



# Bridgemates

Issue No. 20 May 2019



## MARIO'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all club members!

It is rather satisfying to report that there is very little to report! Everything is "sailing along" extremely well and the various positions accepted by club members are functioning perfectly.

Previously, I have stressed that we have a group of players who work steadily in the background for the benefit of the club with no intention of receiving recognition. To those who "fill in" and just do the work for which they quietly volunteered, this club cannot thank you enough - without our volunteers, we would be in panic stations.

Lessons and supervised play are proceeding as planned. Once again, there are helpers here who have been of tremendous assistance to the club. Naturally, we would like to welcome these new members into club play and it has been suggested that the **buddy** system be introduced. This will go a long way to helping a new member settle into the club. (A new club number would be assigned to an experienced player so that his/her handicap is **not** affected). **Linda Boyle** will prepare a list of players wishing to take part in this system. So, whether you are a "newbie" or not, please consider this.

You will have noted in the Little Red Book that **President's Trophy Pairs Handicap** is scheduled for **17 July**. As this is an all-day function with lunch, I must remind everyone that we start at 9.15am.

Membership fees are due on 1 July with the usual 3 methods of payment: cash /cheque (mail or handed to the Treasurer or Secretary), or by bank transfer with these details: BSB 124081 Account No. 10357121. Please remember to insert your **name**, NOT your club number in the reference section.

So do keep enjoying your bridge in the most congenial company.  
Happy bridging  
from President Mario.



*Continuing our series of conversations with Bridge Club members*

## **Peter Birt (born 1940) and Jennifer (Jennie) Birt (1940-2016)**



Peter was born in 1940 on a remote copper mine called Nkana in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) where his father was the assistant medical officer at the mine hospital.

In 1944 they moved 36 kilometres up the red mud Great North Road (Cecil Rhodes's dream Cape to Cairo) to Chingola, another copper mine on the Belgium Congo border where his father was appointed chief medical officer.

Peter was a true colonial boy, brought up in the days of District Commissioners and pith helmets.

In 1947, Peter's family moved to England for a year.

The Birt family stayed on Hayling Island on the south coast. Peter experienced food rations, books, air raid shelters, unexploded bombs and beach defences. It was the first time that Peter was able to enjoy creamy fresh milk, Walls ice cream, crab apples and shrimps. They weren't rationed!!

He met many cousins. On the smallest of television sets, he watched Queen Elizabeth II being married. England experienced one of its coldest winters in 1947 and we 'bush babies' loved the snow and iced-covered ponds.

Jennie Birt (nee Roberts) was born on 20 March 1940 at Northwood Middlesex London. Her parents left England in the early 1940ies to work in Malaya. Her father was an accountant.

Jennie and her sister were brought up by their grandmother, Grannie Clark, as Malaya was very remote in those days and her parents only returned to England every three years. She became a weekly boarder at the age of four.

Jennie witnessed some of the bombing of London before being evacuated to Whitby. She described how she saw a passenger train steaming into London being completely wiped out by a bomb near her home in Northwood.

She was educated at St. Mary's College, Wantage, in Berkshire which was run by Anglican nuns. She loved her school, where she was a boarder for 5 years and excelled at Science and Maths and played Lacrosse for the school.

After the year in England, Peter went back to Chingola. This is a painting of Chingola shopping mall in 1945.



At seven years of age, he was packed off to school in Johannesburg. The journey took four days in a soot emitting steam train. The train chugged through Lusaka, Livingstone, over Victoria Falls through Wankie Game Park all the way to Bulawayo. They often encountered elephants and herds of antelope roaming freely on the train line. At Bulawayo, he changed onto the South African system. The train crossed the Kalahari Desert through Mafekeng (boy scout started here) and on to Johannesburg. Here a matron met Peter and hauled him off to a Harry Potter like school without the magic.

