



THE CALIFORNIA SHUFFLEBOARD HALL
OF FAME

Induction Ceremony Honoring

GEORGE CAMARA

Presented at

133 Club
Manteca, California
May 27, 2006

GEORGE CAMARA

George Camara was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts – the “Whaling Capital of the World,” in 1938. His father passed away when he was very young so George along with his mother, brother and sister took a Greyhound bus all the way to Manteca, California to move near George’s uncle.

After a couple of years, George’s mother remarried and the family moved to nearby Stockton, California. George went to Edison High School and played baseball. His folks owned a bar in Stockton on El Dorado and 4th St. Later, they bought an old Safeway store on Charter Way and Sutter St. and turned it into a bar. The place was called “Tony’s” and it had two shuffleboard tables.

George joined the Marines at the age of seventeen, and served for two years. Afterwards, he attended Stockton Junior College for another two years. He then went to work for Beneficial Finance and was all set to be transferred to New Orleans as a Finance Officer. Fate stepped in and changed his plans when his stepfather became ill and then died. At 21 years of age, George became a bartender at the family’s bar. He continued to bartend there and then at various other bars for the next 35 years.

SHUFFLEBOARD – THE EARLY YEARS

George’s brother Ernie taught him how to play shuffleboard. Clyde Martin taught him how to shoot a Jersey. George says,

“There were about 14 regular players in the area then. If you rated them by today’s standards, there were two –1’s and the rest were + 0’s and – 0’s.”

George went over to the Hi Lo Club in Stockton and watched Bobby Miles and Pat Stagno play a session. “I sat on that bar stool for 36 hours and watched the best left hand I ever saw.” George says the boards were a lot different then, there was no lacquer on them. “You would wax the board one time and the wax would stick to the grooves in the bare wood and last all day.” The boards were very straight also, “You wouldn’t even shoot at a two, just out-lag it.”

George got married at the age of 21. He began going out to play shuffleboard so often that his wife said, “It’s either me or shuffleboard.” George answered “Goodbye.”

LITTLE GEORGE

George would open the bar at 8 a.m. and then practice on the shuffleboards until about 10 a.m. when the clients would start coming in. He says, “By the time I was 22, I could beat anyone on my boards. Everyone coming through California stopped there.” He picked up the nickname “Little George.” Some of the players that came through then were Raggedy Don, Glen Young, Bob Miles, Billy Mays, Fred Thuman, Joe Hudson, Rod Cameron, Glen Davidson, Ronnie Graham, Frisco Gene, Granville Humphrey, Bill Van and Bill Moore.

FAVORITE STORIES

One day, Bob Perry from Illinois walked in and announced, "I'll play anybody in the house for \$100 except Little George." George and Bob had never met, so apparently George's reputation had preceded him. George said, "I'll play." Bob asked, "What's your name?" George answered, "Ernie." Six hours later George had won \$1200 when his brother Ernie walked into the bar. Someone yelled, "Hi Ernie!" Bob looked at Ernie, then turned to George, "You son-of-a-bitch!"

Tommy Tucker, a player from Oklahoma decided to play George \$20 a game one day. George won the first game and Tommy paid him. George won the second game and Tommy pulled a gun on him, "I ain't paying ya." And, he didn't.

The longest session George was ever involved in was in Stockton over a Labor Day weekend. He played from noon Friday until noon Monday. He was in the middle of a game with Jack Wilson who suddenly conceded. "Take the money George," Jack said. "When I see elephants run down the table, it's time to quit."

Another player that would stop in to play at Tony's was Hal Perry. They would play on Saturdays for hours. "Most of the time I would beat Hal, and then take him to breakfast. When I first met him, both of us weighed 135 lbs." A few pounds and several years later, they are good friends.

Hal started taking George on road trips. The first was to the Liberty Club in San Jose where he met Pee Wee Ramos,

George Sears, Micky Gomes and Tom Beem. Hal also took him to Bill Jennings' place, the "Happy Hour" in San Jose and to Visalia.

Glen Davidson took George on the road to Oregon, to bars in Roseburg, Portland and on to Coos Bay where he got into his first and last shuffleboard fight – another case of someone not happy about losing to George.

STOCKTON GEORGE

George continued to play until he was 26. He got married again, and players were starting to play tournaments in Marysville. George loved session play and had no interest in tournaments at that time. He didn't pick up a weight for the next 25 years.

