

1) How did you first start playing bridge?

After playing and enjoying Solo for a couple of years I went to night school in 1965 to learn bridge and fell in love with the game. There I met my dear friend the late Jill Bentley (***Journalist note: Jill Bentley was a member of the county who along with her husband Bill, Bernard and Rhona won the Manchester league in 1985 as part of the Whitefield Eagles. Her husband Bill still plays in MCBA events including in the recent Swiss Pairs in Altrincham***) and in 1967 we decided to venture to the Central Bridge Club, the forerunner of MBC.

We came bottom every week for quite some time and then one week we won. In those days of manual scoring they assumed there was a scoring error and rechecked the scores.

(Journalist note - bloody cheek! They would soon learn)

That was when Bernard asked me for a game and our partnership at and away from the table blossomed from there.

You have been a perennial winner of competitions all over the North West for many years, but which was your first?

In Nov 1975 Bernard took me to play in my first Congress in Blackpool and we won the mixed pairs I was so excited.

I knew we were doing well but during the last round I was so nervous I could hear my heart pounding.

We were playing against Rita Oldroyd and I misplayed the hand but she mis-defended so I made my contract after all. She said she only mis-defended because I had played it so badly! (***Journalist note: Rita Oldroyd was a two time European Gold medal winning ladies player from Bradford, in the days when it was one of the stronger clubs in the area***)

3) Do any of your family play bridge?

Only one of my sisters and her husband. I spent years trying to show them that with Axx opposite Qxx it is not correct to run the Queen. (***Journalist Note: Welcome to my world!***)

4) What are the best places you have visited for bridge?

There is no place in the world like Killarney. A medium sized town in South West Ireland located in County Kerry it is home to an annual congress to which a large host of Manchester based players always attend.

Bernard took me there for the first time in 1978 and we had wonderful times at the Congress every May.

5) You played for many years on the ladies team and won many medal - what was your favourite?

I was so fortunate to have Michelle Brunner as a partner in ladies bridge. We had some wonderful trips but best of all I enjoyed playing in Tenerife because the playing conditions were so good.

Also because that is where we won the European Gold Medal. **(Journalist Note: Rhona is far too modest to mention this but her and Michelle also won the cross imps, the individual partnership ranking)**

6) What can you tell us about the tournament - Were there any matches that you particularly enjoyed?

The event was a big round robin of 21 teams, you play a single set against each country and the Imps are converted to victory points, just as in a Manchester league match. We led the field from match 8 onwards and never looked back. In round 17 we played against Austria who were lying second.

Michelle and I played against Maria Erhart and Jovanka Smederevac, with our team-mates Heather Dhondy and Nicola Smith taking on Terry Weigkricht and Doris Fischer. Although it looked to be a tough match we beat them 25-5 on Victory points, the maximum number we could have won. **(Journalist note: It was a tough match indeed, all 4 of those players were World Championship with Maria Erhart considered one of the greatest women players of all time. MCBA members might also recall that Jovi Smederevac came to the Manchester Congress in January where she won the teams event)**

Onto county matters now, what is the best and worst part of running the Green Point Pairs and teams events?

The best part is having email to get the entries in and acknowledge them and all the help from Joan Lewis makes them easy to run. It is good to think players enjoy the events and so far they have all been successful.

What is your favourite ever league result?

I am not sure my team have ever beaten your team but I am sure if we have that would be my favourite match.

(Journalist note: I have no idea why everyone enjoys beating me so much. The last time we lost a proper league match was May 2018 when we lost to Bernard and Rhona, John and John to cost ourselves the league. They also beat us 18-12 in a crucial top of the table clash to pip us to the league title by 4 victory points in 2011 but I am in no way bitter. Journalist Note within note: I am always bitter)

What is your favourite hand?

My favourite hand came from the Venice Cup in 2007.

I was playing with Michelle against China. We were on vu-graph and at the other table our team mates played in 4S making 6.

At our table the precision auction **(Journalist note: Precision is a system based upon a strong club, where all hands of 16+ points are opened with 1C)** unopposed went

1C - 1D* (negative)

2S - 2N (2S=forcing, 2NT=rolling)

3C - 4C (both natural)

5NT - 7C (5NT asking for top trump honours. 7C = I (wrongly) think we have enough)

I was looking at 764 J10952 KJ98 K - obviously the opponents had just had a bidding misunderstanding thinking they held all the top clubs.

I was hoping that Declarer would be in dummy and take the club finesse so I led JH and dummy went down with

102
Q6
Q542
Q10985

Declarer played the Q and if Michelle had covered with the K (seemingly the obvious play) she would have been in her hand and with no entry to the table and would have had no option but to play AC and drop my K making her grand slam.

Michelle did not cover thereby giving her a losing option which after what seemed like an age she took and I made my KC. That resulted in Michelle winning the award for the best defended hand.

She knew from the bidding declarer could not have any losers except K or A of trumps. This was the full hand:

	643	
	J10952	
	KJ98	
	K	
AKQ987		102
A7		Q6
void		Q542
AJ732		Q10985
	J5	
	K843	
	A10763	
	64	

Had you played much online bridge before - how are you enjoying it?

I had never played online before lockdown and found it very difficult at first, Now I am playing probably too much but am enjoying it.

What will you do once lockdown is over?

I won't change much after lockdown but when the virus has gone I would like to get back to face to face bridge, go out for meals with friends and also it will be great to have the family back for Friday night dinner. Eating chicken soup alone is nowhere near as enjoyable.

(Journalist Note: That's a lovely offer, thank you Rhona I'll be round as soon as I can. Please remember I don't eat chicken, but that fish pie you made me last time was lovely)