

Migry Zur-Campanile – the Colour of Bridge

Migry has red hair and a big mouth. Her voice is hoarse from years of smoking and her accent a Romanian-Israeli-American cocktail. And then she always smiles – even through tears.

She grew up in Romania and moved to Israel in her late teenage years after meeting her first husband.

“I grew up by myself basically. My parents separated when I was 3. My mother lived out of town and my father was... somewhere. So I grew up with my grandmother and had the most amazing childhood till I was ten. Then she died.” We sit quiet for a while in the darkness on her balcony at the hotel in Bali.

How was your grandmother?

“She was wonderful, she was so... She was fat and lovely and just what a grandmother should be. I really had a great childhood. I am never going to blame anybody for anything that happened in my life or my childhood. I didn’t have my parents, but a lot of love and affection. I am what I am because and despite what I was.”

At the age of 14 Migry’s parents got back together and suddenly wanted to set boundaries. That did not suit the wild teenage girl, who was used to being completely independent. At some point she even ran away from home and stayed with friends – only for a week, and then she came back again.

However 14 was also the age she started to play bridge, learning from her parents.

“I played in Romania and skipped school a lot. I was kind of talented. Then I met a man, my first husband. I was 17 and a half and he had a motorcycle, which was much more interesting than the bridge. So I stopped playing bridge and I got married. Then I moved to Israel with the husband, but without the motorcycle. So there wasn’t much charm left.”



Migry divorced her husband after two years, but stayed in Israel.

“When we separated the only thing I wanted was just to be by myself and read books and have coffee and not have anyone to tell me what to do and when to do. So that is just what I did and it was great. But all of a sudden the walls became a little bit too tight and I thought: ‘What am I going to do?’ ‘I want to play bridge.’ So I went to the bridge club in Haifa and that is how it all started. I started to play and direct at the club and give some lessons. I didn’t have a great plan to become a bridge professional. But I loved it. It found me, I didn’t find it.”

She married her second husband at 29, however once again divorced after two years.

“My second husband was extremely smart, but he was never very happy or very sad. It is not who I am, although I have learnt to balance it a little bit better. When we went to the rabbi to get divorced he said ‘It seems like you still love each other.’ ‘We love each other, but we are very different.’ My husband said ‘We are like fire and water. The rabbi said ‘I can guess who is fire.’”

Third Time Lucky

10 years after meeting the second, Migry met her third husband, Pietro Campanile – this time a bridge player. He was an Italian and lived in London. In the beginning they met playing bridge online, then started to chat and email, Migry going to London, Pietro to Tel-Aviv.

“His phone bill was so big he got flowers and champagne from British Telecom. So we decided it was time to get married. I hardly knew him. We met in person in November and got married in March.”

The newlyweds had to decide where to live. Migry’s whole life was in Israel and the colorful woman was not keen on the thought of moving to London.

“London is grey. I could never live in a grey place.”

So Pietro quit London and followed Migry to Israel. To Migry’s surprise their marriage made it past the two-year limit. After some years Migry started to play a lot professionally in the US and Pietro once again followed his wife to another country.

How would your husband describe you?

She pauses a long while.

“I am not sure. But I think that he would tell you I am even better than Napoli winning the Italian football championship. He is giving me the space I need. He is extremely supportive. He sends me flowers to every tournament I go to. If I go into a room and there are no flowers, I say it is the wrong room. I make him happy and he makes me happy.”

Though I hardly know her, Migry invites me to have dinner with her and her best friend Chris Willenken, an American bridge player 15 years younger than herself. Migry makes friends in all shapes, sizes and personalities. At the restaurant she starts a conversation with a young and giggling Indonesian waitress, who soon tells Migry about her dream to have her own cookie shop and that she does not have a boyfriend now ‘But maybe tomorrow’, she giggles shyly after her gentle and successful attempt to make a joke. Chris

tells me that she always talks to strangers. On her trip to Bali she had to stay 5 days in Singapore in order to obtain a visa. When she finally got it, the people at the embassy arranged a party for her.

“I always had amazing friends. When I was 18 and left Romania I said ‘I will never have friends again.’ Then I moved to Israel and got the best friends ever. And then I moved to New York and got the best friends there. And I still keep making good friends.” She points at me.

Despite many painful years, Migry has managed to keep her spirit intact throughout her life.

“I take life in a too easy way perhaps. It is not that I am superficial. It’s like... it is just not that important. I divorced once, I divorced twice. I wanted to have a child and I didn’t have a child. I got the things that happened to me, and it is not a big tragedy. I am lucky. I really am. I have my husband and friends.”

When were you most happy?

“Pietro’s mother once told me she was happy her whole life, but didn’t know it. I realized it is not enough to be happy, you have to know you are happy. It is very hard to say when was the happiest time of my life. I think it is now actually. Life is quiet and peaceful and I have a husband that loves me whom I love a lot. I am happy, I am a bit older, I know where I am in my life.”