



Five Minutes With...

Ray Dohnt



Very quickly Ray had an affinity for bridge. He learned in his lunchbreaks!

“At the age of 21, I got pulled into a bridge game at lunchtime where I worked. As I made the ‘fourth player’ I was tolerated!

“For the first three days, I was convinced it was a silly game. You bid in a ‘code’, you bid to your limit, and the play and defence was a whole other problem.

“However, on the Thursday, it all seemed to make sense, and on the following Friday night, I was talked into playing at SABA, in a real competition. I was so ‘green’, that I even took a spare pack of cards with me, because surely they would not have enough to go around!” he said.

“When asked what system I played, I answered – ‘bid them like you’ve got them!’ I do remember getting lots of strange looks,” he said.

Within a week, Ray was playing three times a week.

“Mind you, in 1974, it only cost \$2.50 to play. Bidding was all verbal, traveller sheets were filled out after each game, and the scores and results were put on the board one week later,” he said. “Smoking was allowed, a supper was supplied, and a whole new community was introduced to me.

“Most nights, the room was packed, and I loved the atmosphere of 120 people in deep concentration,” he said.

What about the highlights of Ray’s time playing bridge?

“Well, I played football for 30 years, and the two highlights for me were the Grand Finals we won.



Five Minutes With...

“This is my 50th year of playing bridge, and while I have hundreds of small highlights, nothing stands out for me. Over the years, I have been blessed to play with partners, who I liked dearly, and enjoyed their company and tolerance. Sadly, I have had four partners who have died on me, and I am not keen to add to that list. Apply at your own peril!” he jested.

Ray sees many reasons to play bridge:

“It offers us a plethora of benefits. It’s great for mental strength, problem solving, communication, social interaction, fun, enjoyment as well as developing humility.

“At the same time, it has the ability to make you look foolish, forgetful, stupid, childish and occasionally brilliant!

“More importantly, it will introduce you to an enormous group of people from all walks of life, most of whom you will like, or at least tolerate!” he said.

On the frequency of playing bridge, Ray responded:

“When you first learn to play, two, three or four times a week seems to be a good number.

“Once a week will not give you the immediate learning curve you need. The more you play, the more you see, the more you learn.

“After five to ten years, you may choose to play one or two games a week, but you may be keen to play in tournaments that can go for a whole week.

“Great fun; lots of pressure. If you are lucky, you won’t be driven to drink!” he said.

On the age to learn bridge, Ray reflected:

“Sadly, our club’s average age is to seventy. Most of our students start the game at 55 plus.

“Introducing children to our game is tricky and difficult. Some schools have given us a term with students, but in the end do not have time in their curriculum to continue.

“In my own childhood, I was introduced to dozens of card games, but not bridge, as my parents thought it was too difficult to learn,” he said.



Five Minutes With...

“Nowadays, kids have too many electronic devices and interests, and bridge is seen as an ‘old persons’ game’. Whoever has the answer to this question, may well hold the future to the continuity of our fantastic game,” he said.

What about Ray’s involvement and commitment to our club?
“I spent my first 34 years simply playing at SABA. Work, sports and entertainment took up most of my time,” he said.

Ray has made a significant contribution to our satellite clubs.
“For the last 16 years, I have spent my time as a caddy, a tutor, lecturer, and helping to organize our satellite clubs at Walkerville and Glenelg North (nee Somerton Park).
“Those two clubs have flourished, and I am proud of the friendly communities we have been able to organise. May they continue for a long time,” he said.

Ray has a range of interests.
“Away from bridge, I have been lucky enough to enjoy a myriad of pastimes. I have a great passion for films, of most genres and from all around the world.
“The cost of films and bridge have mirrored each other for 50 years. Both have cost me thousands of dollars, and I regret nothing in cost or time.
“Thoroughbred racing, football, basketball, reading, eating, TV, walking and daydreaming take up the rest of my waking hours.”

Ray’s sense of humour as well as his values shine through when he’s asked about his future:
“My plans for the future are totally unclear. Staying alive is probably high on the list. I have always wanted to write, but am way too lazy to succeed.
“Travel is appealing, but financially not viable. Politics holds no interest at all. I am convinced that there are at least 100 more good films to see, lots of Cup races to witness, a few more superb books to read, a number of TV shows to laugh at, and a good number of great meals to be eaten.



Five Minutes With...

“My hope for the future is World Peace....but that may be a dream. Perhaps, instead of wars and global conflict, we could solve our problems by playing bridge against each other, instead of trying to destroy ourselves.

“Now there is a game I would like to ‘Kibitz’! he said.

Thanks Ray for your good humour and the valuable contribution you make to our club.