

Interview to Frederic Wrang by Fernando Lema

ferlema

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First tell us something about yourself for our readers to know you better.

How old are you and where were you born? Where do you live? Do you have a college degree? Are you married, children?

I am 52 years old and live in Stockholm. I work as a salesman in our Family business.

We import party items and hair items and manicure and pedicure from Far East and sell to big retailers in Sweden and Norway.

I was born in Stockholm. I have three brothers; two of them are very good bridge players. I am not married and I have no children. Right now I am single.

What can you tell us about your foray into the professional poker? Hobbies? Reading? Sports? Movies? Music? Favorite food? Favorite Drink?

My education is not what my parents had wanted. When I was young I liked to gamble a lot. I asked a friend of mine who taught me a lot about Poker: Omaha and Texas Holdem. He is a very good player and he has won several Bracelets at Las Vegas. He is a legend in Sweden his name is Chris Bjorin.

When I asked Chris what kind of education he had; Chris answered me that it was LHS. What's that I asked him. In Swedish basically it means the hard school of life. I can say it is the same for me.

I have played a lot of Poker. I prefer to play live Poker. I know a lot of very good Poker players such as Martin De Knijff and Gus Hansen, who also play Bridge. I feel that I don't have time and interest anymore. But its a very thrilling game. I prefer to play Omaha rather than Texas Holdem which I find quite boring.

Hobbies: I like to play golf, my HCP is 15 but it used to be lower. But you can't have any expectations if you never practice. I am also a sports fanatic and follow all HI Class European soccer and Golf.

Reading: I read a lot of History especially from 1st and 2nd WW.

Sports: I follow mostly soccer and Golf and some Winter sports.

Movies: The Godfather number 1 and 2 are my favorites.

Music: I like most of music but not heavy metal.

Favorite food: Japanese and Italian. I love sea food such as Swedish crawfish.



Drink: Gin Tonic or vodka bitter lemon. Why not a cold beer after a round of Golf in a sunny summer day.

Now about your first contacts with bridge: When and how were you captured by bridge?

I used to kibitz my brother when he played rubber with friends at our home when I was 10-11 years old. I was hooked directly but me and my brother were not allowed to watch to much. I was fascinated because they could sit and play for many hours in a row.

Did you have and if so ... who was your mentor in your beginning and your memories of those years?

My first mentor was Jan Wohlin who taught me and my brother David how to play when I was 13 years old and he was 15. He was a genius how to explain bidding and declaring. Jan Wohlin is one of the greatest players we have ever had in Sweden. He has written many interesting Bridge books. Those years were very interesting and I also came in contact with Gunnar Hallberg and Jorgen Lindqvist who also helped me a lot.

How many years passed and how did you decided to become a bridge professional?

20 years. It was when I was playing rubber Bridge in London. My confidence grew when I could compete against the best players such as Zia, Hamman, Hallberg, Lev and players like that.

Your first partners? Some special memories...

My first partner was my brother David. Then I played with Johan Sylvan my partner in the Swedish team. I remember we played super precision with David and we spend hours and hours to improve our system. When I was young I had a very short temper and I fought a lot with David when we had bad boards. And believe me, we had plenty. Every time when we made a big mistake we had to pay 5 kronor. And there were many penalties. David was still the boss because he was much bigger than me so I had to watch up.

Players you admired in those days...and why?

Internationally it was Belladonna and Garozzo who were my idols. Bob Hamman was and still is one of my favorites. They were just unbelievable good and there declarer play and defense was amazing.

Your weaknesses and strengths in bridge? Something a bridge professional can't fail to have.

