

The California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame

**Induction Ceremony
to honor
Al Stewart**



**Presented at the
Dixie Belle,
Downey, California**

February 14, 1998

**California Shuffleboard
Hall of Fame
Induction Ceremony**

at the
Dixie Belle
Downey, California

Saturday, February 14, 1998

PROGRAM

Introduction
Paul Weber
Master of Ceremonies

Tributes to Al
by his friends

Presentation
Jolene Lembke
President
California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame

Acceptance by Honoree
Al Stewart

AL STEWART



THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

AL STEWART — THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

Al Meets the Puck and Falls In Love!

In 1949, Al shared an apartment in Pacific Beach with a friend, Glen Black, who invited him to La Jolla, where Al played his first game of shuffleboard, and promptly fell in love.

Back then, there were no shuffleboard leagues, no organized shuffleboard play—there were only the “shuffleboard hustlers.” Al quickly became one.

Al Gets Into the Shuffleboard Business.

He was working for an insulation company when Freddy Anderson, his shuffleboard hustler partner, broke off a key in the shuffleboard money box, and asked Al to go with him to pick up a screw lock from the American Shuffleboard Company in L.A.

While he was there, a call came in for someone to move some shuffleboards, and since he had a pickup truck, Al volunteered.

Seeing a need for someone to pick up, refinish, and deliver shuffleboards, Al quit his job, rented a building, bought sanders, spray guns, and learned by trial and error.

Al said, “The first board I refinished was for Santa Barbara, and it was so slow, you practically had to hit the weight with a golf club to get it to the other end. I did seven boards in San Diego, and had to redo every one of them because the finish peeled off.”

A&M Amusement Service Established in 1959

In December of 1959, Al, decided to go into business, doing what he enjoyed most, and started A&M Amusement Service.

Al said, “I love to get those old boards and when I get them fixed up all nice and pretty, and someone asks, ‘Is that a new board?’ that really does something to me. I’ve built up a pretty good reputation and I’m proud of that.”

Al refinishes boards in nine western states and has gone

as far as 1,700 miles to Idaho. He averages about eight re-finishing jobs a month.

Love Strikes Again!

Al fell in love again, for good, when he met Von, the girl he describes as "the sweetest thing God ever created." and on May 29, 1970, Von and Al Stewart were married.

The Stewarts Become Born-Again Christians.

After a somewhat stormy married life, because of drinking, Al and Von were on the brink of divorce, and Al's shuffleboard refinishing business was dwindling because of lack of attention.

All that changed in November of 1972, when the Stewarts found God, gave up alcohol, and became born-again Christians, "Thanks to God, who saved our marriage and our business," said Al.

Medical Problems Beset Al and Von

In April 1989 Al was loading a shuffleboard when he had an accident, broke a number of his ribs, and then pneumonia set in. While in the hospital he was worrying about a shuffleboard that needed to be delivered and set up, and a group of his friends, including Jay Kimble, Joanie Swenson, Billy Chiles, Andy Smeder, and Joe Muniz, with Jay driving Al's truck, went to A&M, loaded the shuffleboard, drove it to Escondido and then set it up. Al has never forgotten their kindness in doing this.

The next month, on Mother's Day, Von had a heart attack, and had open heart surgery with a triple bypass.

These two events combined to burden the Stewarts with staggering medical bills.

Shuffleboarders Open Their Hearts to the Stewarts

On August 26, 1989 the shuffleboarders held a tournament/benefit at the Covered Wagon in Anaheim, and the Peanut House in Bellflower for Al and Von Stewart, and presented them with a check for \$8,770 to help with the

expenses from Al's accident and Von's triple bypass surgery. The Stewarts have a copy of this check framed in their home today, and enjoy seeing this outpouring of love from all their friends..

Al and Von Honored by Shuffleboard Federation

At the Pacific Coast Shuffleboard Association's Extravaganza in Las Vegas in 1989, Al and Von were recognized for their years of distinguished service to shuffleboard with a plaque from The Shuffleboard Federation, Inc.

