

The Board Talk

Published Monthly by George & Donna Wilber
503 E. Sheridan Rd., Lansing, MI 48906 Phone: 517-371-2538 or 517-484-4976
E-Mail: dgwilber@prodigy.net

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Houston Holiday Open: Bah! Y2K Humbug!

By Don Meehan

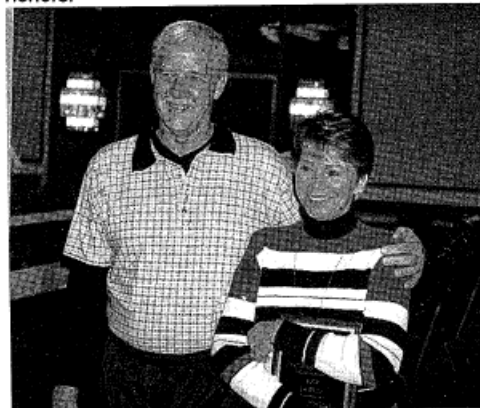
- 170 Shufflers from Nine States
- Diana Hagen Inducted into Texas Hall of Fame
- New Year's Eve Bash Fun for Everyone

Dateline Houston: The last major shuffleboard tournament of the millennium came off "without a hitch" in Houston, Texas on Dec. 26-31, 1999. Organizers Jack Scott and Johnny Ballard moved the 4th edition of the tournament to an expanded venue, the Houston Greenspoint Marriott Hotel, and 170 shuffleboarders from nine states followed them. Competition took place on 16 beautiful boards in the hotel's Grand Ballroom. The hotel also offered \$49.95 deluxe rooms and free transportation to and from Houston Intercontinental Airport, located nearby.

Veteran shuffleboard player and large tournament volunteer Lyndon ("Coach") Baize from Austin opined: "This is a good tournament. You folks do a great job. I've seen and worked a lot of tournaments and this is real smooth. Lots of folks are looking for something to do right after Christmas and it's good to get out and have some fun, win or lose, and shake those holiday blues!" Right on, Coach! (Editor's Note: Did you check out Coach's sexy legs on the cover of the January issue?)

Official tournament competition commenced on Sunday, Dec. 26, with a pro-am draw and an amateur draw. In the pro-am, Johnny Wayne Crawford of Dallas teamed with Houstonian Stan Stinson to withstand a fierce challenge from Arlington's Jeri Billard and Houston's Danny Norris and take first place. Mitch Melton and Mahlon Nobles from the Dallas-Ft. Worth area claimed third, while C.W. Walker and Jack Davis of Ft. Worth finished fourth. The amateur draw saw the Houston team of John "JT" Thames and Chuck Leach complete the event undefeated, despite a furious assault by fellow Houstonians Don ("Hitman") Meehan and Jim ("Rainbow") Bramlett. The team of Houstonian Wayne Hammond and

Jason Veal, newly moved to Oklahoma City, placed third, while Len Webster of Omaha and Leon Black of Lansing, Michigan, eased into fourth. Houston players Jim Payne and George Marx, Perla Scott and James Cato shared fifth and sixth place honors.



While Diana Hagen hugs her plaque, Johnny Wayne Crawford gives a congratulatory hug to Diana for her induction into the Texas Hall of Fame.

Day Two featured the ABC draw, an event in which players of all skill levels team up with "A" players playing "A"s, B's playing B's, etc. First place was claimed by Gwyn Orsi and Jim Kosicke of Omaha and Danny Norris of Houston. Johnny Wayne ("The Great One") Crawford led teammates Pete Worsnop of Houston and Jim Coulter of Huntington Beach, California, to second place. New Texas Shuffleboard Hall of Fame member Diana ("Queen of the Jungle") Hagen mentored fellow Houstonian Gilbert ("Silent Assassin") Baird and Marilu Roberts of Omaha to a third place finish. The team of Jim McGee of Houston, Mahlon Nobles of Dallas and Marie Coulter of Huntington Beach, California, claimed fourth.

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Holiday Open (continued from Page 1)



Stan Stinson (left) and Johnny Wayne Crawford were winners of the pro-am draw.



Jeri Billard and Danny Norris took second place honors in the pro-am.



Mahlon Nobles (left) and Mitch Melton finished third in the pro-am.



Chuck Leach, with his partner "JT" Thames, took first place in the amateur draw. (Editor's Note: The flu bug struck during the Holiday Open and some players were confined to their beds when photos were taken.)



Winners of the ABC event were Gwyn Orsi, Danny Norris and Jim Kosicke.



Johnny Wayne Crawford, Pete Worsnop, and Jim Coulter took second place.

