



DAVID BIRD has written a record 131 books on bridge. He is best known for humorous fiction and his Abbot series has been running in *Bridge Magazine* for 37 years. His school stories in *English Bridge* are based on masters at Highgate School, back in the 1960s. A frequent voice commentator on Bridge Base Online, David is married to Thelma with a daughter, a son, and two grandchildren.

When did you start playing bridge?

By good fortune not until my fourth year at university. Consequently I didn't screw up my degree, unlike many student bridge fanatics.

How often / where do you play?

I gave up playing when I had a heart attack ten years ago. I didn't miss it at all, I was surprised to find, so after my full recovery I never started playing again.

What do you do for a living?

I retired early from IBM after thirty-two years of testing system software and giving courses around the world; I have been a full-time bridge writer ever since. The creative side of writing a new book is always enjoyable – particularly for the fiction, where I enter the magical world of the characters. The subsequent polishing and checking for errors and typos is hard work, taking a long time, but it's part of the job.

What are your favourite bridge books (apart from your own)?

I must admit that I found many of Kelsey's books too difficult. I enjoyed everything that Reese wrote and, of course, it was Mollo who blazed the humorous fiction trail that I have followed. Many thanks to him.

What are your hobbies?

My wife Thelma and I spend a fair amount on long-haul holidays – four a year, alternating between the Caribbean and the Far East. Another big slice goes on wine and dining out. I have written some three hundred and fifty photo-packed reviews for Tripadvisor, although Thelma claims she's embarrassed when I take photos of restaurant dishes. ('You haven't brought your

camera again, have you?') I watch the Southampton football team when we're in the country. How I enjoyed their recent 8-0 win over Sunderland! I regard money spent on cars as a total waste and drive a battered V-reg Rover 620 that they refuse to insure for more than £195.

What do you like and what would you change in bridge?

It's just such a fabulous game, with a constant stream of intriguing deals and new situations. Marc Smith and I often share a Chinese lunch, discussing hands; three hours go by in no time at all. I don't see much need for change in the game.

Which of your own bridge books is closest to your heart (so far)?

I'm pleased with two recent books featuring computer simulation (Winning Notrump Leads and Winning Suit Contract Leads), where I rejoined forces with my friend and bridge partner from the 1970s, Taf Anthias. For a given hand on lead, 5000 deals matching the bidding are created. The computer then plays these deals to determine the best opening lead. The publisher was uncertain about the books' prospects, and I enjoyed his surprise when they turned out to be two of my best sellers for quite a while!

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