Al's Shuffleboards Get Into Movies, and a TV Commercial.

In 1994, when Warner Brothers movie studio was shooting *Police Academy Two*, Al rented one of his shuffleboards, which he delivered and set up in a warehouse in downtown Los Angeles, to be used as a prop in a bar scene.

Another of Al's shuffleboards starred in an O'Douls commercial. Al and Von were invited to watch the filming, and enjoyed it very much.

Al Talks About Shuffleboard in Particular and Life in General

"Shuffleboard has certainly changed since 1949, when every shuffleboarder was a hustler, and out only for money, not just for the fun of the game. It was a dog eat dog business. Now, the shuffleboarders are like one big family. The tournaments are like family reunions, with all the hugging and handshaking. It has become much more sportsmanlike.

"My philosophy is, if you're good to people, they'll be good to you. You get back just what you give out!"

Al's Induction Into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Today, February 14, 1998 is a red letter day for Al, who will be inducted into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, surrounded by long-time friends and well-wishers.

Words from Al's Friends . . .

Al Stewart—four words—Honesty, Integrity, Dedication and Loyalty. —*Paul Weber*

There is no man more deserving of induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. His contributions have made shuffleboard in California possible. —*John J. Fisher*

Al, it's been a pleasure knowing you over the years. You are a true friend, and you are very, very special to shuffleboarders. —*Jay Kimble*

Compared to Al, I've only been involved with shuffleboard a short time, but I've helped move my share of boards. One thing I guarantee you, when it comes to moving and setting up shuffleboards, Al, "You're the man!" —*Paul Elliott*

One of the greatest contributors to shuffleboard in California has been Al Stewart. He gives his time tirelessly to promote the game. —*Rich Warren*

When the name Al Stewart is mentioned to most of us, it means *SHUFFLEBOARD*. —*Jim Anderson*

Al, it's a pleasure to know you. You're honest, kind and giving. You have done so much for our game, both as a person and a distributor. —*Gregg McFarland*

You're a great guy, Al. —*Jack Eichar*
P.S. But I can still beat you at shuffleboard!

Al Stewart makes deals with a handshake, and never lets you down. His word is his bond. There is no better than this. —*Debbie Merhoff and Steve Budrys of the Dixie Belle*

Al has been the backbone of shuffleboard for many years. Words alone cannot express our love for Al and all that he's done.

—*Joanie Swenson*

Al is the most devoted, hardest working shuffleboard fan-player that I know. If there is work to be done or help needed concerning our game, Al is the one that people turn to and can count on.

—*Darrol Nelson*

It is an experience to see Al adjust a board. A tweak here—a twitch there—and you have a board that's a delight to play on.

—*Chris Brown*

Al's knowledge and expertise in refinishing and settling shuffleboards is legend. We all appreciate Al's boards here in Arizona.

—*Bob Lewis,*
Playfair Shuffleboard Co., Phoenix, AZ

Al, thanks for all the great service over the years. You are a true Hall of Famer!

—*John McGinnis*

If anybody deserves induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, it is our good friend, Al Stewart.

—*Dennis "Sparky" Sparkman*
Chuck Norris
Jim Allis

We were amazed that Al moved boards and set them up with no help. He would adjust the board by throwing a few weights—never using a straightedge, level, or any other device—a true craftsman.

—*Bob and Anna Brunskill*

Al, you never shy away from a problem and always lend a hand when needed. You're always there with your expertise and advice. If not for dedicated people like you, the World of Shuffleboard would not be thriving today. Congratulations on an honor well earned. You're the greatest!

—*Dave Brennan*

Al, you're one of shuffleboard's true pioneers. Your experience and knowledge of boards can never be replaced. Thank you for your support to the wonderful sport of shuffleboard and congratulations on being the first inductee into the CSHF.

—*Jim Martin*

Al has earned the distinction of being the first inductee into the California State Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. Without Al's influence, there wouldn't be the number of shuffleboard players and establishments there are today in our state.

