



# Bridgemates

Issue No. 21 July 2019



## MARIO'S MESSAGE

### MY LAST HURRAH

My Dear Fellow Club Members,

This is my last communication except for the AGM Report. You will be aware that I have decided not to take on another term as Club President - after all, how much fun can you expect to have at our age? Elma is mentally preparing to retrieve office space and in anticipation is mentally sharpening the teeth of the shredder.

With assistance from the committee, I will be leaving club in a very solid position. It is functioning well and I thank my committee members for their unwavering support. Our equipment is in good order and membership is currently at 196 with many new players joining us following the lessons.

We are now looking forward to a new "board of government". It is taken for granted that the new members have your goodwill (after all, you will have elected them) but do please find time periodically to show your approval - it is heartening for a committee to know they have the appreciation of the Club.

With that in mind, I extend congratulations and best wishes to the next team and wish them "all the best" for the next year. Thank you all for accepting responsibility in taking on these positions. As they say in restaurants -..ENJOY!

My thanks to you all.

from President Mario.



## Wonderful Event to look forward to

### 1. President 's Trophy Pairs Handicap Day on Wednesday 17 July

- Commencing 9.15am to 4.30pm
  - Delicious Lunch with dessert
  - Nibbles and drinks to celebrate the day
  - Only \$20 for entire day supported by a subsidy from the Club.
- Full enjoyable day of bridge and fun to boot.



### 2. **Do not forget to pay your fees.** BSB: 124 081 Account No: 10357121

### 3. **AGM** – 23 August commencing at 10.45am



## **My life story so far – Marilyn and (Tom) Pearson**



I (Marilyn), was born in Surrey England in 1944, but as I have been a nomad for most of my life, I think I was born under a wandering star.

I have one brother, a successful teenage actor who starred in many popular UK TV programs in the 1950's. He played Julian in the Famous Five series, acted in Billy Bunter, played Jim Hawkins in the film Treasure Island. His best known role was as the first person to play Jesus on UK TV in 1956 in the miniseries Jesus of Nazareth. He also acted in several films and stage plays.

My father was in the parachute regiment of the army. Dad was a glider pilot and was involved in the operation Market Garden. I have some charcoal prints of the operation, and I donated copies to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

When I was four, we went to live in Germany for about 4 years. We lived in places including Düsseldorf, Minden, and finally in a German village where we were the only English family. Apparently,

everyone thought I was a German girl adopted by English parents, as I was very blonde with plaits and spoke fluent German by then. I know I learnt to ski, and we went to see the Mohne Dam, the scene of the famous Dambusters. We kept up many German Christmas traditions when we returned to UK, which I keep to this day.



We returned to England when I was about eight and went to live in Essex. We were there for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953. Unfortunately, while everyone was having a great time celebrating with street parties, I was being rushed by ambulance to hospital to have my appendix removed. We were also there when Canvey Island was flooded, and saw everyone being evacuated by boat.

Sadly, my parents split up shortly after that, and by the time we settled in East Sheen, a West London suburb, I had attended five different primary schools, before going to Tiffin Girls Grammar School in Kingston Surrey at age 11. When I was 13, I spent the next three school summer holidays in Normandy, travelling on my own by train and cross channel ferry to stay with a French family who spoke very little English. This certainly improved my French.

I left school at sixteen and went to Regent St, Polytechnic London for a year, to study a secretarial course using French and German. I tried working in an office, but it wasn't for me. I had several jobs over the next few years. I worked for a family in the South of France, and once took a coach load of Americans to Stratford on Avon learning the history from a leaflet on arrival, and hoped I knew more than they did!



In 1964 I joined the independent airline British Eagle as a ground hostess. In those days, females could only be promoted one level, so after my only promotion, I left to become an air hostess. I loved the job, and took advantage of cheap travel. I went to Cairo, visited the museum, went inside a pyramid, saw the Sphinx lit up at night and rode a camel. I also spent time in Tunisia, slept a night in an oasis and also stayed in a cave in the troglodyte hotel in Matmata which was in the Star Wars Film.



Sadly British Eagle went bankrupt late 1968.



British Eagle had leased two BAC 1-11's from Zambia Airways which had to be returned. Fortunately, I was the hostess who went with the aircraft and the training manuals to Zambia Airlines. All except three of the air hostesses were local. I flew all the international routes, with regular night stops in Nairobi, Dares Salam and Mauritius. My food shopping was done in Nairobi market as the food quality was superior to Lusaka's market.

I occasionally flew on the DC3 on local flights, landed on grass strips in the middle of nowhere. On one occasion we went 'tech' theoretically. The problem? was remedied after lunch with a group of wild life experts and the wildlife artist David Shepherd who, by coincidence, were in the area.

