

OBITUARY

RFA Handbook 1995-96

MARK CHARLES DANIEL
Died 6th April 1996, aged 52.

Mark left Bedford School in 1963 to read Mathematics at Cambridge University, before setting forth on a dual career as an actuary with Equitable Life Assurance and an independent Rugby Fives entrepreneur. Over the twenty-five years that Mark spent with Equitable Life he was held in the highest esteem for his actuarial intellect and became very much of a 'Guru' in the development of the Company.

Over the same period of time he created the Old Bedfordian Rugby Fives Club and became dedicated to the pursuit of Fives wherever he could find it. He arranged well in excess of five hundred fixtures for them during his leadership of the club and found opponents under a great variety of banners. If he had a spare match day he would cajole somebody into forming a team in order that a match would be played, even to the extent of managing his opponents' as well as his own team. The O.B. VIII against the East of England was a case in point. Sixteen players, all gathered together by Mark, to play a full eight-a-side match. Mark was single-minded, idiosyncratic and sometimes controversial in his determination to see Fives played, and it was almost impossible to say no to him.

Victoria College, Jersey had been evacuated to Bedford School during the war, and Mark re-established the connection with Fives tours to the Channel Isles. He also toured New England with the RFA Club and became a very generous host when the Americans came on reciprocal visits. When an Anglo-American match was staged at his old school, he insisted on the flags of both nations and a brass band to open the event.

Independent, idiosyncratic and controversial. Mark was all of these. He lived to his own dogmatism of the game and was unshakeable in his pursuit of it. Ironically, he often undervalued his players by eschewing national tournaments, and he was adamant in his refusal to play in the National Club Knockout, regardless of the fact that at one stage the O.B.s were undefeated in 122 consecutive matches over six seasons.

By 1990, Mark's failing health forced him to withdraw from both his professional and recreational occupations. The enormous intensity of his commitment to work and play had taken its toll. Mark's massive contribution to the playing of Fives will be sorely missed, not least by his own coterie of Old Bedfordians, who have lost their very own Fives 'Guru'.

The Association extend their deepest sympathy to Mark's widow, Jackie and his daughter, Elisabeth.

Jerry Cooper

On tour with Mark Daniel

I first met Mark in April 1984 on the inaugural RFA Club tour of the USA in snow-bound Boston. Mark sported his inevitable trilby, the essence of an Englishman abroad. I remember many a late night on that tour, as the party stayed up till the early hours telling some of the worst jokes we had ever heard.

Mark was of course very anxious about the match. It was unthinkable that a U.K.team should lose to the colonials. He need not have worried: his singles opponent withdrew with a sprained ankle, causing Mark to agonise for hours about how the correct score should be given.

Over the next few years I would be rung from time to time for assorted tours and fixtures. I would find myself playing with Mark, against Mark or for one of his teams. (He would occasionally drop himself from the team, 'in order not to jeopardise the result'.) These events were always meticulously well-organised, so that not only did his team win, but the opposition had such a good time afterwards that the result faded into insignificance. Winning was important to Mark, as only anyone who played him at croquet on his own lawn can testify.

Over the years, Mark and I politely disagreed about every political and social issue we ever discussed, but we shared a love of the game of Fives and a certain competitiveness, and that seemed to transcend everything.

Whatever feathers Mark ruffled in his time, I will always have good memories of his enthusiasm and commitment, and I shall think of him as the classic Englishman abroad, with his broad smile and, of course, that hat.

Neil Butterfield