



Pat Kelly - An appreciation

It was with great sadness and shock, that we heard the news of the passing of "The Great Pat Kelly" on Monday evening February 16th 2015.

Dave Terry tells me "THE GREAT" came from myself many years ago, but I think he was known as "The Great Pat Kelly " prior to me knowing him.

As far as I can remember Pat was active in the Portmarnock Tuesday Bridge club when I went there in the late 1980's as an Inter B player. However I cannot be certain when I first encountered Pat.

I know in the 1990's he became active in Malahide Regional, being a regular winner in most of the Monday and Thursday competitions, partnering Dave Terry and John Murray. So to win stuff in Malahide one had to pass out "The Great Pat Kelly " and his supply of good partners.

I must have made some progress, as I ended up winning a Kelbourne Cup (National Teams Championship) with Pat Kelly, Dave Terry and Paul Delaney. I recall we had to reel in a 25 VP deficit against a powerful team, including Michael and Padraig O'Briain, Peter Pigott and Thomas McCormac. They had a 5th member but I forget who it was. I know each O'Briain played a day each. We played well in the 3rd session but the breaker was when the Connolly's and Masterson from Longford broke the O'Briain team.

We defended the following year but 3rd place was all we could get.

In later years when I was mainly performing as a Tournament Director, the tall Pat Kelly would arrive and put his arm around me and then list out some hand which had misfired for him and he would hope I would agree with him.

I recall Michael McDonagh (Irish Senior international) telling me that Kelly and Terry were a top pair in the past. This was a few years ago while standing outside the Bridge centre in Tempogue. I also vaguely recall Pat Kelly and probably Ramin Sai qualifying from some pairs event to represent Ireland maybe in the early 90's.

I suspect I only saw the latter end of Pat Kelly's bridge career, as I presume he was active in the Regent and Trials when I was just starting out in the late 1980's.

I remember Dave Terry admonishing me for arguing with Pat Kelly over some bridge hand just after Pat suffered bereavement. However I was only attempting to treat Pat as a normal bridge player, so if we could not beat the opponents then we beat up the partner. I meant to get Pat going on the computer bridge, but we never got round to it and sadly, we won't now. I did not realise he was going to be gone so soon.

Out in Malahide I often heard it said: "I am not playing in that competition as Pat Kelly always wins". I always replied: " Get better at bridge and beat him if it bothers you that he wins "

The reply often came back: "Well, he has better partners than I". I always replied: " Get better at bridge and better partners will come your way"

That's what I did and I ended up playing as a partner/teammate with Pat Kelly from time to time! (Well there was no point in playing against him as he had better team mates).

On the day of the funeral, while I was waiting for it to arrive at Balgriffin Cemetery, I met a man called Liam McDonald (or Donnell), who was wandering around the cemetery near me.. There was a heavy shower of rain in progress and I had taken shelter under the large tree in the middle of the cemetery. He joined me and indicated he was waiting for the Pat Kelly funeral.

Somehow he had mixed up the times ala 11.30 and 12.30. I had missed the mass and headed straight for the graveyard arriving about 1½ hours too early.

Liam told me about Big Tom, Big John, Joe and Pat who used to play golf and discuss bridge in some golf clubs where they played. Tom Freeman, John Murray and Joe English were the people this Liam was referring to, and all play bridge in Malahide Regional.

So I heard about another part of Pat's life under a tree in the rain at Balgriffin cemetery. Liam told me they always had sheets of paper out discussing some kind of cards.

That's enough for now.

*“Ár Dheish Dé go raibh a anam dilís”
(At the right hand of God may his soul go)
Eamonn Galligan*