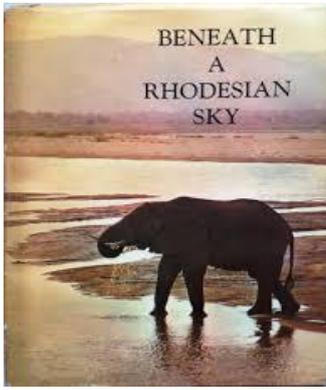
At The Ridge School, he learned how to be tidy and obedient. Beatings harnessed his wildness but he enjoyed the fun of sport, tuck shops and midnight feasts. Latin was his least favourite subject!

In 1951, his parents moved to Johannesburg. In 1954 he was sent to College at Bishops in Cape Town, where his father and uncle had attended. He travelled 40 train trips between Cape Town and Johannesburg to and from school. Air travel was very expensive. It was a historical trip as he passed Kitchener built pill boxes constructed during the Boer war, and towns where battles had been fought between Boer and Brit. They always stopped at Kimberley, of diamond fame where he drank a Root beer. The 1849 established Bishops was a great school with lovely grounds in the shade of Devils Peak and Table Mountain. The Cape was a wonderful place to live in. It had white beaches, towering mountains and infinite history. Cape Town was founded in 1652.



Peter played lots of sport, climbed Table Mountain, studied sometimes, and matriculated in 1958. He started his career in Johannesburg as an audit clerk with green fingers from ticking with a green inked fountain-pen. The work did not suit him. Consequently, in 1960, he went to the University of the Witwatersrand. Apartheid had just been legislated. The University was to be segregated from mixed colour to pure white. Peter protested and soon earned a profile and photo in the Security police files. It was serious stuff with some of his friends being jailed.

At 17, Jennie left school to join her parents in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. Her father had been appointed Commissioner of Works based in Lusaka. Jennie joined Barclays Bank and it was there that she developed her bookkeeping skills.



When her parents moved to Salisbury Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), Jennie moved with them. She witnessed the first stirrings of African Nationalism when she was in the Harare African Township late one evening collecting the shops takings when her vehicle was surrounded and rocked by angry Africans. Fortunately, some Greek traders were driving by and rescued her. In Salisbury, she had a brief marriage to an English man who became a mercenary in the Belgian Congo. He died under mysterious circumstances. They had a son.

In 1963 Jennie moved to Johannesburg with her son and parents. In Johannesburg, she worked for the Cocoa Cola Export Company where she became the Personnel Manger.

Peter graduated with a B.A. in Psychology. His intention was to go into Personnel management but he landed in the Insurance industry.

Peter met Jennie in Johannesburg and they married in 1967. They were married for 49 years. Peter worked for an Insurance Company and soon after their marriage was offered a job as Branch Manager in Port Elizabeth. Jennie, without hesitation supported his acceptance and off they set on their life of many moves.

Jennie and Peter had two children Stewart (Paediatrician) and Sarah (Teacher). They have seven lovely grand children.

Peter worked for an South African Insurance Company for 13 years ending up as a Regional manager. He studied and became a Chartered Insurance Practitioner through the Chartered Institute of Insurance in London. Insurance Broking beckoned and after a short stint on the Rand, he was appointed Managing Director of **Stenhouse Hogg Robinson** Insurance Brokers **Botswana** in Gaborone.

Botswana had some of the finest game parks in the Southern hemisphere. Peter and Jennie were 'big frogs' in a 'small pond' and were invited to presidential functions and other notable events. Peter's family visited a number of game parks and rubbed shoulders with 'Great White' hunters who had even greater stories to tell.



It was in Botswana that Jennie started playing club Bridge with mainly expatriates from many different countries. She had been playing social Bridge in Johannesburg.

Peter joined Rotary in Gaborone and served in it for 35 years. It stood him in good stead for his Australian visit in 1981 as the family was keen to settle in Australia. Peter, Jennie and children arrived in Sydney in April 1982 to work for the same company as he worked for in Botswana. They rented for a year and then purchased a house in St. Ives. **Peter and Jennie both worked, so not much Bridge was played by Jennie for those ten years.**

Peter joined the Rotary Club of Chatswood where many good friends were made. Rotarians took them sailing, and golfing. Peter ran a successful golf day as a fund raiser for charity for the Club for 6 years.