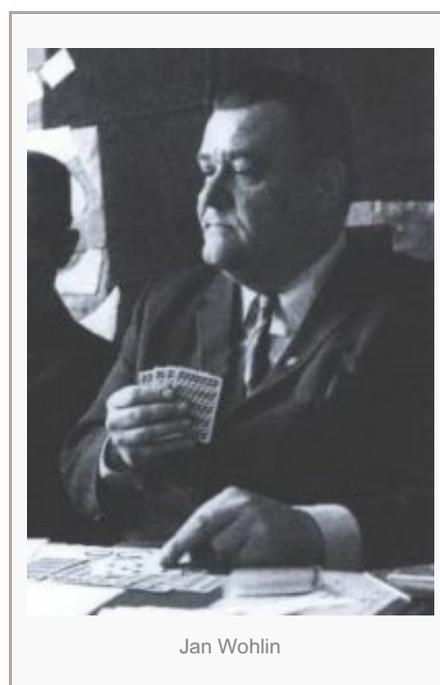
In the past my weakness was that I could not forget a bad board. All of a sudden you have 3-4 bad boards in a row because you are upset. But I still think that you can improve everything a lot. My strength is that I never give up. I also have good table presence, defence in particular especially leading.

You've had many successes in your bridge career, we'd like you to tell us about:

In 1998 you played and won the Gold Cup, in a team where one of its players was the legendary Boris



Frederic Wrang



Jan Wohlin



Zia Mahmood

Shapiro, ¿What can you tell us about this event and about Boris?

1998 Gold Cup. The semi final and Final was played in Peebles Scotland. Every player had to wear a tuxedo.

I remember that in the semi final we played against a strong English team where my friend Hallberg was playing. After 32 boards of 64 we were losing heavily. We came back and won by a couple imps; when in the last board was a slam swing in our favor.

I remember that we had a player in our team who had never won Gold Cup despite trying 30-40 times of course that was huge for him and of course for me. Boris had won 14-16 times before and also won the seniors pairs that year in Lille together with Irwin Gordon at age 88.

Boris Shapiro was one of a kind. We had a rough start. But after a while I started to like him a lot and we became friends. He and his wife Helen invited me for dinner. I asked Boris about his life and he told me a story:

Boris was born in Russia, he was of Jewish origin. Russia wasn't the best place for his family to live in so they decided to move to Germany. They were buying and selling horses and cattle to England.

At year 1932 he was in a bar in Berlin with an Irish journalist who had a big nose and red hair and did not look like the German ideal at that time. The journalist had short temper.

In the bar came three SS men in their black uniforms and saw Boris and his friend.

They shouted to the Irishman and told him: Go out from this bar you fxxxx Jew.

Boris was blond and the SS men did not expect him to be Jewish. The Irishman hit one of the SS men and a big fight started. The Gestapo came and arrested the Irishman. He spent 3-4 weeks in a prison and was almost killed there.

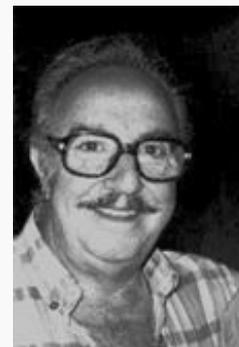
Irish State department managed to get him out of prison and back to Ireland. The poor Irishman spent a couple of months in hospital but survived. The next day Boris convinced his family to move to England and so they did.

I still miss Boris and I still think about him and his amazing life.

You won the Bronze Medal in the 2007 European Open teams Championship, what are your memories.

2007... I remember that in round of 16 we played against a strong Polish team and we were losing 28 IMPs at half time.

We managed to sit at the wrong direction in the 2nd half, but the directors changed the wind in board 8, the momentum also changed and everything went our way. We bid 7 after a 2 opening bid by opponents. My partner made it after a finesse. After the round of 8 we came from behind and won narrowly. Unfortunately we lost against an Indian team in the Semi final.



Giorgio Belladonna



Boris Shapiro



Shapiro, Belladonna y Reese



Sweden 2007

In 2008 playing with Martin de Knijff, you were the runner up in the Blue Ribbon just one step from Meckwell the winners...your comments



2008 Meckwell won. Losing to one the best pairs in the world last 20-25 years. What can I say we played well, but they were just too strong.



In 2013 you won the Monaco Cavendish Open Teams playing in the Kamras team, what can you tell us about it?

