

Brought Back to Life

I WAS very interested to read my obituary in the January issue and grateful that your kind letter of apology brought me back to life, especially as you have provided me with the liquid means of celebrating that.

Though the obituary was dealing with an undistinguished career in first-class cricket, my report on your effort would be: 'Could do better.' I am not sure why my batting was referred to before my bowling: 144 runs from 19 matches is not very impressive.

On the other hand, I did achieve two batting distinctions in matches at Lord's. One was to make a pair, which not many people can claim to have done there, though my second dismissal was run out by a fellow tailender without receiving a ball myself.

The other was to make a quarter-century, during which massive innings I hit a Denis Compton chinaman for a six, which only failed to clear the Father Time stand by a few feet. Denis was not amused by such treatment from a number ten.

I also shared a stand of 70 with Martin Donnelly at Bristol, when Oxford were in dire straits. My contribution was two. Martin made a magnificent 117 out of 172, and Tom Goddard said he simply did not know what to bowl him next.

Until I read the obituary, I had no idea how many wickets I had taken, nor what my average was, and I am sad that I could not have made the tally of 47 wickets up to 50.

However, I am proud of the fact that I bowled the father of the Editorial Director (yes - Len Hutton) in both 1946 and 1947, and I also took the wickets of Denis Compton, Bill Edrich, Jack Ikin, Charlie Barnett, Basil Allen, Walter Robins as well as getting various other worthwhile scalps.

During my short stay in another place, I was told by St Peter that I could not be sure of re-entry, even if you were to make the obituary more colourful and impressive next time round. He seems to consider that one's behaviour, whether on the cricket field or in life generally, is more important than material or physical success.

He was very impressed with the ideals of sportsmanship, good manners and determination, and hopes that we will return to the days when we can validly describe unfair, underhand or reprehensible behaviour as 'not cricket'. I respectfully request that my next obituary will assist towards that re-entry.

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PS. St Peter bears a reasonable resemblance to Father Time.

