

**The California  
Shuffleboard Hall of Fame**

**Induction Ceremony**

**to honor**

**Bellflower Bruce  
Hale**



**Presented at**

**Oskar's**

**Bellflower, California**

**April 18, 1998**

## **"Bellflower" Bruce Hale**



**THIS IS YOUR LIFE!**

## BRUCE HALE — This Is Your Life!

Gertrude Stein said, "A rose is a rose is a rose!" But poor Gertrude had never met Bellflower Bruce. A rose from *Bruce* is a *special* flower.

This gentleman we know as Bruce was born in York, a tiny town on the extreme southern tip of Maine, which, even now has only 16,000 inhabitants. He went to a one-room schoolhouse which taught grades 1 through 9, and had only 13 students. He was fortunate enough to have a retired Harvard professor teaching him through seventh grade. Regarding his schooling, Bruce says, "I graduated in the top 30 of my class of 31."

After high school, he attended Northeastern University in Boston. When General Electric offered students a program combining work and school, he jumped at the chance, and attended the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

On February 7, 1959, in a blinding snowstorm, with a mere \$35 in his pocket, Bruce stood on a street corner and hitched a ride west, heading for California. His first ride lasted as far as Decatur, Illinois, where he had a room at the YMCA, for \$2 a night.

He hit the road again, all his earthly possessions in a small suitcase with a sign on it proclaiming, "California or Bust." He was picked up by two girls, who drove him to Tucson. Continuing on his journey through California, he was picked up by a State Highway Patrolman, who, after checking him out at the station to make sure he wasn't an escaped axe-murderer, compassionately offered to drive him to the scenic part of downtown Los Angeles, affectionately known as Skid Row, where he dropped Bruce at the Greyhound Bus Station.

Bruce went to the coffee shop across the street, and began searching the want ads for a job. Having no money for housing, our resourceful Bruce built his own castle, in a blind alley behind the coffee shop, using boxes of wood and filling in with cardboard. He showered with a garden hose, also in the alley. When asked if he wasn't cold, since it was February, he said it felt like a tropical paradise after the 10° weather in snow-bound Boston.

He immediately found work, and walked seven miles each

way to his job across town. After a week, he received his first paycheck, which was for \$86. Needing desperately to cash it, and finding no place open at eight o'clock at night, he went to the cashier at Union Station. She asked to see his California Driver's License, and of course he had one from Massachusetts. She asked if he had any utility bills with his address, or any other form of I.D., which of course, living in his cardboard castle, he didn't. Seeing his crestfallen face, the cashier finally said, "Do you have a Social Security card?" He immediately produced one, and she cashed his check.

After subsisting for two years on peanut butter and crackers, Bruce couldn't resist going to one of the fanciest hotels downtown, and treating himself to a huge steak dinner, which cost him a grand total of eleven dollars.

With his engineering background, North American Aviation made him an offer to work for them for 6 months, and he would receive a bonus of \$800, and he did.

Shuffleboard has had an effect on many facets of Bruce's life. When he came home after playing shuffleboard till 3:00 in the morning, to face his bride of three months, she indignantly said, "It's Shuffleboard or me. Take your choice." Knowing Bruce, need you ask the score of that game? Wife: 3 months, Shuffleboard: 42 years.

In 1960, Bruce was drafted into the Army and was introduced into the fun things of life, such as beer and cigarettes, and he continued his love affair with shuffleboard. His tour of duty was extended because of the Berlin and the Cuban crisis, so his career in the army lasted 25 months, 13 days, 7 hours, and 11 minutes.

Bruce credits the Army with making him the man he is today. The discipline he learned in those 25 plus months has served him well throughout his life.

Bruce founded Newport Plastics in 1968, and became sole owner some 18 years later.. The company specializes in injection molding and the myriad of other associated fields.

If you have ever played shuffleboard, used cosmetics, or bought your kids a Happy Meal from Mickey D's, you have undoubtedly used some of Bruce's products. He makes caps for shuffleboard weights, containers and caps for well-known perfumers and cosmetics companies, and McDonald's giveaways for kids, in addition to all the rest

of his products.

In desperation, after nine burglaries in three years at Bruce's company, he got "Cheetos," a huge Australian Sheep Dog, which he describes as being yellow in color, and has not had a burglary since. Cheetos is fierce enough to scare off all unwanted intruders, yet loving enough to be Bruce's "baby."

Although his business has been plastics for the past 30 years, this man is truly made of precious metal. He not only has a heart of gold, but also has a silver tongue, never failing to compliment those around him, particularly newcomers who make a good shot.

