



### 1) How did you and Celia start playing bridge?

I started playing Bridge at college in 1960. I fancied myself as a card player being brought up by whist playing parents, playing Solo, Cribbage and Nine Card Don. In the college game a seat became vacant at the Bridge table. Full of bravado I offered to step in and made a complete ass of myself! Home I went that Christmas and devoured Josephine Culbertson's book, "Contract Bridge Made Easy". Returning to college I was able to sit in and hold my own. The game almost cost me my college career having, on one occasion, been called from the table to attend a lecture by a tolerant lecturer. After teaching for five years in London I returned to Manchester , joined Stretford B.C. and then MBC immediately after it moved from Central Road.

Celia's first Bridge experience was sat on the knee of Paddy McCabe at Leicester University in 1969. After only three play sessions that game collapsed for lack of

opponents. She had to wait until the early eighties to take up the game again when she was invited to make up a table at a charity event at Manchester Bridge Club. She soon became a popular member of the Club playing regularly, with a vodka in one hand thirteen cards in another and a fag in her third, coached by Michael Newman

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

We learned before we were wed, meeting for the first time in Alan Jones's house where he hosted a regular weekly game for eight players or maybe more.

On one memorable occasion Bernard Goldenfield was sat at the table with a lady who had brought her recently born offspring for the evening. The incredulous look on Bernard's face when she pulled down the front of her dress and began breastfeeding is something to be remembered.

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

There is no doubt the best part was instigating the Manchester Congress in 2000. Previously MCBA had run a number of separate events: ladies pairs, mixed pairs, mens pairs, teams events, etc. all of which were rather poorly supported. The idea was to replace these events with one flagship Congress in the centre of Manchester embracing all of them. Along with committee colleagues we reconnoitred possible venues finally alighting on the Renaissance Hotel on Deansgate. Each January I get great pleasure seeing its success in terms of numbers, quality and age profile of the field as well as out of 'towners' from London, Wales, Ireland and yes even Norway. Being involved in the organisation of various national and international competitions over the years staged in Manchester by MCBA, not always as Chairman I should add, gave me much pleasure. The Commonwealth Games alongside Paul Hackett, the Lady Milne with Eve Lighthill, the Corn Cairdis, and latterly the, the Junior Camrose and the Camrose itself.

The worst part was undoubtedly dealing with a very difficult incident during a league match which I'm happy to say was resolved successfully. I had to ensure that procedurally the case was handled correctly as when things go wrong it's not the verdict that is the problem but how a case is conducted. Fortunately advice from the EBU and the experience gained in my professional life saw the Association through. It culminated in an appeal to the EBU which necessitated sending a thick wad of all e-mails, minutes of meetings, findings and the other documents to the EBU for inspection by their officers and Executive members who found the case had been handled correctly Phew!

After this Celia told me I was standing down, as she ended up doing half the work. The good news is the players in question now get on very well, and all of them have "reined" in their behaviour.

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

Eric Rodwell, who I met in South Wales during a Buffet Cup match and listened to playing jazz music on Maggie Pierce's piano with not a sheet of music in front of him.

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

Do not believe everything you hear! We have had our moments! I recall in our early days together making a cue bid on one occasion in a competition at Bury Bridge Club heading for a stone cold slam only for Celia to pass! I ended playing in four Hearts in a 3-1 fit. Celia is more vocal than myself when we disagree. I tend not to say much but Celia says she can tell when I disagree with a bid by the twitch made by my right cheek. Something I inherited from my Dad.

Was your recent opinion, Michael, on one of our bidding sequences designed to give substance to the separate room rumour?

***(Journalists note: no it wasn't, Celia was right (as usual) and ended up apologising for the hand (as usual).***

#### 6) What is your most interesting hand?

I have to admit I don't/can't easily recall hands from the past. I remember a hand playing with Bernard Goldenfield in a men's team match in Ireland when we took a 1000 points from our opponents (10 down Vul) At the end of the hand Bernard asked me why I hadn't doubled. My reply "I forgot" Bernard gracefully accepted but, I might add, never let me forget. On another occasion when a curtain card accompanied each hand I picked it out and without looking at my 13 cards opened the bidding with a Weak Two Spades. My left hand opponent looked at me quizzically. My partner raised to three Spades which was doubled on my right. I passed and after some thought LHO bid 5 Diamonds. Imagine my consternation when I looked at my cards only to find I was void in Spades and had a Weak Two bid in Hearts. I had read the top line on the curtain card and had assumed it was Spades not noticing the top line was blank. I invited the opponents to call the Director but he was unable to rule on the matter.

