

Don Valk

Table Shuffleboard Association Hall of Fame Induction

November 3, 2006

TSA HOF Inductee Ceremony

Donald Patrick Valk, was born January 12, 1942 in Austin, Texas where he has lived and resided most of his life. He started playing shuffleboard in his early 20's and has been playing and promoting the game for over 40 years. His love of and dedication to shuffleboard started at an early age with his dad playing game after game of Bank Shuffleboard. His dad

started playing Bank shuffleboard in the Austin area in the late 40's and early 50's. Don describes the Bank Shuffleboard as about half as long as our standard boards with a bank on each side and says it was REALLY a hot sport in the Memphis, TN area by the early 80's and that Billy Mays told him that one of the best Bank Shuffleboard players he had ever known from the Memphis days was Glenn Young (who was also a good long board player) and that in the 80's there were only a couple of long boards in the Memphis area, but Bank Shuffleboards were in abundance.

Don started his career with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in August of 1964. His job entailed a lot of travel, giving him an opportunity to really play the game in various Texas towns. His travels frequently took him to Rosenberg (near Houston) where he spent much of his free time playing at the Mustang Lounge on the "long boards" that we all know and love. His play evolved from freehand to thumb shots, to his expert variety play today.



Sol Lipkin Award Nov. 13, 1993
Texas HOF Award - March 20, 1999
TSA HOF Award - Nov. 3, 20006

TSA President - 2000-2006



Table Shuffleboard Association November 3, 2006

The Table Shuffleboard Association's Board of Directors, TSA Associate Members, shuffleboard community, friends, and family proudly present the TSA Hall of Fame Induction Award to Donald Patrick Valk on this 3rd day of November, 2006.

-- TSA Board of Directors & Associate Members,
Table Shuffleboard Association, Inc.

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Don enjoyed his job and travels from August 1964 until January 1966 when Uncle Sam called him into the Army and sent him to the Logan Heights area in El Paso, TX. He continued his Shuffleboard play while in the Army, averaging about 4 hours a day for 2 years. He had some great times in El Paso playing at Tom Bells (Dyer Street) which has since been torn down and the Buckaroo Lounge (Alameda St.) which has since relocated and does not have a board anymore.

In January, 1968 Uncle Sam released the noose. Don returned to Austin itching for a match only to find there was very little activity in Shuffleboard. He had much difficulty finding a board or players. He played some at Curtis Boyce's Texas End Zone (which was closed by the ACB after a year), the TAP on Guadalupe and the historical Horseshoe Lounge on South Lamar. But boards and players in the Austin area were few and far between. It was common practice for Don to drive to Lake Buchanan or Canyon Lake on a Friday or Saturday night or to San Antonio for league play on a Tuesday night. He loved the game so much that time and distance made no difference. As Brenda Moore puts it, "he drove his white Cadillac across Texas playing every board he could find from Abilene to Brownsville." Billy Mays attests that Don ran the rodeos and horse racing across Texas, driving his infamous Cadillac, combining his travels with the love of Shuffleboard play.

The big event which introduced Don to a score of Pros came when he attended Glen Davidson's tournament in Tulsa, OK in the late 70's or early 80's. Don went to observe players that would pay \$300 entry fees and travel long distances to compete with each other. The ones he remembers being there were: Bud Broka (winner) and Galen Gaunce (2nd place). This was an exciting and rather interesting trip for Don. Billy Mays (Texas Billy) waltzed in after driving 2100 miles nonstop (California to Oklahoma) only to find out that he would not be allowed to play in the tournament. Well, Billy didn't drive 2,100 miles to turn around and drive right back, as he was ready for some play. Billy did not know Don, but asked him to partner up in some challenge games against some very good Arkansas Shufflers (C.B. Faulkner, Gus McKinney and Dick Thomas). Don played \$20 on his end against C.B. and Billy played the big bucks on his end. Don was amazed with Billy's plays when he kept covering his opponent's weights, only to clean the board with his last shot and leave his own weights standing.

This was the first of many times Don would join up or cross paths with Billy in his Shuffleboard travels and career. Tulsa was an impressive experience for Don and really intensified his ambition to gear up for real tournament play. Besides

MEMORY LANE



Championship Singles held in Las Vegas. This was a tough tournament (3 out of 5, triple elimination). Don placed in the upper 1/3 out of 32 players.