Day Three was four-person team day, with pro-am and amateur events. On the pro side, the team of Fred Johns, Gary Thompson and Mike Keevil of Washington and Hall of Famer Glen Davidson from "all over" completed the event undefeated but chose to split 60/40 with a Houston team led by Diana Hagen, with Marshall Partlow, Tom Milan, and John Szinski, who were declared the runners-up. David Williams of Ft. Worth led Jeri Billard, Steve Walker of Cushing, Oklahoma, and Kathy Keevil of Tacoma, Washington, to a third place finish.



First and second place pro-am team members (from left): Gary Thompson, Fred Johns, Marshal Partlow, Diana Hagen, Glen Davidson, Mike Keevil, John Szinski. Not pictured: Tom Milan.

The amateur side paid four places with 17 teams competing. The Houston team of Ann Walker, Sylvia Martinez, "Super" Dave Ramold, and Donnie Gamer held off the challenge of Stan Stinson and Jimmie ("Rhubarb") Britt of Houston, Neil Garvin of Corpus Christi and Chris Clayton of Houston to claim first place.



Challengers Neil Garvin, Chris Clayton and Jimmie Britt. Not shown: Stan Stinson



Gary and Kay Nelson and Jack Davis, all of Dallas-Ft. Worth, and David Veasey (left) from North Texas took third.

Frank Mako from Washington, Dallasite Jeff Womble, and Sue and Len Webster of Omaha claimed fourth place.

Day Four featured the bring partner events with a pro-am (add to 0), amateur Div. I (add to 4) and Div. II (add to 6). In the pro event, Dale Williams and Howard Mouton bested the teams of Sally Goff of Tulsa and Steve Walker of Cushing, Oklahoma, Mike Baker of Houston and Bob Shaw of Dallas for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places, respectively.

Div. I saw Houstonian Tom Milan team with Jeff Womble of Dallas to take first place, edging out local players Sylvia Martinez and Jorge Galvan, who finished second.



Div. I winners Tom Milan and Jeff Womble.



Second place honors to Jorge Galvan and Sylvia Martinez.



Houston area players Rene Roberts and Ken ("Doc") Strong claimed third.

Linda and Mahlon Nobles of Dallas came in fourth. The Div. II results showed that the "Jims" have it -- Jim Payne and Jim Kosicke, that is, first-place winners. Gary Thompson and Mike Keevil of Washington claimed second, while locals Frank Huffman and Mahlon ("Sky King") Moore took third. Jeanine Carmack and Pete Worsnop claimed fourth, while the teams of Jeff ("The Rock") Clark and David

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More Notebook

Bonnie English Applauds Karl Spickelmier Induction

As soon as I receive my Board Talk, I flip through the pages to seek articles about the players I know. The headlines on Page 5 caught my attention immediately: Karl Spickelmier Inducted into California Hall of Fame. I want to say that it is of note that his rise to fame and glory began here in Colorado. I clearly remember the early days he refers to in 1969 as a beginning player at The Place in Denver. How heartening to read that he gives credit to Bill English at that time for helping him learn and love the game!

Bill always referred to Karl as a "real class act." He especially appreciated the fact that Karl had a great desire to become a very skilled, competitive player. He recognized that he had the talent, determination and ability to achieve these goals.

Through the years, Bill always looked forward to seeing Karl when he returned to Denver. He remembered that Karl arranged his vacation time so he could visit his mother who lived in Denver and be there with her during the holidays. Of course, Karl would also be playing shuffleboard while he was there. These visits meant a lot to Bill because Karl was definitely one of his favorite players and friends.

My congratulations to Karl for this much-deserved induction into the California Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. I echo all the accolades about him that were featured in this article. I am so very proud and truly happy that he credits Bill as one of the people who inspired him along the way!

Bonnie English, Loveland, Colorado

We're pleased, too, Bonnie, that Karl paid tribute to Bill (first inductee into the Colorado Hall of Fame) as his teacher and mentor. You'll appreciate the following note....

Applause from Mike Roach...

I applaud the following.... "Quote of the Month" (January 2000 issue) by Nick Chaffin:

"....The World of Shuffleboard would be (a lot) better off if we had (a lot) a few more Karl Spickelmiers."

Mike Roach, Omaha, Nebraska

More on the Houston Open

The new tournament facility, Greenspoint Marriott, was a better host than the previous hotel. The ballroom offered ample room for 16 boards with enough space between boards and generous seating capacity. The directors, Jack Scott and Johnny Ballard, were very hospitable and went out of their way to make sure everyone was being accommodated. The tournament events came off in good fashion and were handled efficiently. The volunteer staff did a great job of bracket board control, dust distribution, siliconging of boards, and prize and sale money presentation. Unfortunately, the boards, as a group, were hard to play and the dust was too slow. One other criticism was the selection of events. The ABC draw was not favored by a vast majority of the players in attendance. I heard many people mention that they would have much preferred a draft team event. But, overall, a very good tournament and grading from A to F, the Holiday Open should receive a B+.

