



**NORMAN SELWAY's early bridge experiences were at the high-stake rubber bridge table with the likes of John Collings and Jonathan Cansino. Since he converted to duplicate, he has won all the major competitions more than once (with the exception of the Gold Cup, which he is hoping to add very soon) and has represented England in the Camrose with different partners.**

## What is your bridge story?

I learned at the age of 14 at my secondary school, Quintin Grammar School in St John's Wood. My physics teacher, Harvey Bengen, who still plays regularly at Pinner Bridge Club, started a lunch-time bridge club and I was hooked.

I started playing at the old London International Bridge Club in Finchley Road at 5p a 100. I was taken under the wing of Paul Gordon (Fritzi's husband). I learnt the basics of rubber bridge which is characterised by excellent card play but poor bidding. My rubber bridge upbringing was dominated by 80-year-old Austrian or German Jewish émigrés who all became great friends even though I was still a young teenager. Often on Christmas Day I would get a phone call at home asking me to join a game – I always went.

Later I played at the Acol Bridge Club in West Hampstead when it was run by Joe Amsbury and 'Tiny' David Huddy (5' 2" and 24 stone). It was a tough game. My first high-stake rubber bridge game at the age of 15 consisted of Paul Hackett, Freddie North, Geoffrey Breskal and John Collings. I survived but I learnt that at rubber bridge it is just as important to get the psychology of the game right (knowing your partner's and opponents' habits, personal weaknesses and strengths) as it is to play bridge well. From there I graduated to Stefan's Bridge Circle in Marble Arch where players like Manch, Rockfelt, Cansino and an inexperienced Zia Mahmood were regulars.

When Stefan's closed down, Geoffrey Breskal invited me to play at St John's Wood, where I played every day and every night for several years. Here, you could play an afternoon game with Panto, Smolski, Sampson and then in the evening you could play in what felt more like a lunatic asylum. For example the first time I played the evening game I partnered a monocled old Scottish gentleman who informed me that at part-scores 'My no-trumps are slightly suspect', and followed this by opening 1NT on a 7-5-1-0 4-count. The evening games would progress into mornings and we would often get breakfast on the way home.

I continued in the rubber bridge game for ten years, after which I explored the duplicate bridge clubs in

London, especially the Young Chelsea Bridge Club. In those days it was based at the Mansions in Earls Court, where I met the first of my many duplicate partners, Mike Vail, and my wife, Kay Preddy.

## Who were /are your duplicate partners?

I have been lucky in my duplicate partners: Richard 'Two Jacks' Sampson, Bob Brinig, Unal Dormus, Bob Rowlands, Espen Erichsen, Derek Patterson – all fine players and fun to play with. Now my main partner is my wife, Kay, with whom I have won the Brighton Pairs, the Hubert Phillips and numerous county events. Kay (a Great Britain international) retired when our first child was born nineteen years ago but has recently taken up the game again.

Now that I have reached the grand old age of sixty I can play Seniors and do so with Nick Irens with whom I have great fun, this year winning the Kent Senior Pairs.

## What are your favourite bridge books?

*Why You Lose at Bridge* by Skid Simon; anyone who wants to know how to play rubber should read this. *The Expert Game* and *Play These Hands with Me* by Terence Reese, superb books on card play. *Reflections of a Bridge Player*, by Colonel Walter Buller, memories of a time passed.

## What are your hobbies?

As well as bridge the following activities consume my time: looking after the family, tennis, badminton, reading (especially bridge history).

## What do you like (or would like to change) in bridge?

I think the English Bridge Union has made massive improvements to the game over the past few years. When we went to Australia twenty years ago, results were posted immediately on several large screens so everyone could easily see them. This was in stark contrast to many English tournaments where results are often posted in small print on one or two locations – a minor quibble.

I have enjoyed my forty-five years in bridge and have seen many, many great characters and players. Is it just me or are there fewer characters nowadays? □