

Margaret Bourke

The end of an emerald bridge career

By **STEPHEN LESTER**, MELBOURNE

MARGARET BOURKE, nee Cumpston, was born on November 11, 1945 in Canberra. She has been the enduring player from the last half century of Australian women’s bridge.

She competed in her 48th consecutive Australian National Championship in 2019. It is fitting that Margaret not only represented ACT Women, but also spearheaded its success in taking out the Championships.

I had the good fortune of sharing an Airbnb with Margaret, and despite the pain and discomfort she was feeling due to her illness, she still managed to captain her team to success. She also maintained high interest in what was happening in Hobart, taking me on an entertaining visit to MONA, the ac-



claimed Museum of Old and New Art, where she far outshone me in energy. Margaret has a list of achievements many miles long. She captained the ACT Open Team in 2015, and was a member of the winning Open Team in 2004 and 2014. Her first win in the ACT Women’s Interstate was in 1999, and she was a member of the winning Victorian Women’s Teams from 1976 to 1987. Brad’s editorial on page 4 includes a list of Margaret’s many other achievements at national and international level.



In December 2019, just before COVID-19 put a hold on face-to-face bridge, Margaret (in partnership with Peter Reynolds), advanced to the semi-final round of the Seniors’ Playoff in Canberra (defeating my team soundly). An article by husband Tim, published on the ABF website, heralds a previous milestone in Margaret’s bridge career.

A NEW EMERALD GRAND MASTER by Tim Bourke

It was sometime during the 2014 Summer National Women’s Teams event that Margaret became Australia’s fourth Emerald Grand Master (EGM), after Bob Richman, Paul Lavings and Pauline Gumby. Of note is that she was the first non-Sydney based EGM.

After two years away from Australia, Margaret began playing bridge in earnest in 1971, having learnt the game with her older brother in 1968. Her first partnership of note was with Meredith Woods, and they made the Victorian Interstate Women’s Team in 1973. When Meredith was unavailable to play the following year, Margaret formed a partnership with Lidia Kilvington (later Beech) that lasted for 27 years. However, Margaret represented Australia with Ailsa Tandy and Paula Schroor before she and Lidia qualified for the 1988 Australian Women’s Team, a feat they repeated many times in the ensuing 13 years.

One of the things that helped Margaret become an EGM is that she has always loved to play the game – just riffle a deck near her. Also, she is a great partner: those not mentioned above who she has played with at international level include Felicity Beale, Jillian Hay, Dagmar Neumann and Sue Lusk, and at the ANC with Arjuna De Livera and David Hoffman.

Another of her traits is that she has always wanted to improve: indeed, I present her with more difficult versions of the problems that appear in the Daily Bulletins at these championships and she gets most of them right. However, like all good players she is not above playing for a defensive error when there seems little technical hope of making the contract, as this example from a 1990s PABF Championship shows:

1985 Asia-Pacific Women’s Teams champions, with Paula Schroor (back), Pauline Gumby, Sue Hobley, Barbara Travis and Sue Lusk

Board 1 ♠ A J 8 3
N/Nil ♥ J 2
♦ K J 5 3 2
♣ A 8
♠ K 10 9 7 6 4 ♠ Q 2
♥ 9 8 ♥ A 10 6 5 4 3
♦ A 9 6 4 ♦ Q 10
♣ 7 ♣ K 9 2
♠ 5
♥ K Q 7
♦ 8 7
♣ Q J 10 6 5 4 3

WEST	NORTH Beech	EAST	SOUTH Bourke
	1♠	2♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

The same contract was reached at both tables. West led the ♥9. Both Easts took the trick with the ♥A and returned a heart, taken by the king.

Against Felicity Beale and Diana Smart, the declarer continued with ace and another club and Felicity had little trouble in defeating 3NT by leaving the round suits untouched for the rest of the play.

After winning the second trick with the ♥K, Margaret saw there was little genuine hope for the contract and instead tried a psychological play. She deliberately ran the ♣Q, expecting that East would win the trick with the ♣K and return a heart. When East did just that, Margaret was able to discard the ♣A on the ♥Q, and the impossible game was made.

I am sure everyone will join me in congratulating Marge on becoming an EGM.

Tim Bourke, 2014



The following deal was reported by Brad Coles in the September 2017 issue of this magazine:

N/NS ♠ A 9 6
♥ A K 8 7 2
♦ A 8 3
♣ A 6
♠ Q 3 2 ♠ J 7 5 4
♥ Q 10 6 4 3 ♥ 9 5
♦ 10 5 ♦ 7
♣ Q J 9 ♣ K 10 5 4 3 2
♠ K 10 8
♥ J
♦ K Q J 9 6 4 2
♣ 8 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Hudson	Coles	Lavings	Bourke
	2NT	pass	4♦
pass	4♥ ^{cue}	pass	4NT ^{RKCB}
pass	5♣ ^{1 or 4}	pass	5NT
pass	7♦	all pass	

The deal came up in a critical match on the last day of qualifying in the 2017 ANC Open Teams. Margaret and Brad reached 7♦ after a Blackwood sequence, with 5NT showing grand slam interest and confirming possession of the king and queen of diamonds.

Margaret won the ♣Q lead in dummy, cashed the ♥A, ruffed a heart, crossed to the ♦A, ruffed another heart, and ran the diamonds.

With two diamonds to play, the position was:

♠ A 9 6
♥ K 8
♦ —
♣ 6
♠ Q 3 2 ♠ J 7 5 4
♥ 10 6 ♥ —
♦ — ♦ —
♣ J ♣ K 10
♠ K 10 8
♥ —
♦ 6 4
♣ 8

On the ♦6, West discarded his last club (pitching spades would have been a better defence, but still futile on this layout). Margaret played off the last trump, and this time West had no choice but to throw a spade (as did dummy). Having now been left with the sole responsibility of guarding both spades and clubs, East was subsequently squeezed when Margaret crossed to the ♠A and cashed the ♥K. This was a 13-imp pickup against 6♦ at the other table. ♦♦