My most amusing hand was played on a train travelling from Worthing to Brighton where I was acting as host at the annual EBU Congress. On Worthing station was a middle aged larger than life West Indian lady who I helped find the right platform for the London train. My corner three seater faced three seats opposite, all occupied, separated by a table in an open carriage. Sat diagonally opposite me was my West Indian lady. As the train departed I took out a book when the lady said loudly for all to hear, "So you don't wish to talk to me". Somewhat startled I looked across at her and put my book back into my bag. Round my neck was a lanyard. She pointed at it and said "What is that?" I told her I was officiating as the host at a Bridge event in Brighton. "Oh", she said. "So you build bridges then?". This brought smiles to the faces of the four passengers sat next to the two of us. I explained it was a card playing event. "You teach me then", she said. I took a pack of cards from my bag and enlisted the cooperation of an elderly lady sat next to me and a young man sat

next to her. I constructed a hand for each of us and fixed it so she played in three Hearts guiding the four of us through a simple bidding sequence and showing them the mechanics of play ie. the dummy, following suit. etc. Having explained she had been successful in making nine tricks she loudly exclaimed, "Where's my money?" Where upon the young man opposite me took out a five pence piece and passed it over to her. By this time a small amused audience had gathered from adjacent seats in the carriage standing in the aisle. By this time the London train was approaching Hove where I was to change for Brighton. She now said, "You come to London with me and teach me some more". I alighted the train saying tactfully I had work to do.

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

Two sons, daughter-in-laws and four grand children; Lauren, Megan, Emma and Thomas. The two lads, Robin and Russell, dabbled with Bridge in their teens playing in division seven of the Manchester League. Lauren and Megan have also had a go. I recall Russell playing with May Hinchliffe in a pro-am event at MBC some thirty years ago.

***(Journalists note, this almost certainly means 40 years ago)***

After completing the last hand he walked away from the table smiling as is his wont. May followed behind him with a grimace on her face. I asked her if she would like a whiskey. "Make it a double" she promptly answered.

### **You have travelled a lot over the years especially to Ireland. What are your favourites trips to go on?**

With hardly a break Celia and I have been going to the ten day Killarney Congress in County Kerry for the past twenty-four years with Bernard and Rhona Goldenfield. The Bridge is very friendly and is mainly played in the evenings with the days spent enjoying the beautiful surrounding countryside. We have made very good friends there over the years

I go to Westport in County Mayo every January with a gang of men. We stay in a very friendly pub on the Atlantic coast where we are royally treated. People ask me quizzically,

"Why January? Are you golfing?"

"No", I reply.

"Walking."

"No".

"Fishing",

"No "

Now they usually get it right!!!

We went to California with Bernard and Rhona. A great holiday The best ever says Celia. We played Bridge whist in Yosemite National Park before moving on to Las Vegas crossing Death Valley on the way to my son's.

### **9) What was your most memorable league match?**

The last match of last season in division two immediately springs to mind! Manchester S needed 2VPs to gain promotion. Playing Proteus we lost by 61 Imps losing 30-0. We are playing in division two this season! Michael kindly reminded me that we beat his team of all stars by 57 Imps some years ago. I had actually forgotten. Honestly!!

***(Journalist note - it was our very first match as a team and in those days we weren't all stars...)***

### **10) Kevin - what is the best part of Celia's bridge?**

I have to tread very carefully here. So much so that I actually asked her this question. She replies, "My imagination" To my follow up question, "What is the worst part?" Without hesitation she replied, "My imagination"

### **11) And now the same question to Celia?**

Celia tells me the best part of my game is my competitiveness. I'll have to take her word for it.

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

Playing against Ely Culbertson in the 1930's I tried to justify the line I had taken only to go down in my in my contract. He sarcastically said to me, "Every human being who ever sat down at a Bridge table thinks he is a better player than he actually is. There are no exception to this: none". When I asked him how I might have succeeded he drew my attention to the hesitation his partner made when I could have taken the unsuccessful finesse the other way adding again with a touch of his sardonic wit, "A player lacking in bridge psychology or knowledge of the personal equation cannot succeed."

***Journalists note: Kevin is speaking tongue in cheek here, He was only a small child in the 1930s and he didn't start bridge until he was at college....actually maybe he is older than he looks?***

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

I'll take Celia away somewhere nice for a long weekend. Paris maybe where we spent our honeymoon.

***The allotment seems more likely...***

