



Elliot Stuart retired from Barclays in the mid-1990s and joined the Global Alumni programme last year. As well as being a speaker at the London Alumni event, 'The Power of Networks', Elliot took time out to be interviewed and share his Alumni story with us.

### **What was your first role at Barclays?**

I joined Barclays Bank in 1968, straight after studying metallurgy at Newcastle University. Why metallurgy? My dad worked in Vickers & Armstrong shipyards, on the Tyne, and he thought it would be interesting - he was wrong.

I began life in Barclays at Tottenham Court Road Computer Centre as a computer operator. I had passed the aptitude test to be a programmer, but a wise student pal, who went on to be a whizz kid at IBM, told me to have a spell in computer operations, before becoming a computer programmer. This was very sensible advice and I found the experience extremely rewarding.

My career progressed through operations, programming, systems analysis and then onto project management.

### **What did you enjoy during your time at Barclays?**

At university, I played a lot of badminton, and by the time I joined Barclays, I was on the verge of being selected to play for England. I moved to London to work, because it was easier to fly from Heathrow (regional airports barely existed then) to the many

badminton tournaments throughout Europe and the world, which I needed to compete in, to further my badminton career.

In 1969, one year into my Barclays career, I was selected to play for England. Barclays were incredibly supportive as they gave me six months a year paid leave, without contractual obligations, except to spread the name of Barclays, whenever appropriate at events across the globe.

With this support, I had a successful badminton career. A Bronze medal at the Munich Olympics in 1972, Gold and Bronze medals at Commonwealth Games in New Zealand in 1974, and World Doubles Champion in 1975. My biggest success personally was that I married the Swedish World Singles champion Eva Twedberg in 1973.

I returned back to banking and enjoyed having access to a whole range of roles available and being part of a large organisation which I found fascinating. It felt like having a multitude of jobs under the safety net of one large company.

Probably, my most rewarding 3-year role was at Ashdown Park as a Training Manager, lecturing in inter-personal skills to directors and managers of Barclays worldwide.

Teaching can be so rewarding, and when the subjects are people skills, to a receptive audience, doubly rewarding.

I also undertook many other roles in IT and the business and working with inspirational Barclaycard CEO's taught me so much about working practices and life principles.

### **What were your reasons for leaving?**

At age 50, in 1996, I took an early retirement package. I wanted to help the sport of badminton transition from its amateur status to the professional ranks. Lottery funding had arrived, and the sport was set to change. As a Performance Director for English badminton, it was an exciting transition, renewing old acquaintances from the world of elite badminton - professionalism was spreading across the world. Sad to say, English badminton has tumbled from the world-class heights of the early 70's, when there was little funding, but we had 8 world class players, Now, we are 2nd rate status with lots of money. A salutary lesson for me is at work and in life is that people give their all to be "the best they can be". Professional, paid sport seems to alter that dynamic. If you tell your best 10 boys and girls that they will have rewarding central contracts, as long as they remain in the top 10, many succumb to the money available and their aim changes from "being the best" to "not being number 11".

### **What career development and experiences did you have externally?**

Managing people and projects teaches you skills that are applicable in life and sport. I didn't realise at the time how relevant to life were the work experiences that I gained at Barclays. Time management, counselling, motivation, delegation, team leading etc. These skills are so helpful in life, and in sport.

To this day, I coach/mentor some of England's best badminton players and coaches, with the simple promise "I will help make you the best you can be. I will ensure you fulfill your potential. You will not look back at the end of your career saying "If only....."

A Barclaycard CEO, Gary Hoffman, gave me a role which I found hard as it required the skill of planning, which I didn't think was my strongest skill! However Gary guided me and showed me how to overcome shortcomings. When I joined his team, he remarked "If you can be a world champion badminton player, you can manage large projects" - he may have been right. His other 2 pointers, which he demonstrated were "the devil is in the detail" and "if you can't plan it, you certainly won't be able to do it".

### **What prompted you to stay connected to Barclays through your work as Chairman for Barclaycard Pensioners' Club?**

I retired and have been living in Portugal for the past 18 years. Being the Chairman of the Barclaycard Pensioners Club is hugely enjoyable. I have a committee of 9 dedicated retirees, who give their time and energies to ensure our 1,100 pensioner members enjoy companionship and get-togethers - subsidised lunches, coffee mornings, outings, theatre trips etc. This is all made possible by Barclays funding to support each active member. I fly into the UK 20 times a year for our monthly committee meetings and events.

The crucial thing that pensioner clubs provide is the opportunity for companionship. The event is not as important as the getting together, particularly if members are on their own.

**What do you feel an Alumni programme can offer?**

Following my experiences as Pensioner Club chairman, the Alumni programme can provide a wider circle of contacts. It enables members to join in, to meet people and enjoy a wide range of events, tailor made for the membership

**If you had to share advice to a Barclays Alumni who was considering an option to stay connected to Barclays, what would you say?**

Retirement is very appealing, at the end of a career, which will have had many ups and downs. Putting one's feet up is something we all need to do at times. However, there are opportunities in many varied roles, where you might find something that gives you a real buzz and rejuvenates and regenerates the brain cells.