student and only after learning the hard way in a shilling a hundred very tough rubber Bridge game back in Leeds did he decide to take it more seriously and "Calling a Spade a Spade" by Ben Cohen and Rhoda Barrow, two fine Acol exponents, became his Bridge bible. (like many of his generation – totally self-taught)

2) Did you learn before or after you were married?

I thought I'd better learn (or become a bridge widow) before we got married in 1970 and Paul Hackett taught me at the Central BC.

3) As treasurer of MCBA what would you say is the best and worst part?

I'm just about to start my 3rd year as Treasurer - the best part is thinking of ways to make everything more efficient; the worst is slow players - sorry Freudian slip - payers!

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

Joy: -Leonardo da Vinci - scientifically, mathematically and artistically brilliant; Omar Sharif - just gorgeous to look at.

Irving tells me he would look no further than me, but I suspect he would have liked to have played with Bob Hamman.

5) I believe for a period in the 90s you moved into separate parts of your house following a tricky hand.

That is a disgraceful fabrication and any further dissemination will result in a letter from my solicitor. In any event, I ask you in all fairness does mis-playing a Hedgehog squeeze warrant segregation??!!

6) What is your most interesting hand?

Perhaps our erstwhile double dummy solvers would like to have a go at this (answers to joy_n_irv@hotmail.com)

South to make 4S, West leads the 8 of Clubs.

	♠ Q8	
	♥ AQ2	
	♦ AJ932	
	♣ KQ7	
♠ 7543		♠ K10
♥ K103		♥ J9876
♦ 10876		♦ KQ
♣ 82		♣ AJ109
	♠ AJ962	
	♥ 54	
	♦ 54	
	♣ 6543	

7) I believe you have a large family - how many of them play bridge?

We have three daughters and one son - NONE of them play bridge (we probably put them off in their childhood!). However out of four grandsons and one granddaughter it's the granddaughter who is really keen. She's only 10 but has been playing cards since she was 3 or 4 and is a superstar in the making.

8) You went around Europe playing a lot of bridge after you retired. Where were the most interesting places you visited? What were the best tournaments?

We bought a motorhome and took a year out from 1st September 2004 to 31st August 2005. Our first port of call for bridge was Pula, Croatia - a brilliant tournament held every year in the middle of September; fantastic playing conditions with competitors from all over the world and really interesting culturally.

We also played in Sicilian events but mostly we played in France - Juan les Pins in May, Biarritz in June and Deauville in July. The French tournaments are very civilised - you play one session per day usually 4-8pm - for most of the day you can relax or go sightseeing and then when play finishes enjoy a lovely meal with friends.

It's great to pit your wits against top players from all over the world.

We managed couple of wins in St Tropez where we met Frankie Fratura a Bridge Pro from South America. He kept in touch and when one of our daughters got married in California several years later, we took the opportunity to accept Frankie's invitation to a tournament in Cuba. (John Hassett and Peter Ciernerwski flew out to join us as team-mates)

Frankie was playing with Enma Castro (Fidel's sister) who didn't seem to have eschewed the high life as had her brothers!

9) What was your most memorable league match?

The one where we got to 7H but the trumps broke 6-0.

10) Joy - what would you say was the best thing about Irving's bridge? And the worst?

Irving likes to devise tools to improve bidding accuracy (every unused bid should have a use!) as well to counter the manifold things you have to contend with nowadays, but (especially with the memory not being what it once was!), he doesn't believe in reams of notes; relying instead on general principles when dealing with situations that arise.

Even after all these years (and especially with the multiplicity of methods you come across) it's amazing how many things seem to arise that you've not seen before.

Whilst he is always looking to improve our bidding methods his card play and reading is probably his strongest feature- he magically produces extra tricks out of thin air; he knows at a glance whether it is a squeeze that's required or some other exotic line. The worst thing is his expression when I'm declarer!

11) And now the same question to Irving?

Joy has excellent bidding judgment, great stamina in the long haul events, and plays and reads the cards nicely (Is that called being damned by faint praise?- but I am a stern taskmaster).

Otherwise no complaints.

12) And finally I believe you once played against Omar Sharif

We played against Omar many times. Always charming, greeted us as if old friends but that's how he was with all.

One little story about Omar (he actually went to school in Cairo with my mother's cousin – he wasn't Omar Sharif then!):-

We were off to play in Juan les Pins (beetling from our Motorhome campsite on our scooter) – When a young Dutch family learning we were going to play bridge with Omar Sharif, the mum enthused how wonderful he was in Gone With The Wind!!! – “Ah well” sighed Omar when I told him at the Bridge table, “I suppose it was a bit like Zhivago”

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

Joy: Just enjoy normality! Face to face bridge! Get my hair cut. Throw a party for the whole family.

Irving: What's normal?