

Joy and Brian Saville: Bridge Ambassadors Extraordinaire

Brian and Joy Saville have both received lifetime appointments to ACBL's Charity Committee. To put this honorary achievement in perspective, District 18 (AB, SK, MT, ID, WY and UT) are allocated 2 Charity Committee awards per year and this year both go to the Savilles. Please congratulate them on your next play at one of their games



Brian and Joy were both born in Cape Town, South Africa. They married in 1969. Brian worked in the S.A. Department of Telecommunications and Joy at a general insurance company. In 1976, with their daughter and son they immigrated to Canada [Canada was lucky as New Zealand and Australia were also on their radar screen, and Calgary was particularly fortunate as Vancouver was the other possibility in Canada]. Brian started his career at AGT and after a couple of years shifted to a loved 25-year career at SAIT teaching in the Telecommunications Division of the Engineering Department. Once the kids were older, Joy worked in the tax department at Gardener, McDonald, Touche & Ross, and later as the office manager at Mikulak, Rubin & Naga. Joy retired in 2002 and Brian in 2003 and both immediately became further focused on bridge.

Brian was the first to try bridge, commencing in the mid 1960's by fellow workers who required him to be the dummy during games played at tea breaks. To gain more insight into the game of bridge, Brian took a series of 8 lessons at a local rubber bridge club in Cape Town. Graduation 'permitted' Brian to then play at the club and at one of those sessions the Director (who at one time played with Terence Reese) offered a game of duplicate. After relocating to Canada, Brian started teaching Joy how to play the game and they began playing at Martinique (Walt Alex's 10th Street location). Brian had early bridge role models in his grandparents who played bridge "in the other room with the door closed" and took quickly to the game. Although Joy had not previously played bridge, card playing was a major pastime for South Africans and she also quickly took to the game.

Lorne Hanson created the Aurora in 2002 and, in collaboration with Joy as Director, started a Friday afternoon game that year. A couple of months later the collaborators opened a Monday afternoon game. In 2003 Wednesday and Thursday games were added with Brian and Joy as partners. The Monday/Wednesday games were operated by Aurora and the Thursday/Friday games operated by Bridgejoy. Brian and Joy opened Bidwell October 1, 2007. When asked about their energy for bridge (especially directing) and how it rewards them, Brian and Joy advised that they "feel extremely fortunate to own bridge clubs where they endeavor to run games in a friendly environment". Watching the bridge players studying the hand records and asking question about the bidding or play of the hands is particularly rewarding to them. Brian and Joy also find it extremely rewarding to see players develop their bridge abilities at the Friday game and later become competitive in our open games and at the tournaments. They add "our passion for bridge has allowed us to teach and direct games on 6 star cruise lines which is very interesting because it made it possible for us to learn how people from other parts of the world approach the same game". In addition to their excellent contribution as Managers of Bridgejoy and Bidwell, Joy also served 15 years on the Board of Unit 390, from 1981 to 1983 as the Novice and Club Coordinator, and from 1984 through 1996 as the Tournament Chairperson.

All bridge players have been positively influenced by one or more other bridge players, and who was that for the Savilles? Helen and Russ Purdy --- not only in bridge but in their lives. "Being new to bridge and Calgary we were very fortunate to meet them at the club. They invited us to their home and holiday cabin for bridge weekends and were the first people to play with us when we were novices in team games at tournaments".

The Savilles of course have been enormously influential in the bridge (and lives) of almost all Unit 390 members. What aspect of bridge would they surface in conversations with newcomers? --- when playing with newer players they always stress the importance on counting tricks and cards. Says Brian, "the only way you can improve your defense is to improve your declarer play". Joy adds, "keep your conventions to a minimum and use standard signaling".

A bridge story with a smile? The Savilles offer lessons and games on cruise ships. At their first beginner bridge lesson on the Queen Mary II they had 5 Russian guests that came in as a group. "We handed them the lesson booklet and seated them at a bridge table. When we started our lesson we discovered that they could not speak or understand any English". "Joy immediately called the guest service desk to see if they had someone who could help us to communicate with them. When the interpreter arrived and spoke to the Russians she discovered that they wanted a tour of the bridge of the ship not a lesson in the game of bridge".

How will bridge evolve looking out to 2025? The Savilles believe that bridge will remain relatively unchanged in Calgary in the foreseeable future, provided that the community maintains the dedicated people who teach and inspire new players. They feel that this aspect of bridge in Calgary is very strong at this time and all who are involved with teaching and running novice games should be recognized in some way by our Unit. What about a 'ringer' event that might show up some day and significantly change bridge? Brian and Joy think that although unlikely to happen in the near future, "replacing cards and bidding boxes with some type of electronic wireless device would be wonderful".

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Ken Scott