

‘Good Luck Fellows: Good Skills Partner’

John (‘Jack’) Terence Murphy, one of the most influential leaders of Calgary’s post WWII bridge scene, was born in Medicine Hat August 10, 1920. Jack was a CPR Locomotive Engineer for 45 years. Before and after marriage to Lil, bridge was a key hobby. The family relocated to Calgary in 1957 and Jack quickly became immersed in the bridge community, playing at the Martinique Bridge Studio and the other clubs of that era.

Jack liked to be in charge and served on the Unit 390 Board from 1963 to 1972, including a term as President. He was a powerful force behind first Regionals in Alberta, serving as Tournament Chairperson for Calgary in 1967, 1970, and 1973. He was the Alberta Representative on the ACBL District 18 Board; Zone V Representative to the Canadian Bridge Federation (1971 – 1980) and CBF President (1974 – 1976). On behalf of the CBF (as President), Jack (with Lil) attended the 5th (1976) World Bridge Olympiad in Monte Carlo and (as Representative) the 6th (1980) World Bridge Olympiad in Valkenburg, Holland. Jack was a good public speaker; often announcing winners at tournaments. He provided the encouragement for Msgr. Le Fort to create the Canmar Bridge Club in Calgary. Jack was an avid non smoker and may have provided early leadership in that area.



Looking at Jack’s book collection, one bridge guide must have been an extremely well thumbed A. Sheinwold’s: 5 Weeks to Winning Bridge, 1960. At the age of 46 Jack achieved Life Master in 1966. Lil achieved Life Master in September of 1991 and was a respected bridge teacher. A memorable trait was Jack’s advice following a lead and while tabling the dummy: ‘Good luck, fellows; Good skills partner’. Jack tended to never get averages, just tops or bottoms. A frequent comment was “just 2 more successful finesses and we’ll make this contract.”

Jack was a very sincere person. He cared about the bridge, about the game, and about the people who played the game. He gave bridge his all. At the same time he was a mischievous person with a great sense of humor, very much liking to entertain by telling jokes. He was a member of the Burlington Liars’ Club. (A favorite story was to recall a trip on a fishing boat off coast of Ireland with some cousins; ‘embellishing’ to include that he was sick and was advised to go to back of boat to discharge over the side, returning without his false teeth reporting that the teeth went overboard in one of his spasms. Back at the dock as fish were being unloaded, Jack secretly placed his false teeth into the mouth of one of the caught fish and when the fish with the toothy mouth was noticed, Jack went over, popped out the dentures and refitted his own mouth, claiming the fish must have picked them up when the teeth went overboard).

Amongst the many stories told by Jack to entertain passengers (including Pat Smolensky) in the car ride back from the 1973 Regina Red Coat Regional was being matched with a Southern Colonel through the partnership desk. Playing against a Regina couple, the female of which had a significant and ample cleavage, the Colonel said ‘I’ll have the trey’. Jack, while distracted, passed the Colonel the ashtray. The Colonel sternly replied with ‘it’s the trey of spades I want; keep your eye on the cawds boy’.

Jack and Lil had 3 sons and 5 daughters, and many play bridge. As kids, some were given math assignments to work out table movements in that pre-computer era. Most of the kids helped set up and take down tables at tournaments, and a few of the younger kids served as caddies.

Jack was an amateur archaeologist and made many trips to Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump to look for artifacts long before it was declared a Heritage Site. He also had a strong interest in native culture, especially the Blackfoot Nation, and it may have been Jack’s idea to organize induction of Charles Goren, Oswald Jacoby, Eric Murray and Sami Kehela into the Blackfoot Nation when they were invited guests and participants in early Calgary Regionals. Jack served as Honor Guard for Pope Paul II in 1984. In about 1989 Jack was co-winner of a 649 lottery, sharing \$2 million win with about 30 others (Jack purchased a banjo for himself and donated the remainder).

Jack died in Calgary March 9, 1992. At that time he was a Silver Life Master with 1714.70 Masterpoints. Lil Murphy died 3 years later in 1995, by then holding 446.96 Masterpoints.

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