It was a perfect team effort. Upmark-Nystrom played great when the team was in trouble. I played for the first time with Marion Michelsen. Marion and I had hardly any misunderstandings at all. We also were able to cover up for the team when they were in trouble. I can't describe how happy everybody was after that win.

In what tournament that you have not played until now would you like to participate?

I would like to go to Australia and play a big tournament there. I have never been in Australia.

In 2014, you had an excellent bridge year playing with J. C. Ventin, how did you prepare? What is your studying routine? What system do you play, do you make changes regularly? What are your goals for 2015?

First we discuss our system a lot and of course we discuss all the situations that come up. We prepare before each tournament. We go through all our mistakes after each tournament and discuss them. We Update our system after every tournament and we are always trying to improve it.

We play 5542 with transfer responses and 15-17 NT. 2 strong 23-24 bal or any strong. 2 Multi with strong minor clubs or Diamonds or 25-27. 2Major is 9-13, 6 cards.

2015 our goal is to perform and do well in the European Championships in Tromsø. We will just try our best and hopefully do very well and win.

Advices...

I think that bridge players think a lot about declaring but not about defending. You need to take your time at trick one...one second after is too late. If you win the first trick when you are defending take some time before playing again.

The player number one for you is....WHY? and the second...third...

Number 1: Geir Helgemo. A very nice and humble guy. He is the perfect partner and he has basically no weaknesses and he never gives away a trick. He plays together with Helness and I consider them to be the best pair in the world.

Number 2: Agustin Madala. He is a genius. Everything who is difficult he



figure it out in half a second.

Helgemo will have to watch up, Madala will be soon the number one. Playing with Bocchi they are between the best three pairs in the world.

Number 3: Thor Helness. He is just as good as number 1 and 2. He is also a very nice and humble person and a terrific declarer.

What is the funniest bridge story you remember and that you can share with us?

We played Scandinavian Juniors in Trondheim 1983. We had had 5 rulings against us. Our Captain was a former Ice Hockey star in Sweden and very good Bridge player. He did not like some of the rulings against our team and he went very upset.

After losing ruling number 5 he went out to the schoolyard where we were playing and started to scream for 1-2 minutes, his eyes were black.

Anyway he came back and we still had a minimal chance of winning the Championship. We had to win with at least 19-1 the last match and the Norwegians had to lose 17-3!!!

On the last board the team from Norway gave away an overtrick and lost 17-3. We won our match... big.

I have never seen my Captain being so happy, know he was screaming of joy, and the team was so happy to beat the Norwegians in their home ground... after all we went through.

Did Bridge give you something in life that you had not gotten if you wouldn't play?

Bridge has given me friendship and joy and the the possibility to visit a lot of places which I would never have seen if I wouldn't played Bridge. Bridge is also the ultimate game where ethic is very important. You also meet a lot of interesting and smart people.

Do you play online bridge tournaments for money? Do you know about the 1st World Online Bridge Championship in Bridge Big? What do you think about this initiative?

No I don't play online tournaments for money. I heard about it. I think that everything who promotes Bridge is good. If they can do it safe is possible that it works...

Finally, your best advice for a young player who wants to improve his bridge.

My best advice is first of all to have fun. If you don't have fun you dont perform well. Practise a lot and play a lot live or online. I always prefer to play live.

Thank You! Frederic

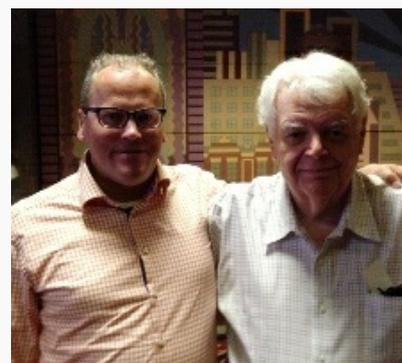
Diseño: Ezena



G. Helgemo – T. Helness



Agustin Madala en Bali 2013



F. Wrang & Bob Hamman



Johan Upmark, Peter Fredin, Frederic Wrang and Martin Schifko