

Linda has asked me if I would say a few words about her mum. I feel it an honour to be asked and hope I can do justice to her. Linda has spoken about her mum and her devotion to her family. She did not come from a comfortable background and she worked hard all her life. That tenacity and pride came through strongly in all that she did. But it is through bridge that I got to know Peggy and it is bridge that is the main theme of my tribute to her.

What can I say about Peggy that you don't already know? Many of you will have known her much longer than I have. You have come here today to show your affection and respect for an outstanding bridge player and a wonderful friend. Her obituary in the Oxford Bridge Club website bears testimony to her enormous contribution to Oxford Bridge Club in so many ways. She also played at Summertown Bridge Club and in County events where she was equally valued. Several of you will have been taught by Peggy and will be grateful for the grounding she gave you in what is a complex game. You will know that she was a good judge of progress and knew when to encourage you to take part in higher level sessions. All of you will have your own memories of playing against Peggy and some of you will be fortunate to have played as her partner.

So, what was it like to partner Peggy? Well, it has to be said she was very competitive. The face-to-face environment for bridge is very different from its online cousin. There are many pitfalls, including: playing the first card you touch, leading out of turn, bidding out of turn, under calling, revoking and so on. Peggy was a stickler for the rules and expected them to be observed properly. She could hold her own with anyone.

But face-to-face bridge is more than rules. It is about courtesy, fairness, generosity and temperament. Peggy had a perfect temperament for bridge. She was always calm and alert. She was skilled in all aspects of the game but in defence she had few equals. If there was a way to defeat a contract or exploit a weakness in the bidding, Peggy would find it. She understood the role of partner in defence and tried to ensure that her partner's hand was used to its full extent. Her sense of timing was excellent; when to hold off, when to attack, how to sow confusion in declarer's mind. She was superb at reading the body language and behaviour of other players. She told me once that bridge is not just about what is said in the bidding or done in the playing of the hand but what has not been said and what opponents are reluctant to do. She used all the information available to her and that is what made her such an outstanding player.

I have said that she was always courteous to her opponents and generous when opponents scored better than she did. She was especially kind to newcomers to higher level bridge and to those less accomplished than she was. She took an interest in everybody, asking after family, reminiscing over past events, enquiring about health and so on. Above all she was considerate to her partners. She would never criticise me for a mistake or blame me for a blunder which had jeopardised our final score. Win or lose I always felt a better person for having spent time with her.

Those of you who play competitive bridge know of its infinite challenges and demands. Peggy rose to the challenges and was respected, admired and loved by all those who were fortunate enough to have played with and against her.

Peggy had a wonderful sense of humour, playful and teasing. It was always a pleasure to be in her company. I, and all of us here, will miss her.