In 1992, George met Andy Brorsen who was also living in the Stockton area. Andy sold George a set of American weights, which he still uses today. He went to the Reno tournament that year and was amazed by the "plastic boards." He wasn't familiar with today's boards and style of play.

"I couldn't shoot a lick on those damn things. I didn't have a thumb shot or a spread shot or any kind of a passing shot." However, he was hooked again and has only missed one Reno tournament since.

Since coming back to shuffleboard, "Stockton George" has won or placed in many tournaments, including events at Reno, Blinky's, 133 Club and Phoenix.



George and friends at a Blinky's tournament in the mid-1990's





George with Karl Spickelmier in Reno, 1998

TESTAMONIALS

J.R. (Danger) Noel

I first met George in Modesto. My partner and I thought we could beat anyone, boy were we wrong. George and his partner beat us every game we played. Since then, we became friends and George was really full of it – advice, that is. He helped me a lot. Now I don't have to donate as much as I did then. Congratulations!



George and friends at the 133 Club

Paul Weber

George, congratulations on your induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. You have been a great player and gentleman over the years. Congratulations again.

Nick Chaffin

I don't remember when I first met George Camara, it might have been in the early 1990's. We both knew some of the same old time players but I didn't know him when he played in his younger days. We first played against each other in a bar in Stockton, the name of which escapes me now. I think we came out about even.

Over the last few years, I have played with and against George quite extensively at the 133 Club in Manteca. George is a strong player who always keeps his head in the game and has a strong will to win. I guess though, the biggest thing that comes to my mind when I think of George, is what a wonderful person he is. Win or lose, George is always a perfect gentleman. Without a doubt, George is one of the finest people I have ever known in shuffleboard – or in life for that matter.

For all the years that he has put into the game he loves, George Camara certainly deserves to be in the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

Jim Martin

I've known George for just a short time but I can tell you, he is a fun person to have at any tournament. George, first I want to congratulate you on your induction and second I want you to know that I am bummed that I will not be able to be there for your party. I am looking forward to seeing you later on this year at the Rogue River tournament and having some fun.

Rick Thomas

I met George at Blinky's in Santa Clara in 1992. He hadn't played shuffleboard in a long time. When he registered for a tournament, he had that infectious smile he always has and I thought, "Good, he looks like a good guy." As it so happens, he is one very good shuffleboard player also. It's been a pleasure George, since I moved up to Linden, I get to play with you a lot more. Thank you George for your friendship.

Kathy Thomas

George is always so cool and unflappable – I have never seen him lose his temper. I really enjoyed hearing the stories about the old "session" days - 24 to 48 hours straight with paychecks (or more) on the line! I'm glad I don't have to endure that to play the game, but I still love the stories.

Bob Hunt

Once known as "Little George", George Camara has always been a terrific player and ferocious competitor. His record over the past 40 plus years speaks for itself. During this period, he has played and beat all of the best "road" players of the 1960's and 1970's from his hometown of Stockton.

Since that time until the present, he has become a very strong tournament player, having played and beat most of the great players of the present and recent past.

Congratulations, my good friend George on your induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. This is a wonderful honor and you are most deserving.

P.S. from Vickie: Congratulations my Birthday-mate!

Dave Keithahn

Although you put the game aside for over 20 years, to be remembered as “Stockton George” by players across the country means you made it to the top as a player/session player. You still have a smooth left stroke and are a kind and gentle person. Congrats – Well deserved!

Jane Mourgos

The CA Shuffleboard Hall of Fame – an honor of which you are most deserving. Congratulations! If there was a “Hall of Fame” award for hitting the most casinos coming back from a shuffleboard tournament, you’d deserve that honor too! Thanks for making that trip back from Rogue River memorable.

Dan Mourgos

“Stockton” George:

Northern California shuffleboard would not be the same without you. You are a fine player and a gentleman. It is a pleasure to know you. Congratulations.

Eddie Brayman

George has been a teacher, inspiration, and most importantly, close friend. Despite his horrendous snoring at night and frightening appearance in the morning, he is still one of my all time favorite people. Congratulations on your well deserved entry into the CHOF.

Rich Warren

George Camara has been a great player and ambassador for the game of shuffleboard. His induction is well deserved. Congratulations George!

Don Cox

Congratulations George on your induction into the Hall of Fame! It's always great when someone from the "old school" of shuffleboard is recognized when there were no handicappers. You came up the hard way and beat the best.