—*Karl Spickelmier*

Al Stewart is synonymous with California Shuffleboard. No one in the state has done more to promote, preserve and maintain the integrity of the game more than Al. His loyalty to our sport is unquestioned and admired. We are lucky to have a man so dedicated. His induction to the State Hall of Fame was inevitable, and I'm proud to lend my support. Thanks, Al!

—*Steve Perry*

Where would the world of shuffleboard be without Al Stewart? Al's generosity, honesty and integrity, both personal and in business are an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Al for your countless invaluable contributions to the world of shuffleboard.

—*Louise Freer*

Al has always been there when you needed him—to sit and talk with anyone, to make you laugh when you're sad, and most of all to be your friend. Al's values, responsibilities and priorities are all in order, and how many of us can say this about ourselves. If I could be reincarnated, in my next life, I want to come back and have a father just like Al.

—*Freddie & Lois Thuman*

The people who own Al Stewart boards have something in common—a tremendous amount of respect for both the craftsmanship that went into their equipment, and for the man who stands behind us. For his friendship and support, particularly in the early years when we were struggling, we shall always be grateful.

—*Phil Skover & John McDermott*
The Shuffleboard Federation, Inc.

ROBERT M. HUNT

380 Cedar River Way
Sacramento, CA 95831

January 29, 1998

California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame
P.O. Box 8143
Bellflower, CA 90706

It has been my pleasure to have known Al Stewart for over thirty years. I have known him as a player, sponsor, supporter and distributor of shuffleboard supplies and equipment.

In addition to having performed well in all of his endeavors, he has always been a very personable gentlemen. He always goes out of his way to say hello at various tournaments and always makes me feel that he is on my side, even when I'm playing one of his best friends—I think he wants everybody to win.

I have enjoyed playing on boards he puts together. His commitment to producing a great board is evident in the workmanship and unique character of each individual board. I look forward to playing on them for many years to come.

Congratulations to Al for being the first inductee into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. It's a well-deserved honor to one who has done so much for the game. I wish him continued good luck and success in the future.

Sincerely,

Bob Hunt

P.S.: As a member of the Board of Directors of the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, I'm clearly looking forward to supporting his future nomination and induction into the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame as the players across the country acknowledge his many years of dedication to the game of Shuffleboard.

A Tribute to Al Stewart

*From George & Donna Wilber
The Board Talk*

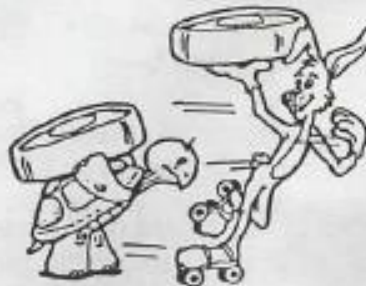
With much enthusiasm and heartfelt emotions, we endorse the nomination of Al Stewart to the Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Our first contact with Al was during our first, struggling year of publication. In September of 1984, just when we were wondering how we could scrape up the resources to send out our next issue, here came a paid-in-advance order for two full-page ads! Not only did it pay for our next couple issues, it served as a "show of faith" that somebody as important as Al Stewart thought we were worthy of support. That following December, after a telephone interview which "bonded" us with the Stewarts, we printed the story of Al's 25 years of service to shuffleboard.

That was 14 years ago and during that period of time, our friendship with, and respect for, the Stewarts have grown and grown. Many times, over lengthy phone calls, Al "talked" George through the refinishing of boards when he was first starting in that business. The few precious times when we have been in their area of the world, they have opened their home and hearts to us.

Most of all, throughout the difficult years, we could feel the power of their prayers seeing us through. We were not alone in our respect for Al's work. Many times, we have received letters that said: "Al does more than simply refinish boards. He cares!"

Al and Von are role models for us. God willing, and with some work on our part, we will share a special place in Shuffleboard Heaven with them.



PLAYFAIR SHUFFLEBOARD CO., INC.

Phoenix, AZ

I would like to congratulate Al Stewart on his induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Al's knowledge and expertise in finishing and setting shuffleboards is legend. We all appreciate Al Stewart's boards in Arizona.

