

How it Started

It is important to write down the early History of the Forty-Five Club before all the original members are no more and I am greatly indebted to Mirek Kizlink who supplied me with most of these details, writes Felicity Bernstein.

The origins of the setting up were in 1964 when Mirek, aged 45 years, discovered many tournaments for senior players on the continent. After taking part in these in Germany, Italy and Swit-



Clive Bernstein & Mirek Kizlink. The two who established the 45 club

zerland, he was disappointed to find there were none in England and the one Veteran Club which did exist restricted membership to British-born players only. This excluded several strong veteran players, like former Davis Cup and Wimbledon competitors Drobny, Tloczinski, Sychala, Wittman and others - All naturalised British.

The situation was discussed with Clive Bernstein and others including Noel Berryman who was then Chairman of Queen's Club, and it was decided in 1974 to form a club open to any veterans over 45 (men) and ladies over 40. The Queen's Club generously provided the premises and Mirek invited Lord Dunboyne, President of the International Club of Great Britain, to be the first President. He kindly drafted the Articles of Association and the first Committee included Clive Bernstein, Noel Barber, Karl Ashner and Peter Forda.

It was Noel Barber who came up with the name for the club. Peter Forda was the first editor of our newsletter, a job he was ably assisted in by his wife Joan. Later on he arranged excellent foreign trips for the club with plenty of friendly tennis matches and cultural visits.

Mirek was elected as the first Chairman but sadly decided to leave England the following year to live in Monte Carlo. Clive Bernstein then took over and by popular request, remained in post for 26 years until illness ended his tennis career.

By the end of the first year the Club consisted of 27 members and included some other well known players, namely Hall Parke,

Paul Werner, Ishmael Saheekish, Ivar Boden and Stefan Laszlo. Two ladies, Maureen Berryman and Mrs. Wallace, also joined.

Four years later the Newsletter of May 1978 proudly declared: "The Club is now the biggest Veterans' Club in Great Britain with 140 active members". The rapid expansion ignored fron-



Felicity Bernstein proudly holds the trophies which commemorate her late husband's contribution to the 45 Club, especially the part he played in establishing it.

tiers, thereby giving the Club an international flavour with Honorary members in America, France, Germany, Spain etc., 17 countries in all. As a result members were encouraged to participate in tournaments and friendly matches all over the world.

These days the majority of the members play in this country with plenty of events, both social and competitive being organised on their behalf. The annual tournament for 45-Club was inaugurated on its tenth Anniversary.

The Club has scored many successes over the years but one springs to mind.

Soon after it was set up, the 45-Club, without any funding from the LTA, helped to send a team to represent Great Britain in the Austria Cup, the World Championship team event for players over 55 years. Great Britain won and the three players representing the country were ours, Drobny, Hesz and Mirek Kizlink!

Eventually the membership grew to one thousand, including overseas players. And all can be thankful that 44 years ago, thanks to the enthusiasm for the sport by a few disbarred veteran tennis players, resulted in them setting up this marvellous club in the seventies. Peter Forda's foreign holiday trips for twenty or thirty members at a time will always be remembered, a tradition now being continued and maintained by the Tomlinsons.

My dear husband Clive was devoted to encouraging and supporting the club and loved chairing it for all those years, moulding it into what it is today, a warm and friendly organisation.