George and Donna Wilber, printed a great big "CONGRATULATIONS TO DON VALK ON YOUR WELL DESERVED HONOR!" in their February, 1994 issue of Board Talk for Don's November, 1993 receipt of the SOL LIPKIN Award. Don was honored by The Shuffleboard Federation "for your tireless and unselfish efforts in promoting the sport and for the new standards of tournament excellence you helped to establish through the U.S. Open Shuffleboard Tournament, we proudly present the 1993 SOL LIPKIN Award in recognition of your extraordinary contributions to the advancement of shuffleboard".

John McDermott, a close friend of Don and Linda's, arranged with Linda to get Don there for presentation of the Sol Lipkin Award without letting Don know about it. Don was up with his camera ready to take a picture of the one to be honored - only to have to put the camera down and take the stand himself. He was very surprised when they announced his name while he was standing there ready to snap a shot of the winner!

Don Valk Award Summary:

A Long-time table shuffleboard player and promoter. Not only has Don been instrumental in running tournaments, supporting and promoting this great game for many years.

Significant Awards & Positions Held:

■ Sol Lipkin Award

November 13, 1993
Sands Regency Hotel & Casino
Reno, Nevada

■ Texas Shuffleboard Hall of Fame Inductee

March 20, 1999
Danny's Sports Bar
Houston, Texas

■ Table Shuffleboard Association (TSA) Hall of Fame Inductee

November 3, 2006
Sands Regency Hotel & Casino
Reno, Nevada

■ Office of President (TSA) from 2000-2006

being dazzled with Billy Mays' expert Pro play and his introduction to the Pros, he has great respect for all the Pros. He considers Darrol Nelson as the "best tournament player" and feels that Bill Melton "has class and is one of the most respected, skilled and professional players around".

Shortly after the Tulsa event Don and Linda started going to Dallas to visit friends. Of course they had to check out the Shuffleboard scene. One of the first introductions was when they walked into the Cottage Lounge. Don was handsomely dressed in his cowboy attire with his Ranger-style belt buckle shining. He had the appearance of a Texas Ranger and the entire club got real quiet. There was a sense of uneasiness and distrust flowing through the air. But, Texas Billy came to the rescue and stood up when he recognized who had just walked in. He assured the crew that Don was "okay" and one of the "good guys", putting everyone at ease. Don then learned that the Texas Rangers had staged a football gambling raid at the club only a few short weeks before. Guess they all thought— "Oh no, the Texas Rangers strike again!". Don says one of his biggest problems, even today, is walking into unknown territory and "all the outlaws think I am a cop, and all the cops think I am an outlaw".

Don played several locations then in the Dallas area. He met and played some matches with Earl Kelly for the first time at the Pilot Lounge's Annual Play.

Later the Annual Play event moved to the Honeycomb where there were 3 boards (Pilot Lounge only had 2 boards). Don didn't play in the first Honeycomb Annual Play, but the next year he got in for a \$20 Single Handicapped event. He paid \$15 for his Calcutta (bought himself) - so only had \$35 invested. He got to play and observe all the big boys again, Darrol Nelson, Bill Melton, Glen Davidson, "Fast" Eddie Jeffries and all the crew. He had to play against Bill Melton, Fast Eddie, Glen Davidson and the finals against Bob White (tough matches), but ended up taking 1st Place and winning \$1,900 with only \$35 invested. Don then drove straight back to Austin after the event - hoping not to get mugged before he got of the club.

He enjoyed the tournament so much, he returned the next year to a Singles (no handicap) double-elimination tournament and his Calcutta jumped to a whopping \$35! Jeffries' brother bought him and Don pitched in for his 1/2 of it. He was in the winner (of the winner) bracket with a 6-0 lead against Billy Mays (from the loser bracket, unfortunately)... but Billy came back and took 1st place.

After playing some of the locals at a bar in Canyon Lake (TX), Don coerced Billy Mays into doing hits trick shot exhibition. He told us how Brenda Moore was awed by the exhibition. In talking with Brenda, she said that exhibition was her first time to see a "pro" in action and she was impressed. She said this is when her life of bar shuffleboard changed to a concentrated desire of real play.