Al Stewart was and is always willing to share his knowledge and experience on any question I put to him. For this I am grateful.

Many Happy Returns, Al and Von.

Sincerely, **Bob Lewis**

The Shuffleboard Federation, Inc.

Northville, MI

Anyone who is familiar with Al Stewart's ad in The Board Talk may recall that it states, "For Experience, Integrity and Care — You Can't Beat Al Stewart." This is no mere advertising slogan, it's who Al Stewart is.

Being in the shuffleboard business, one of the things we do whenever we pick up a new customer is to ask them about their shuffleboard table. Over the years, we have found Al's boards in places like Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming and of course all over the West Coast. The people who own these Al Stewart boards have something else in common, a tremendous amount of respect for both the craftsmanship that went into their equipment and the man who stands behind it.

On a personal note, Al was one of the first people to give us a chance when we first entered the supply business. It is a relationship that has blossomed over the years. For his friendship and support, particularly in the early years when we were struggling, we shall always be grateful.

Congratulations on being the first member of the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Phil Skover & John McDermott

Louise Freer

**What would the world of shuffleboard be
without Al Stewart???**

Being from the East Coast, I didn't have a great deal of opportunity to know Al very well until I started traveling to other parts of the country, but I had heard of his many accomplishments from other people, and read of him in *The Board Talk*.

The first time I saw Al was at one of the big national tournaments. I had wandered into the ballroom before the tournament began and, lo and behold, there was Al and a number of other people setting up boards. It was a fascinating, behind-the-scenes view of just how much time, effort, and sweat was involved in setting up the dozen-plus boards. It's a lot of work!

All the effort and hard work in delivering and setting up boards and running tournaments is often not appreciated by the shuffleboard playing public. This has not stopped Al from being a major contributor, supporter and promoter in his many years of service to the world of shuffleboard despite personal and business hardships that would have deterred anyone else.

I am thankful to say that I have had many occasions since that tournament to be a first-hand witness to Al's dedication, hard work and generosity to the world of shuffleboard. It is an honor to add my small voice to the many others in recognizing his invaluable and irreplaceable efforts that have helped, in no small measure, to make the game what it is today.

Al's honesty, integrity, both personal and in business, and his generosity are an inspiration to all of us. His induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame is a recognition that is certainly in order . . . in fact, it is absolutely necessary!

Congratulations Al, and thank you for your countless invaluable contributions to the world of shuffleboard.

Louise

When we first started playing shuffleboard in California, we met one of the true gentlemen of shuffleboard. Whether he was installing boards or adjusting them, or all the other things he did to stay busy all the time, he always had time to shake hands, say "Hello," or answer all of our dumb questions.

We never knew him when he played shuffleboard, but all of the tournaments with which we were involved, Las Vegas, Temecula, Dixie Belle, just to name a few, could never have been successful without him. He worked harder and made it look easier, and did it faster than all of us put together. We are probably responsible for more of his fingers being smashed than he is.

Without this man's work and dedication, shuffleboard, especially tournaments, as we enjoy it now, would not be.

If anybody deserves induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, it is our good friend, Al Stewart.

Thanks, Al, for everything!

Dennis "Sparky" Sparkman, Jim Allis, Chuck Norris

I have known Al about 30 years. He has been a friend to the world of Shuffleboard just as long. When I held my board tournaments at The Best Little Warehouse for seven years, Al was always ready to find boards for the event for me. He refinished several boards for me and always did a good job and gave excellent service also.

Back in the early 70's when I had just left Santa Anita with \$20.00 and stopped off at the Rendevous watering hole on Colorado Boulevard and tried to make up some of my losses on the boards. New owners had taken over and the place was empty. The owner was behind the bar, and told me they were making some changes and getting rid of all the games. I asked him how much for the shuffleboard. His comment was, "You got \$150.00." I almost fainted. I gave him \$10.00 down and told him I'd be back in a day or two. I called Al that night and we were there the next day to take the board out.