1982 was the year of the free lunch. Malcolm Fraser was the Prime Minister. Directors at Reed Stenhouse lunched in many of the finest restaurants in Sydney. What a stark change from Gaborone! The same year he was appointed the NSW director responsible for International commercial accounts and subsequently became Development Director. Peter was responsible for commercial accounts such as Wormalds, Burns Philp, and Barclays Bank amongst others. Peter found the work to be challenging and very stimulating.

In 1982, Jennie worked in the Treasury at Grace Brothers Chatswood for a short while then moved on to an accounting practice where she did payroll work. She became a Para professional at Arthur Anderson in North Sydney and then worked for NSW aged care.

Jennie's bookkeeping skills stood them in good stead during their 49 years of married life. When Peter was being transferred around the South Africa Branches of the Insurance Company, Jennie always managed to find work doing bookkeeping. Jennie also worked as a Bursar at a school in Gaborone in Botswana.

In 1992, Peter and Jennie decided to move to the Sunshine Coast. Peter bought into a small Insurance Broking

business which he then sold and managed the much larger amalgamated business until he retired in 2002. His job changed radically from managing large commercial accounts to taking care of much smaller regional accounts.

In 1992, Jennie became the manager of the Sunshine Coast Committee of the Ageing. She computerised their accounts and retired 2001.

After retirement, Jennie joined the Buderim Bridge. She followed the Club as it moved from Mark Anthony's motel in Kings Street to St. Marks Church hall and on to Alkooringa and finally to Sippy Downs.

She loved playing Bridge and was a regular Monday night and Friday afternoon player. Jennie served on the committee of the Buderim Bridge Club for 8 years. She was a Director and helped with the dealing machine and supper over many years as well as being a vice president.

Jennie had some success at Bridge being part of a team that won the Clubs Teams Championships twice. Mary de Wet, Barrie de Wet, Roger Hess and Peter were part of the team. They also had a second in the Championships and had a lot of fun.



Peter joined the Rotary Club of Mooloolaba in 1992 and served on the Board for 10 years and became President in 1998 after which he was made a Paul Harris Fellow by the Club.

Peter started playing unstructured family Bridge in the 1960's and then had a gap until 1995 when he was invited to play in a 'Darling Downs' farmer's social group. Peter played occasionally with Jennie at BBC on a Monday night when Rotary was not on, but it was only when he retired that he became a regular Friday afternoon player.

Retirement from Rotary gave him time to play Bridge on both Mondays and Fridays. Jennie and Peter played occasionally at the Sunshine Coast Bridge Club. Jennie and Peter have always enjoyed playing Bridge in the relaxed but competitive atmosphere of the Buderim Bridge Club.

Peter's other hobbies include golf, gardening, reading, travelling and photography. Peter has been a member of the Headland Golf Club for 29 years with moderate success.

Jennie was an avid golfer. She started playing in Sydney in the mid 1980's and met with some success. She played Pennants for Roseville Golf Club in Sydney and Headland Golf Club in Buderim. She was part of a team that won the "C" Grade pennant in the Sunshine Coast Zone in the 2000s.

Jennie's talents included hobbies such as beautiful sewing and knitting for the family. She did a sewing diploma at Hornsby Tafe in Sydney.

Peter found his faith again after a long absence and joined the St. Marks Anglican Church Buderim in 1995. He served as chairman of the Friends of St. Marks for 5 years. (Social and Fund-raising). Jennie and Peter became side's persons, 'greeters' at that time and today he still stand at that same door twice a month welcoming parishioners and guests. St. Marks is a warm, friendly and outreaching church. Jennie was a devout Christian and served in many different capacities at St. Mark's Anglican Church Buderim. She was the treasurer of the Friends of St. Marks for 6 years. She provided Sunday morning teas once a month for 20 years as well as serving as a side's person for the same period and helping in many other church activities.

Jennie was a devoted mother, grandmother and wife.

In 2017, Peter married Helen (nee Wheatley) in St Mark's Church. They live happily together in their dotage.