

It is an honour and privilege to contribute to John's service today on behalf of the Ashburton Bridge Club, and I'm sad I'm unable to attend in person.

To those of you not familiar with Bridge, it is a complex game that takes most of us many years to try and master. You play with a partner and you must have a good understanding of each other's game to have any chance of success.

I remember on more than one occasion John mentioning some of his mates teasing him that he was off to play Snap again!! I'm sure you know who you are! You're welcome to come along to lessons sometime!

I first met John when we moved to our farm in Westerfield, and John and Brenda were farming close by, and a few years later some of our children attended Westerfield School together, before it closed.

However, our friendship really developed through the Bridge Club, following me learning in the mid 1990's.

John's Bridge history dates further back. John was brought up in an enthusiastic card playing household and it was when John was just 18 that he and sister Barbara ventured off to the Ashburton Bridge Club to learn the ultimate card game...duplicate Bridge.

It was the following year before Joanna, their mother, took lessons. This is a fact that surprises many people as Joanna subsequently taught bridge at the Club for many years. I was fortunate to be one of her students.

John had a remarkable 55 year continuous membership and playing history with the Club. Over this extraordinary period John achieved plenty of success, with his name featuring on much of the silverware. He won the highest accolade, the A ladder trophy three times with Sue Rosevear.

John also enjoyed success playing in tournaments here and in other centres. As recently as 12th March this year John won a local tournament, with partner Sue Rosevear....a remarkable achievement in light of the events since then.

Over the years I've enjoyed playing at numerous tournaments both here and away with John, with the highlight being our win at Akaroa this time last year, against some strong opposition. I'm sorry we won't be defending our title this year.

John was President of the Club for two years, although I think he was happiest helping behind the scenes, such as manning the bar, and tidying the grounds, rather than being in the spotlight.

John was always willing to play with more junior players, offering guidance and encouragement and often helping them up to a good result.

He genuinely liked to see success spread around the Club and was always encouraging others to do well.

Like everywhere else where he has been involved, Mr Three No trumps will leave a large gap and be sadly missed by all at the Bridge Club.