You see, Al hrdly ever needed any help, but the bar used to be a house which was converted into a bar, so we both had to dippy-doodle the board through the hallways and the window.

Great job, Al. Thanks for everything, Al, through all the years.

Ted Z.

BOB & ANNA BRUNSKILL

I first met Al when I bought a refurbished shuffleboard from him in 1982 for The Shelter. It was bought because my bar customers were starting to go to another place that had a shuffleboard. I was amazed that Al wanted to move the board into the bar without any help. He would adjust the board by throwing a few weights—never using a straightedge, level, or any other device.

One story he told was of setting up a board in a bar only to have the owner complain that it was too straight and he wouldn't have an edge over the other players. The owner then grabbed the board and gave it a jerk which skewed the playing field and declared, "That's better. Now I can win."

He always had some interesting stories to tell about the good old days when he would deliver a board on a Friday afternoon and get stuck in the place playing money games until Sunday night. That was before he gave up drfinking. I have seen him play since then, and he always claims that he gets too nervous without a drink. I have always admired his ability to continue to not drink even though it meant giving up shuffleboard.

Al helped refinish my cousin's shuffleboard and getting it set up in time for a big tournament at The Shelter in December of 1983. The board remained there until I sold the bar in 1986 and he helped me move it back to my cousin's ranch in Chino. This board was known as the "board with character," "the snake," and other nice names.

We had Al move a board we bought from The Trails in Fullerton to The New Oak in La Habra. The New Oak belonged to Anna's son and Al did his usual superb job of getting it moved in and set up. He can always be counted on to adjust his schedules to accommodate everyone involved.

Al had other stories to tell. One of my favorites was about a tournament promoter that paid Al to gather up some boards from some local bars and set them up for a tournament. When the tournament was over, he was told to return the boards and "dump 'em in the bars," since Al wasn't going to get paid to set them up again. Al returned them to the bars and set them up since he felt that his reputation was more valuable than the loss of revenue. This was the approach he always took in any of his business dealings.

Al was always ready to learn. When the boards in Las Vegas developed high centers, he used the Texas cure—flip the boards over and put wet towels on the underside—to straighten them out. He talked about installing spray nozzles on the boards.

Bob and Anna Brunskill

Freddie & Lois Thuman

This is an honor for me to be able to say something regarding Al Stewart's induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. It's hard to put into only a few words or paragraphs my opinion of what this man has done for the game of shuffleboard, and the influence he has had on my life, as well as others.

To know Al Stewart has been one of life's great pleasures for Lois and me. To work with him has really given me an insight into his love for the game and the people involved in it. Most testimonials or tributes would include tourneys won, travels around while playing, and different experiences shared with those in the game. I feel that people need to know the Al Stewart I know. This also includes his lovely wife Vonnie. She is definitely a gracious loving and giving person.

Through the years I've watched Al demonstrate to us players his dedication to making the game of shuffleboard right for us. He has done this for years, without an ounce of regret. To me, money wasn't the issue with him. It was doing things to make the players happy.

He has given of his time, money and knowledge to help us enjoy the game. He would get up at 1:00 in the morning to fix a scoreboard in Vegas, just to finish one game. He would sit and watch for ten or twelve hours at a time to make sure all was well. He would hear all the gripes, complaints and not bat an eye but instead, he worked harder to please those people.

Al has gone through hard times, and never gave up, just worked harder and relied on his faith, which he knows is the answer. He is always there when you need him—to sit and talk with you, to make you laugh when you were sad, and most of all, he is your friend.

He is a living example of what we all should be like. We can look at him and say, "This is how it is done." His values, responsibilities and priorities are all in order. How many of us can say this about ourselves. If I could be reincarnated, I would come back with a father just like Al.

It is something else again, to be honored by your peers, so please enjoy, Al, and congratulations. I wish we were closer so as to share more often with you the famous cup of coffee. You and Vonnie will always have that special place in our hearts. God speed and God bless!

Always your friends,
Freddie and Lois