At the Shuffleboard Tournament in Phoenix, this thoughtful gentleman, who, self-admittedly, has always like the ladies, had the idea to present each lady there with a flower from "Bellflower Bruce." This made such a big hit with all the females, he has continued the tradition. And at Al Stewart's CSHF induction at the tournament on Valentines Day, he added to this with heart-shaped boxes of See's candy, winning the hearts of all the ladies.

Bruce has had a varied career—machinist, maintenance man, soldier, gold prospector, foreman, tool maker, designer, general manager, and company owner. He has faced overwhelming obstacles, many with health, and has come through with flying colors, maintaining a positive attitude the whole time.

Our Bruce has never backed down from a challenge, whether in shuffleboard, or in dealing with his health. He has handled diabetes, and Hodgkin's lymphoma, and has never lost his unfailing good humor. And he has continued having fun with, and helping his "shuffleboard family."

The only boast ever heard from Bruce is, "I've played against all the major players in the country, and I've never beaten one of them."

**You've come a long way, baby!**

**We love you, Bruce, and we couldn't  
be more proud of you!**

*The Board Talk Report on*  
**PCSA's Extravaganza III, Las Vegas, 1991:**  
**Bellflower Bruce: A Generous Gentleman**

Take any ordinary shuffleboard tournament and add one ingredient—Bellflower Bruce Hale—and it becomes extraordinary. We'd heard the name, but it wasn't until March of 1988 that we got to meet him. It was at the 1st Great Arizona Open, staged at the Dunes II in Phoenix, a shuffleboard bar like many of us play in for league action or open games. Compared to the PCSA Shuffleboard Extravaganza III in the huge ballroom at the Showboat in Las Vegas, it was an ordinary tournament—until roses were delivered to every lady in the house—courtesy of Bellflower Bruce.

Since then, we've recorded many instances of how the generosity of this one gentleman has turned the ordinary into the extraordinary. What's the motivation behind the gallant gestures of this modest, generous man? We tried to find out during the tournament that now featured the first Bellflower Bruce Mixed Doubles event (he made a generous contribution to the pot).

Bruce first became acquainted with the game in 1957 when he was in Boston, Massachusetts, going to college and working, and dropping in occasionally at a bar where there was a shuffleboard. He was "mildly interested" and when he returned to California in 1959, he found there were others in Long Beach and Bellflower who shared that interest.

One night in 1964, he challenged the board and was told by his intimidating opponent that his name was "Long Beach Jerry," to which Bruce responded, "Well, I'm Bellflower Bruce." Hence his shuffleboard name was born and the two opponents became best friends.

For the past 23 years, Bruce has operated his Newport Plastics company which specializes in molded plastic products, including shuffleboard caps (you can order them in your own color and design. He's a very successful businessman and he shares the fruits of his labors to make shuffleboard a sport that will grow in the years to come.

"I love the game and the people who play it. I've never met a player I haven't liked, as long as he (or she) doesn't beat me too badly. It's a game of skill, but most of all, it's a sport of camaraderie. They are such great people, always ready to help one another. Today, it's like a national fraternity."

Bruce thinks the major changes he's seen over the years are the level of competition and the quality of the game. The change from 21 to 15 points was a major breakthrough, he believes, but the one big change for the sport, he generously points out, is The Board Talk.

"Without The Board Talk—and I want you to print this—this game would have died. We wouldn't be holding this tournament with its great participation without the efforts of George and Donna," he said.

What of the future? Bruce fully supports the neighborhood bars like the ones where he started and the leagues that keep bringing new blood into the game, but he strongly believes that major tournaments, such as those the PCSA and The Shuffleboard Federation stage, must be held in hotels and resorts that provide family entertainment. Places that have easy access to attractions for members who don't play will keep shuffleboard a family affair, he maintains.

Bruce was pleased when the PCSA and The Shuffleboard Federation shared the podium to hand out plaques and money envelopes for Extravaganza III and The Federation's top players of 1990. "It's going to take all of us working together toward a common goal to ensure the future of the sport we all love," he said.

Bruce didn't collect any of the PCSA Extravaganza III trophies, nor did he hop up to the podium to accept the money envelopes for The Federation's top players of the year. But there was no person in that huge audience who could say to themselves with more sincerity, "This sport will be better tomorrow because I gave more to it than I took from it." Bruce, of course, wouldn't think of saying that. He's much too modest. So, on behalf of the hundreds of people in The World of Shuffleboard who have been touched in some way by his generosity, we'll say it for him.

