



Five Minutes With...

Helen Sallemi



A member of our club since 1990 and a long-standing bridge Director, Helen is about to start a new and exciting phase in her journey.

Helen comes from a card playing family. Her parents played bridge once a month with friends and it was adult-time.

Helen recalls 'My sister, brothers and I were told to go to bed when this happened, which mum, Yvonne Dennis,

regretted later in life. But the family always played a lot of different card games,' she said.

Helen's introduction to SA Bridge Association was serendipitous, 'I got pregnant with IVF and was told I had to stop work or I might lose the baby. My mum said, "You're not sitting at home, you're coming with me to the bridge club," that was in 1990,' she said.

The bridge teacher/director at the time was David Lusk; he knew Helen understood the game enough to offer her a job as a tutor; 'Then it was \$20 cash in hand.

'People still remember me pregnant and occasionally a baby under the table,' she said.

David had great confidence in Helen's bridge competence.

'David put the director's exam in front of me, then the congress exam,' she said.

Helen recalls the days before sophisticated technology at SA Bridge Association and she was working as an assistant Director. 'Before bridge mates, you had an assistant Director. I was working with David Lusk and David Anderson and I learned a lot... and made mistakes.



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'There was a lady Dorothy Saies who came from the era of 'ladies'. She played bridge till she was 103 and lived to be 104. She had an effervescent personality and was always a joy to talk to. She displayed grace, kindness, poise, respect, good manners, elegance, empathy, self-confidence and the ability to handle situations with dignity. 'On one occasion, after Anderson had told me I'd made another mistake, Dorothy called me over, took my hand patting it saying "There, there, don't you worry, I remember all his mistakes when he was learning"! I will always be eternally grateful to her,' she said.

Helen recalls other fascinating bridge players she has come across.

'I have met so many interesting people: millionaires, people who can't rub 2 cents together and everyone in-between.

'The one thing that stands out is that all bridge players are intelligent...

'There are so many other stories like the WW2 spy; she knew how to keep her mouth shut.

'The police man who could make you confess to a crime in another country.

'Playing bridge in prison; friends of mine.

'Making lifelong friends, wives, husbands. Just from playing a silly card game...' she said.

Helen outlined some of the many highlights of her bridge career so far.

'One...playing with some of the state's top players.

Two...bidding and making 7NT.

Three...getting over 73% on a Monday night competition.

Four... having my name on four honour boards, once with mum.

Five... becoming a qualified director, 'understand that by now I'm working, a single mum...so travelling /playing was tricky,' she said.

Helen sees a range of benefits that playing bridge brings, 'Keeping your mind active, socialising with friends and you can go anywhere in the world playing bridge and meeting interesting people and making new friends,' she said.



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On the ideal number of bridge games a week:

‘Whatever your busy schedule allows with a compatible partner... yes, yes, yes, a compatible partner makes all the difference to your enjoyment of the game,’ she said.

Helen’s other interests are dancing with her husband Frank, especially rock and roll.

‘We often spend weekends away going to various rock and roll festivals here and interstate.’

Helen also enjoys going to live theatre and the Fringe, reading and following in her mother’s footsteps, a love of antiques.

Of the next stage in Helen’s journey:

‘Frank and I are retiring to Moonta Bay soon. We are looking forward to doing whatever we want, whenever we want ha ha ha! Walking on the beach every day, fishing, reading more, drinking,’ she said. Helen loves a G&T with ice and a slice and also enjoys a nice drop of red!

Helen and Frank also plan on some adventures;

‘Travelling around Australia in our caravan just enjoying life...’ she said.

Bridge opens up a whole new world, whether it be overseas or here in Australia. When Helen is travelling around Australia, will she be like her parents?

‘They put out a sign, in front of a caravan or tent: “Bridge here 7:30pm”, which my parents did,’ she said.

‘Sometimes getting a game, having a laugh, making friends, swapping stories...’

We thank Helen for her contribution to SA Bridge Association and wish her well for her new adventures.