I had some interesting times working for Zambia Airways which included a bird strike on takeoff from Ndola airport. We were en route to Nairobi about a 2hr 30 flight, over uninhabited country. The captain continued the flight, luckily landing safely after the damage was revealed in Nairobi.

I was in charge of the first flight into Lubumbashi, the second largest city in the DR of the Congo, where French is the first language. The airline had forgotten to organise any return catering. As I was the only French speaking hostess in the airline, I managed to arrange some basic food for the return passengers. I didn't enjoy flying there as the sides of the runway were littered with crashed Air force aircraft from the war.

Another time, I was late leaving the aircraft one night. All the rest of the crew had gone on ahead. Theoretically, there was fear of trouble between Zambia and Rhodesia, and as I rounded the corner of a deserted corridor I was met by a Zambian soldier pointing his rifle at me! Even though I was in uniform, it was a scary few minutes, before he lowered his rifle.

Honestly, the airline was not so bad as these were isolated incidents. I was very privileged to live in Africa in the 1960's, and experience the wonderful variety of wild life that was so plentiful then.

The most important thing to happen of course in Zambia was meeting Tom on a blind date three weeks after I arrived in 1968.

Tom was seconded with others from the RAF to fly with the Zambian Air force for 2 years. While he was there, I was flying back from Nairobi, when we were informed of an accident at Lusaka Airport involving an Air force aircraft. We weren't told any more than that, and I had to keep the smile on my face and do my job until we landed. Thankfully Tom wasn't involved, but we lost a good friend.



The Kariba Dam was built between Zambia and Rhodesia which is now Zimbabwe. As Tom was in the RAF and UDI had been declared, he was not allowed to cross onto the Rhodesia side, but this is a photo of him crossing the border.

Tom and I were married in England in 1970. We have three children, two sons and a daughter, and two grandsons who are in England. I was a stay at home mother as we moved constantly while Tom was in the RAF. He left the RAF in 1980 and became a commercial pilot and flew for UK independent airlines until he joined Royal Brunei Airlines in 1993.



Before Tom joined Royal Brunei Airlines in 1993, he was given free tickets for a subsonic flight on Concorde. Unfortunately, he had to work so my daughter and I went. It was a flight to remember.

We were in Brunei for 9 years. Our three children were still in UK, so I lived between two countries. The two younger ones joined us in Brunei for their school and university holidays.



When we first arrived in Brunei, we lived in a temporary house for a very short time. It was at the end of a road with houses on one side and jungle opposite. As soon as we moved in, Tom went away for 10 days. I was quite nervous on my own. There were monkeys in the jungle opposite, and the builders working on the house next door wore black balaclavas to keep the sun off them, a frightening scene. We moved quite quickly.

While in Brunei, I started a British wives group with a couple of friends. We met monthly, and enjoyed exchange meetings with the wives of the other nationalities who were also living in Brunei. On one memorable occasion, we line danced for the Sultans wife at her all female birthday party. It was a surreal experience dancing with the bejewelled Brunei Royals. We also organised regular functions for the boarding school children when they came on their school holidays.



One funny story about our time in Brunei:



Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip came on a state visit. A small crowd of us were there to welcome them both, we cheered and waved. After the British Royals left, Brunei TV arrived to film the event. Luckily there were still a few of us there, so we were filmed for the TV news, smiling and waving at the pretend Royals.

We had some wonderful experiences while living in Brunei. We had a motor boat and went regularly to a deserted island to have a drift wood BBQ, swim and snorkel. I remember being in convoy with two other boats from Brunei to Kota Kinabalu in Sabah. We hit a tropical storm half way there. But we made it, and when there, stayed in a cabin built over the sea connected by walkways.



We stayed Sandakan, Sabah and saw Orang u Tangs both in the sanctuary and in the wild, and Proboscis monkeys jumping across jungle rivers. We went to Turtle Island for the night to see turtles laying their eggs, and the baby turtles emerging from the sand and



swimming off. We had armed guards there, as there was a possible threat of danger from armed boat robbers. Tom, alone, climbed Mount Kinabalu. We also explored the Niah and Mulu caves in Sarawak, and swam in jungle pools.

We moved to the Sunshine Coast in 2003, and I joined the Bridge Club shortly after. I had learnt to play bridge in Brunei, but in a social environment, so playing in a bridge club was a new experience for me. I hope my bridge has improved, but more importantly I made friends and found companionship with fellow bridge players.

Tom and I have travelled extensively and visited every state since we moved here. We really enjoy the diversity of Australia and living here.

Two of our children have followed us here and have also made Australia their home. However, our oldest son and grandchildren still live in England.

I hope we have stopped wandering now, as we love living under the Southern Cross.