—George and Donna Wilbur

*The Board Talk*  
**speaks out about Bruce**  
**April, 1998**

We wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Bellflower Bruce Hale for induction into the Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

To us, he exemplifies the “heart” of our World of Shuffleboard and we know of no other single individual who is more deserving to be recognized for his contributions to the sport and those involved in it. Many of those contributions will likely remain unknown because he is such a quiet, unassuming person who never seeks the spotlight and that makes him all the more special.

Bruce was an early supporter of the fledgling (and struggling) Board Talk. In 1986, he showed his support not only with his subscription, but with a listing in our (then) new Shuffleboard Directory.

We first had the opportunity to meet this supporter at the 1st GreatArizona Open in 1988 at Dunes II in Phoenix. Imagine the excitement, wonderment—and puzzlement—when each of the women at that thournament received a rose!

Who was this man who had done something that had never been done in shuffleboard history? None other than Bellflower Bruce Hale. He repeated this simple act of kindness and respect at the Michign Open in 1991 and the reaction of the distaff side of our World of Shuffleboard was the same.



But it has been much, much more than flowers for the ladies that our dear Bruce has contributed. There have been few, if any, benefits for those in our Shuffleboard World who have suffered misfortunes that haven't had a generous "seed" from Bruce to build a fund to help them rebuild their lives. that "unknown" will always be remembered and appreciated by those who were the recipients of his generosity. In addition, he has done much to support the growth of shuffleboard at both the local and national levels.

Personally, it has been Bellflower Bruce who made it possible for us to attend, and cover many of the national events throughout the years. Without his generosity to us, finances would have dictated that we stay at home and wait for the reports and photos of those events instead of being "on the scene" ourselves. Even more personally, he serves as a role model for all of us who have battled cancer, with his courage and fortitude and evidently successful battle against the dreaded disease.

We love and admire him. To us, he's been in the Hall of Fame even before there was one, and sets tandards that we all should strive to achieve.

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse his induction

*The Board Talk*

*George and Donna Wilbur*

## Comments from Bruce's Friends

As Principal Nominator, I'm proud to say that Bellflower Bruce is very deserving of induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Not only is he a great player, but he's a friend to all of us. He's always encouraged me, and all the other new players to keep trying to improve our game and never give up.

But far beyond that, for the few years I've known him, he's been supportive of Shuffleboard, not just as a player, but with his generosity, any time, anywhere.

It's an honor and a pleasure to know you, Bruce Hale, and I'm sure those that have known you much longer than I have feel the same about you. I love you, my friend.

—*Jan Manes*

No one can say enough about Bruce's generosity towards the Shuffleboard World. He is always there when someone needs help.

And he is generous with his help toward beginning players. Bruce is always the first person to make you feel welcome when you begin playing shuffleboard. If you should lag decently or make a good shot, you can count on Bruce being the first person on his feet cheering. Bruce is truly one of a kind.

—*Chris Brown*

Bruce is a player and a promoter of shuffleboard, but most of all, he is a great humanitarian. Thank you, "Flower," or Bellflower Bruce Hale, for being a part of us

—*Jim Anderson*

Congratulations to Bellflower Bruce Hale, on his induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of fame. He is a true gentleman, and very deserving of such an award.

—*Ted Z*

We're proud of you, Bruce, for your graduation into the CSHA. To me, you overcame one of the most serious problems anyone could have. It took a man of your caliber to come through. It is a privilege to call you "friend." Love you, buddy!

—*Bill Duncan*

To all who know "Bellflower" Bruce, which probably is half of Southern California, they know him as a dedicated, hard working, giving man.

For me personally, I've known Bruce for years. In that time I've had the pleasure of watching a selfless man have nothing but joy in giving and helping other people: giving to the game of shuffleboard his time when it was needed, and giving to players in need, with no questions asked. This I can attest to.

The hard times he has gone through in his life of late, did not hinder him from still reaching out to help others. the roses he has forever been giving the ladies at tournaments, is just a small symbol of what this man is, within. We should all strive to be like him. Bruce, it's our pleasure to know you, and our most sincere congratulations to you in your induction to the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Always your friends,—*Freddie and Lois Thumann*

I remember first meeting Bruce at the Tustin Inn. He was wearing jeans with bright red suspenders. I liked this man the minute we were introduced. Shortly after that, I started playing at Amoto's in Huntington Beach, and Bellflower Bruce was always there, wanting to jack it up. I always enjoy drawing Bruce as a partner because he is the only shooter I know who will go around more pucks than me. But he has gone around more than just pucks during his life. He truly impressed me the way he turned the corner in his bout with cancer. It's not easy for a person to run the business he owns and cope with a life-threatening disease as this man did. Congratulations, Bellflower! You deserve this moment. Thanks for all your support and the many contributions you have made over the years to the great sport of shuffleboard.