THE "U.S. OPEN" WAS BORN

While Don was not out wearing the tires off his white Cadillac following the horse races and playing shuffleboard, he stayed busy trying to build up the interest in shuffleboard play in the Austin area. He had started a little tournament at Spring Hill Bar in Pflugerville and decided he wanted to get a bigger tournament going to bring in more players to Austin. This is when the U.S. Open Shuffleboard Tournament was born... In 1986, Don started the U.S. Open Shuffleboard Tournament at the Villa Capri Hotel (since closed) in Austin. Linda helped get the location established through her friend Jami Ruddock who was in charge of Sales at the Villa Capri and she came up with the idea to sell sponsor T-shirts. Linda worked the sponsor T-shirt sales. Bill Melton brought in the boards. Don borrowed \$1,000 from a friend to add to the pot and with a lot of help from many dedicated shufflers such as Bill Moody, Joe Roden, Bill and Mike Melton, the boards were set up and the "pros" started coming in. Brenda Moore had told Diana Hagen about the "Billy Mays Exhibition," so they drove in to see all these "pros" do their expert tricks. Brenda said she expected a room full of these big boys doing tricks and exhibitions like she had seen from Billy. So she and Diana had come to see this! Brenda was surprised to find that Billy and the other pros' play was quite different in a tournament than in an exhibition. Now she got to observe the real methodical pro play.

The U.S. Open continued at different locations each year from 1986 through 1991. Don went in debt on the first one to get it started and bring in the pros, but he paid back his debt and the U.S. Open held its' own thereafter.

Billy Mays said he participated in the U.S. Open every year and that Don was really a "hell of a guy, a hard worker, and a real promoter of the game". Billy Mays, Bill Melton, Brenda Moore, Ken Strong, Joe Spratt and all attest that whenever Don ran a tournament everyone knew the money was going to be right, games would be played with integrity and honesty, and that Don would always publish a financial statement for all to review.

Joe Spratt says he has known Don for 10-12 years and to call him a "square" would be an understatement. Joe said Don is one of the most conscientious and scrupulously honest Shufflers and friends he has ever known. He puts Don in the same class as Bill Moody, Bill Melton and Ron and Sharon Huddleston - really nice and honest friends and Shufflers! Joe gave an example that will forever be marked in his memory. Don was in Houston when a notorious gambler came in - very intoxicated - who would drop \$4K-5K in a night without the blink of an eye. Joe said this player got better with each drink, rather than slowing down. He tried to get Don to challenge and play, but Don would not take advantage of

someone who was intoxicated. As Joe stated, Don really would not have been taking advantage because this player really did get better with each drink. Joe said Don would never take advantage of anyone. Any play he has is always fair, professional, and honest.

OTHER MEMORABLE EVENTS FOR DON

1991 was a real PRO year for Don. Don ran the last U.S. Open (and won the Singles event), married Linda in October in Lake Tahoe, and followed that up with the Reno tournament at the Sands when he had to play against Bob Shaw in the Singles finals. He was behind 12-0 in the final game and came back to put the score at 14-13 (Don's favor). Bob had the hammer and lagged a deuce - taking 1st place, and Don taking 2nd place. An exciting match for both Bob and Don and the spectators!

One of Don's most memorable earlier experiences (1979/80 time-frame) was when he was driving to San Antonio for league play with Terry and Brenda Moore. Sportsman Ice House seemed to most always win league play. Don went down to play on Hank's Hide Out team to go up against the Sportsman Ice House champs. The owner, to tick everyone off as a joke, had placed Billy Mays on the roster for Hank's Hide Out. Don, unaware of the roster joke, asked Billy Mays while he was in town to come play on their team. When Billy showed up, it was a surprise to all. Don recalls Freakie Fred's wife, with the

Sportsman Ice House group, having a big fit when Billy really came in for the play! They won and everyone had a blast!

Then there is the "NICE GUY" story of a Houston player that kept coming to Austin beating the socks off of everyone he played. Everyone that ever played against him always said, "I lost but he is such a Nice Guy." This "Nice Guy" was Mickey Baugh from Houston. Don said he kept hearing all this talk about the "Nice Guy" which he thought was unusual coming from the mouths of all these Austin-ites that kept losing to him, and was anxious to meet up with this WINNER. He finally got to meet Mickey and definitely agreed - Mickey Baugh really was a very "NICE GUY"!

One of Don and Linda's favorite Shuffleboard hot spots is Jerry D's in Dacona, CO. The owner is a barrel of fun and the players always have a blast. He said that many Good players will show up at about 10.00-10.30 PM and the play is on! There usually is at least 8 great players that show up anytime he has been there, including Rick Boyer, Morey Balins, Jody Slack and Grady. Don and Linda both said there is never a dull moment at Jerry D's. So, if we haven't tried it yet we must!

Then there was the Colorado Open where Don drew up with a good player from Florida. They had to play Rick Boyer and Darrol Nelson 2 out of 3 and they went on to win 3rd place! Morrie Estes, a real estate broker from San Antonio, sponsored Don at \$800 a person entry to play in Billy Mays' 1984 World