

## Vale Valerie Palk



We sadly note the passing of Valerie Palk, Grand Master and TBA Life Member, and a great contributor to bridge in Tasmania. The following eulogy will be read by Margaret Gibbs at Valerie's memorial service on Wednesday 26th April:

A number of years ago Valerie took me aside and said that she had something very important to ask me. She said that she would like me to speak at her funeral about her involvement with bridge. I told her that of course I would be honoured to do that.

Some people say that bridge is very addictive. I agree with that, and indeed Valerie took it very seriously. She and I played together in a most rewarding and friendly way often over the 40 years that I have known her. Our proudest moment took us to Canberra to compete in a prestigious event to represent Tasmania, and she continued to fly the Tassie flag with pride in faraway places, in partnerships with other excellent players. She was proud of being a member of the Tasmanian Seniors team, and donated a trophy bearing her name.

When visiting other cities playing bridge; for example, in Darwin, we managed to fit in some relaxation, visiting a wildlife park. It turned out to include a boat trip feeding fierce crocodiles, whether we wanted to or not. It was quite an eye-opener, and we gained a whole new appreciation of nature. Maybe it reminded us of some bridge opponents we have met.

It takes a strong, yet humble personality to remain calm, fair, and gracious when in a bridge partnership. Valerie had those qualities in spades. Someone said to me just yesterday that she was always cheerful, and greeted people with a big smile.

In preparing for today, I have gathered some amazing facts. She played bridge in Devonport in the 1970's, and they have a record of her being on the Bridge committee in 1972, 50 years ago. This is a feature of her commitment. Upon settling in Hobart, she and her husband John played bridge at the Eastern Shore, Hobart City, Kingborough, and the Tasmanian Bridge clubs at different times, holding office; committee member, Secretary, including President of the Eastern Shore Bridge Club in 1985, and President of the Tasmanian Bridge Club at the turn of the century, giving impressive leadership. She achieved the coveted rank of Grand Master of Bridge in 2013, and was given Life Membership of the Tasmanian Bridge club in recent years.

Time goes by, and we sometimes find we are not quite as sharp as we once were as we gaze ever-hopefully at our hands of 13 cards. Valerie acknowledged this inevitability in her later years, and told me that she saw herself as a person to encourage up-and-coming players, rather than winning championships.

We thank Valerie for her enormous contribution to bridge over the years, and are privileged to have known her in life, and at the table.