Diana Hagen Inducted

During the Houston Holiday Open, Diana Hagen was inducted into the Texas Shuffleboard Hall of Fame. This was an honor bestowed upon a wonderful and deserving person who has been an inspiration to many who participate in our sport. I opened the ceremony with a brief history of our Hall of Fame and reviewed the members of that illustrious body. Being much better at delegating than speaking, I turned the program over to Brian Walker, who listed Diana's accomplishments and tournament victories, as well as her work with novice players in the Houston area. He told of how her home has the garage and one of her spare bedrooms lined with plaques from her many victories and how, when Brenda Moore would come to visit, Diane would put her in the plaque-filled bedroom as an intimidation ploy. Johnny Wayne Crawford then made the presentation and told a marvelous story of how a younger player had approached the great Billy Mays and stated that there were no really good lady players. After Billy told him how foolish he was, he said he thought of Diana as not being a woman, but simply being one of the 10 best players in the nation. Congratulations, Diana, a well-deserved honor!

Bobby Williams, Fort Worth, Texas

We know you will enjoy the article on Diana as one of our Shuffleboard Sweethearts 2000.

Houston Holiday (cont. from Page 17)

Veasey, Bev McGinty and James Cato took fifth and sixth.



Div. II winners Jim Payne and Jim Kosicke.



Runners-up Gary Thompson and Mike Keevil.



Stars of the show in the pro singles were Bob Shaw and Diana Hagen.

Day Five featured one of the premier events in shuffleboard competition -- singles. While all three divisions were double elimination, the pro format required a player to win two out of three games per match to advance. Many observers consider this year's pro final to be one of the most exciting matches of the tourney. Bob Shaw edged out Diana Hagen after each player had won a game. In the rubber game, with Bob on 14 and Diana on 13 with the hammer, Bob was able to hide his last weight.

Diana tried to hit but missed and as they say: "the rest is history." Congratulations to both!



Harvey ("Silver Tongued Devil") Kidd, having finished his auctioneering duties, claimed third place. He accepts his plaque from Jack Scott.



Amateur Div. I (1's, 2's, 3's) was dominated by the ladies as Ann Walker (center) claimed first place and Mary Koteras of Houston took second. Ron Bowers of Austin was a third place finisher, with Dave Ramold coming in fourth.



In amateur Div. II (3's, 4's, 5's), Lorraine ("Hurricane") Bingham of Santa Clara, California, who made laminated weight case tags for all the contestants, showed her "mettle" by taking first place. Way to go, Lorraine!

Kim Andrews of Austin claimed second, Mike Keevil came in third, and Joe ("Fannin Flash") Parish of Houston claimed fourth. Honors for fifth/sixth places were shared by local Sammy Stringer and Larry Nance.

CONGRATULATIONS, Y'ALL!

Volunteers and Sponsors Make it Work in Houston

Whether it's a chili cook-off or school fundraiser, the participation of volunteers and sponsors is essential in assuring a successful outcome to an enterprise such as this. This year, as in the past, the organizers of the Houston Holiday Open wish to acknowledge the contributions of time, labor and money....

PETE WORSNOP provided posters and circulars. NANCY RICE took photos, wrote an article for The Board Talk, and helped coordinate the registration table. DENISE KLEIN, lap-top computer expert, along with SYLVIA MARTINEZ and KIM ANDREWS, kept the registration and money-handling process running smoothly -- the best this reporter has seen to date! JOHNNY WAYNE CRAWFORD, TOM MILAN and JOHNNY BALLARD showed their expertise at leveling boards and WAYNE HAMMOND kept them clean and well-stocked throughout the tournament. BILL RICE, assisted by KEN STRONG, did an exemplary job on the bracket boards, while RENE ROBERTS assisted at the registration table with sales of tournament shirts, Board Talk subscriptions and Federation weight raffle tickets. DON MEEHAN was spotted every once in a while, doing something or other. Special thanks to PERLA SCOTT and Cummins-Allison Corp. for donating the use of a currency counting machine that sure sped things up! It wouldn't seem like Houston Holiday Open without HARVEY KIDD doing the auctioneering and making people smile. Harvey also gave HHO a sweet deal on use of a Ryder truck from his rental fleet.

DAVID STEGMAN, through his company, Replay Amusements, provided some of the finest boards available. His "crack" team of technicians spent a lot of time preparing and setting them up. Replay also provided a P.A. system, coin machine, juke box and Karaoke system.

JOHN MCDERMOTT, director, North American Championships in Reno, Nevada, donated Shuffleboard Federation dust and silicone as well as a set of weights, which were raffled. The money raised (\$960) was split equally between the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, the Texas Shuffleboard Hall of Fame and the Bowers Rating System.