Keep on turning those corners and let's get the Men's Club going again.

—*Jim "The Marlin" Man, SMR*

A tribute to a kind gentleman and generous friend of many throughout the shuffleboard community, "Bellflower" Bruce Hale. A very worthy member of the California Hall of Fame.

We'd like to congratulate Bruce, and all those who have made it happen. We hope to see you soon. Sincerely,

—*Doug and Marilyn Buhl*

Congratulations, Bruce, and thank you for all you have done for all of us. You are Number 1 on my automatic dial!

—*Mary Lou Deering*

*To the "Bell-Man":* Congrats on your Hall of Fame induction. You are truly in the top 1% of people who have contributed greatly to our sport.

Let me count the ways:

1. Running a full bar (comp) out of the trunk of your Mercedes at all tournaments. (Just because you now abstain doesn't mean you have to quit this practice!)
2. Buying flowers and candy for all the girls.
3. Passing weights at *EVERY* opportunity.

You get the idea . . . it's been a privilege and a pleasure knowing you the past 15 years. Hope we'll play together another 15.

Your bud—*John McGinnis*

I can think of no one more deserving of Hall of Fame status than Bruce Hale who has done so much to promote the game we all love. He has been an avid supporter of The Board Talk, without which the game would not be as popular and as well organized as it is today. Bruce is a great motivator. Personally he has always encouraged me to be the best I can be. At times when some of us have needed moral or financial support, Bruce has been there. The best part is, Bruce is just a wonderful person and I'm so happy to know him and be able to call him my friend.

Congratulations Bruce—don't ever change.

—*Ruthie Miles*

Bruce's never-ending generosity to the game and the players is unequalled. He is kind when it comes to new players and a great competitor for the pros. Whenever he sees a need, he is always willing to lend a helping hand. His integrity is exemplary and he is a fine example of the type of people that have become shuffleboard players.

—*Debbie Merhoff*

Bruce Hale is one of a kind. He's the most thoughtful and generous man I've ever known, and it doesn't matter if it's shuffleboard or not. To me, that's what it should mean to be in the Hall of Fame.

—*Michele Lamo*

Bruce has been a positive influence in all the tournaments I have personally been involved with, starting in 1984 at the Palm Tavern in Springfield, Oregon, where I first met him and continued to my present endeavors at the Silver Spur in San Bernardino. He is a true friend, a good player, and a great promoter of Shuffleboard.

—*Jolene Lembke*

I believe inductees should be people of honor, strength of character, etc., both in and out of the shuffleboard arena, and Bruce Hale definitely fits into this category. The enthusiasm Bruce has for the game, of course, but more importantly for his generous support of many different worthy causes and benefits—be they shuffleboard related or not.

—*Bill Maxwell*

Shuffleboard Enthusiasts, please join me in congratulating Bellflower Bruce for his induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. His unprecedented generosity as a player and a sponsor has been a remarkable contribution for the game and its growth. His list of good deeds through the years has been unparalleled. In my thirty-eight years of involvement, I have never known anyone to be more deserving of this award.

I could not be happier for you, Bruce. Thanks to the committee for bestowing this wonderful honor to one of the best persons in any state, for the great game of shuffleboard.

—*Hal Perry*

Congratulations to Bruce on his California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame induction. I first met "Bellflower" in Temecula. There, as has become his trademark, he was giving flowers to all of the ladies—Vickie was very appreciative. It has been a pleasure to know him. good guy, good player—a credit to the World of Shuffleboard. Also, he manufactures the best weight tops in the business!

—*Bob and Vickie Hunt, R&H Financial Services*

Sincere congratulations to Bellflower Bruce Hale on his induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. No one is more deserving. His love of the game and his generosity are unmatched.

—*Paul Weber*

To know Bellflower Bruce is to know someone who has a child-like enthusiasm and love of shuffleboard and shuffleboard's extended family & friends. His support and promotion of tournaments, meat shoots, fund raisers and benefits speaks for itself. Congratulations, and God bless you, Bruce.

—*Tim O'Brien*