

**FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN DOMVILLE CONTINUES HIS REMINISCENCES
AS A MOTORING WRITER & LIFELONG GROUP FRIEND.....**

The most celebrated boxing correspondent in my time as a journalist absolutely hated the sport. In fact he hadn't a clue what was going on in the ring; so much so that he stayed in the bar. But it was either a matter of covering the fights or drawing the dole. What he did was to listen carefully to all the self-proclaimed experts as they went for a drink after the bout, ask a couple of questions while remaining incognito and then piece together the consensus.

Most journalists may know lots about one or more subjects but they cannot be experts in them all; they are trained to observe and write and not to do. The only "extra" required is to be versed in the law at least as much as a trained lawyer; if anyone sues these days we are talking "telephone numbers."

I remembered this some years ago when I had to cover for the Press Association, aka almost every national newspaper, the world squash championships without having ever having either seen or played a game. It seemed to work because there were no complaints.

Each summer, as motoring correspondent, I was invited to borrow a caravan for a few days by Harringtons of Delamere, sadly no longer operational after almost 100 years in business. I have to confess I hadn't much of an idea about caravans - and still haven't - but I accepted the original invitation, listened and then experienced - and my subsequent story was clearly good enough to earn repeat requests to write reviews over many years. I simply wrote from the heart - and, as with the squash tournament, it worked.

Whenever an open evening was held at the dealership there were invites not just for me but also my wife and children. The Harringtons management were really nice people. But then it happened; the crunch. The dealership decided to hold a brains trust and invited three of the country's leading experts in caravan design and manufacture along with the editor of a specialist magazine to form the panel. All that was needed was a chairperson...and who better than the "expert" ...me.

In the few days I had before the event I swatted up on everything to do with the technical side of caravanning - but was still prepared for the worst when I arrived at Delamere where hundreds of customers were gathering for the event.

During the course of next three hours I must have taken something like 50 questions from the audience and with some minor contributions from myself and buck-passing to my colleagues I made it through the night. If three of the experts had realised my plight they had the good grace not to mention it; so too those in the audience who spoke to me afterwards.

As I breathed a sigh of relief, thinking I had survived, I was approached by the editor of the caravanning magazine. "You made an interesting point tonight," he said, going on to mention something which I have completely forgotten and probably already had by then. "Would you like to elaborate on it in a piece for my magazine?"

At this my nerve cracked. "I would love to do that," I said, "but I really have so much on at the moment..."