The National Plumbing Corporation, thanks to JOHNNY BALLARD, was a platinum sponsor this year. Most local shuffleboard tournament players are familiar with the name, Sky King Air Freight. The name has changed to M S A S Logistics, but thanks

to MAHLON and RONNIE MOORE, the generosity and support remain the same.

If you're ever in Houston, looking for a game of 'board, get on over to Westheimer Rd., west of the beltway, and look for DANNY'S SPORTS BAR, TRIPLE CROWN BAR or SANSONNE'S BAR. These three bars held qualifiers prior to the Houston Holiday Open and have nine of the finest boards in the city!

Thanks to DON CRALL, Del City, Oklahoma, home of the Southwest Open, for purchasing six sponsor shirts, and THE BOARD TALK for donating three subscriptions for the raffle. Special thanks to LORRAINE BINGHAM for her unsolicited act of generosity. She brought the equipment and the skill to make personalized weight case name tags for all the registered participants.

Last, on behalf of the Houston Shuffleboard Community, this reporter would like to thank JACK SCOTT and JOHNNY BALLARD for their vision and perseverance. They are true FRIENDS OF THE GAME!

Houston Holiday Open Revelers Welcome New Year!

One of the highlights of every Houston Holiday Open is the gala New Year's Eve Party. We wish to thank those hardy souls who came from far and near to spend the better part of a week with us and to "raise the roof" without a care for millennium bugs, designated drivers, mothers-in-law...you name it!

This year was no exception to the party rule as, in addition to those 16 beautiful boards, a 15 x 30' dance floor and a 35' buffet table were erected in the Grand Ballroom. A sumptuous offering of glazed breast of chicken, lasagna, quiche and numerous finger foods was displayed for our guests to enjoy -- complimentary, of course.

The ladies in attendance donned evening finery (i.e. dresses!) and many of the men were noted to be sartorially resplendent as well! Dancing rivaled shuffleboard as a group activity with the Keevils of Washington giving Two-Step lessons to Texans. Conga and macarena lines also prevailed, as well as a game that involved passing cucumbers and grapefruit from under one person's chin to another...HMMM!?

A good time was had by all! HAPPY NEW YEAR!

(Editor's Note: See Notebook for viewpoints and photos of the Houston Holiday Open.)

Notebook (continued from Page 19)

Actually, to be truthful, I have noticed the number of men players in the big tournaments are increasing. Like this year in Houston, two players who had played less than a year, J.T. and Chuck Leach, captured first place in the A-B amateur draw, passing up many seasoned players. I don't know who was more surprised, us or them. This being their first tournament, it was great that they also got to see some of the greats play like Melton, the Williams Brothers, Ballard, Shaw, Hunt, Koteras, Hagen, and how could we forget the person who showed the little girl from Fairfield, Diana, how to play -- Howard Mouton. Having been away from the big tournament scene for several years, he breezed into town with the quiet tenacity of a John Wayne. He clicked his spurs, laid down his money with that sheepish grin we've all seen before, like he knew something we didn't. He glided his way to victory and snatched first place with his Clearlake pal, Dale Williams. Could it be Howard is back?

Unknown to everyone attending (even the recipient!) was the induction of Diana Hagen to the Texas Hall of Fame, to my knowledge, the only woman inductee. Many of the Texas players who have come onto the scene in the last six years will tell you she has encouraged, inspired them not to give up, and even loaned a few bucks to enable them to play. In short, she has done more than just come, play, and leave with her winnings. Her standing ovation left a usually vocal Diana speechless and a little shaken. Johnny Ballard commented: I was fine 'til they actually announced it. I had a lump in my throat and was really moved.

The last day of the festivities began with what Gwyn Orsi and onlookers said was the best cliffhanger finals they had seen in awhile. The matches for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places started at 11 a.m. and ended at 7 p.m., with Bob Shaw battling Diana for first and winning, and Harvey Kidd taking third.

Then the infamous New Year's Eve Bash began with a sumptuous formal buffet dinner. Everything from conga lines, macarena and table dances by the gals (hey, I made more in tips there than at the tournament). The party hardy group finally closed up shop at 5:30 a.m. What better way to end the year than with some of the best players and best memories you will treasure for years to come. Isn't that what it's all about? Competition and the friendships you mold along the way.

See you all next year. Bring your Christmas spirit

and fasten your seatbelts for another Texas bull ride.

Nancy Rice, Houston, Texas



Author Nancy Rice playing pass the grapefruit with Mike Keevil of Washington.



Then Mike proceeds to play pass the cucumber with Sylvia Martinez.



Mary Koteras and Johnny Ballard show their stuff on the dance floor.