

Obituary: Brian Halliday, 1936 – 2015

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Brian and his wife, Christine Halliday, at the English Contingent 2007 – photo Robert Palgon

One of the country's greatest table tennis enthusiasts, Brian Halliday, sadly passed away aged 79 on 20th January after suffering from cancer.

Brian, who was at his most passionate when he was just talking about the sport, made a major impact at national level when he took on the role of Vice Chairman Public Relations in 1995 in a period which covered the time of the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games, both in Manchester. Brian led the public relations and publicity aspects of table tennis throughout the whole of that period. In this capacity Brian was one of the lead figures in the publication of Table Tennis News and played a key role within the Management Committee during that period.

Brian's interest in table tennis blossomed in his younger days when he worked for one of Britain's leading insurers, Prudential. Brian ran and played for the Prudential club in the London Business Houses League and, in addition, organised many tournaments for the club in central London around that time. Brian was transferred to the Prudential's Reading office and became one of the major drivers in the famous Kingfisher Club where he was the club's Chairman for approximately 20 years.

Brian was also a very keen player and a tremendous competitor. He was a defender and was noted for his determination to win – many of his matches were marathons with some of the league matches going on until the early hours of the morning. He was an enthusiastic veteran and had played more than 100 times for Berkshire in the Veterans County Championships and was the Berkshire Veterans singles champion in 1977/78.

Brian was a close friend of the former Kingfisher youngster, Matthew Syed, and Brian helped Matthew with the organisation of some of his televised invitation tournaments. For the tournament played in Croydon approximately ten years ago, Matthew asked Brian to pick up the former Swedish World and Olympic Champion, Jan Ove Waldner from Heathrow and take him to Croydon for the event. Brian loved every minute of the two hour nonstop conversation – that was Brian!

In addition to his involvement in the ETTA, in Berkshire and with Kingfisher, Brian was also one of the leaders of the Vett's Society serving on their Management Committee for many years. He was the editor of the Vett's magazine and in that capacity produced more than 100 issues.

Brian's passion for the sport took him to many major championships, not just in the UK but throughout the world. In order to help the British presence within the ITTF, he attended the AGM's of the Federation as the representative for Guernsey as the Channel Island did not have one of their own members at the time to take on the role.

Brian was also very interested in coaching and liked working with individual players. His biggest success was with the current English Junior champion, Maria Tsaptsinos, whom Brian helped from a near beginner up to her current standard. Brian spent many many hours working with Maria and helped her not just with her technical game, but also with the mental aspects of being a top player.

Although Brian was a tremendous team player in his work within the Management Committee of the association, he was never frightened to speak his mind and made many useful contributions, including in his later role as National Councillor for Berkshire and then for the Isle of Wight at the ETTA National Council meetings, the AGM and other similar gatherings. If he felt something was wrong, he would never fear to say so but always with the interest of the sport very much in mind.

In addition to table tennis, Brian had a terrific passion for the football team that he supported, Wimbledon, who

did remarkably well in the "Crazy Gang" days when they produced some incredible performances for such a small club. They reached the 1st Division (the Premier League of that time) of the Football League and beat Liverpool 1 – 0 in the FA final in 1988. Brian was irate when Wimbledon was taken over and moved to Milton Keynes, but continued his loyalty to football in the Wimbledon area and was a great supporter of the club that rose from the ashes and more recently formed AFC Wimbledon whom he used to watch on a regular basis.

Brian was also a great music lover and liked everything from country and western to opera.

Brian was strongly supported by his wife, Christine, who accompanied him to table tennis functions both in this country and abroad. Brian also had a daughter, Cathy, with two grandchildren. Brian's son, Paul, who also played table tennis, has passed away.

Brian was honoured by the English Table Tennis Association with a Vice Presidency in the year 2000. He was also honoured by the VETTS and was made one of their Life Members in 2003 and was awarded the Mike Watts Memorial Trophy for his services to the VETTS Society in 2010.

Brian's funeral will take place at Reading Crematorium & Henley Road Cemetery, All Hallows Road, Reading, West Berkshire, RG4 5LP on Thursday, 5th February at 11.30 am

Alan Ransome, O.B.E, January 23, 2015.

Note: Further tributes to Brian will be most welcome.

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