

Obituary: Elsie Carrington, a great character

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Elsie Carrington

Elsie Carrington passed away on Tuesday March 3, 2015 in Bournemouth, where she had lived for many years.

Born in Walthamstow on September 29, 1919 and surviving the war years despite being bombed out of several office buildings, Elsie did not take up table tennis until she was 28 years of age when she met the outstanding coach and player, Jack Carrington, at a Paul Jones dance.

Despite the late start in playing table tennis Elsie went on to play in nine World Championships, the first being in 1948, as well as one European Championships and 11 English Opens.

Elsie's playing career was extensive and successful – she reached the quarter-finals of the World Championships in 1950 in Budapest with Miss Abraham in the Women's Doubles and reached the last 32 in the Women's Singles that year.

Eleven English Open appearances between 1949–1968 again saw impressive performances in the doubles with four quarter-final appearances (Doreen Spooner, Barbara Milbank x 2, Claude Rougagnou (France)) in the Women's Doubles and one in the Mixed Doubles with Jaroslav Stanek of Czechoslovakia.

Twice National Champion, (Elsie always said she was a better doubles player than a singles player), in the Women's Doubles with Jean McCree in September 1960 and with Jackie Billington (Canham) in 1968. Several semi-finals and quarter-finals were reached too.

Elsie told a lovely story about her first Open Tournament in Birmingham. Feeling very nervous she registered when she arrived, and waited and waited to be called. However, when she heard the semi-finals being announced and she still hadn't been called she went up to the desk and with some trepidation informed the officials that she was still waiting to play.

They looked through their list and realised that they hadn't called Elsie for her first match so they started the tournament again – Elsie reported it didn't make any difference to the final result!

The crowning achievement for Elsie in her playing career was becoming World Over-70s Veterans Champion in Baltimore, USA in 1990. Despite Elsie's late start she made up for it by playing well into her 70s in the Bournemouth League. Always competitive, if you played against Elsie you could be 20-2 up and still not be sure that you would win. After her World title Elsie decided she needed another challenge and took up lawn bowls and before long she was appointed club captain.

Elsie's playing career was prodigious but many will know her best for her tremendous coaching input. Elsie was taught by Jack to play perfect strokes and so became the ideal demonstration and training partner on his many coaching courses and camps, setting up not only the English Coaching scheme but introduced good practices in many other countries, including Canada, Australia and Sweden.

In recognition of Elsie's contribution to table tennis she was honoured with becoming a Vice-President of the English Table Tennis Association in 1979. Elsie was also an Honorary Life Member of Hampshire Table Tennis Association and Life Vice-President of the Bournemouth Table Tennis League.

A regular contributor to the magazine *Table Tennis* Elsie always emphasised the importance of appearance and was a stickler for clean white shoes and neat dress, her standards continued throughout her life and Elsie was always immaculately turned out. Her faculties were as sharp as her dress and it was a real pleasure to listen to Elsie talking about past times. It was only when she reached 90 that Elsie gave up driving, not because she was not capable but because the insurance premiums became rather high!

When we last saw Elsie she said "Don't be sorry when I go because I have had such a good life."

Rest in peace Elsie, a full and fascinating life.

The funeral is to take place on Monday March 23, 2015 at 12.30pm at Poole Crematorium. Details of the wake are to be arranged. If you intend to attend, please contact either Diane or Harvey Webb so that Elsie's nephew and niece, Bob and Chris Tilley, can be informed. DianeK1414@hotmail.co.uk or HarveyWebb17@gmail.com. Alternatively, telephone 01424 216342. At Elsie's request, any donations to the National Autistic Society.

Diane and Harvey Webb

March 5, 2015

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