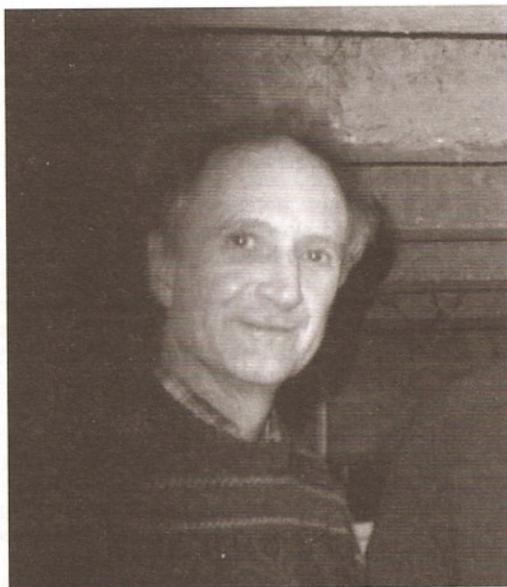


TONY HUGHES (1938 - 1999)



It came as a great shock to Fives players everywhere to hear of the sudden death last September of Tony Hughes. He had, typically, driven to Denstone to play Rugby Fives with the Derby Mercia Club that very day. Tony was never one to spare himself the slog of driving miles to play Fives, and even at 61 he relished the challenge of a hard game of singles. Alas, that evening he was taken ill in the car on the way home from Denstone and died soon afterwards.

Tony was not a mere enthusiast for all forms of Fives and Handball. He was an absolutely top class player of Eton Fives who appeared in 19 Kinnaird Cup finals over a period of 32 years and had a share in the winning of 9 of them; and he became, relatively late in life, a Rugby Fives champion as well, winning both Veterans' and Vintage Singles titles twice. He also played Irish Handball in tournaments in Ireland, Wales and Canada and was keenly interested in Basque Pelota, visiting the World Championships in France in 1994.

Tony was Birmingham born and bred. He won a scholarship to King Edward's School, where he learnt Eton Fives and doubtless absorbed the message encapsulated in the second verse of the School Song, which runs:

*Here's no place for fop or idler; they who made our City great
Feared no hardship, shirked no labour, smiled at death and conquered fate;
They who gave our school its laurels laid on us a sacred trust;
Forward therefore, live your hardest, die of service, not of rust.*

Instead of going to University after leaving King Edward's, Tony went straight into accountancy, coming out as top student in his final year. He was to spend the rest of his life working as an accountant in Birmingham, being one of only two Partners of his firm from 1975 on. He loved the work and served his clients well as a man of professional integrity with a down to earth, human approach.

Tony had married his wife Gill in September 1973, so they were able to celebrate their Silver Wedding in 1998. Gill had marked Tony's 60th birthday earlier that year with an inspired gift - a genuine Rockola juke-box which turned her husband into a near-obsessive record collector in the last 18 months of his life.

Tony Hughes brought an engaging enthusiasm to any project that interested him, in fact. A decade ago, as his 50th birthday loomed, he decided it was time to see more of the world, so he took up backpacking. This was not for Gill, so his stalwart companion was his regular Fives partner Richard Tyler. Over the next few years, always with Fives gloves in their packs, they visited such remote places as the Everest Base Camp, Northern Nigeria, Chile and Patagonia.

An intensely competitive performer on court, Tony was an unreserved supporter of all the handball games he encountered. Off court, he had great zest for life and possessed a quirky sense of humour which hinted at a less obvious side to his character. We shall miss his commitment and individuality, and the President's Cup and the Veterans' and Vintage Championships will not be the same without him.

David Barnes

(I am most grateful to the Revd Nicholas Fisher, who gave the address at Tony's funeral, for permission to use material from his address in the above tribute.)

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