

George Darwin and Harold Eshleman

George Darwin and Harold Eshleman are our “senior members” as far as age (87) and number of years in shuffleboard. Both have contributed countless hours to both our sport and to our Club.

George and his wife Viola have been married for 65 years and before retiring lived in Fremont, Michigan. George worked as a union pipe fitter for 30 years. He decided to retire in 1979 and in 1982 they moved to Winters Park in Zephyrhills, Florida.

George was an avid pool player and always tried to rustle or hustle up games when he was out of town working. He taught his son Jeff how to play the game and Jeff remains an excellent player today.

Soon after George and Vi moved to Winters, George was introduced to shuffleboard. He took to the game right away and practiced for one hour each day, seven days a week. George and “Brother” as he refers to his late brother Don, teamed up in area tournaments in about 1983. Both excelled at the game and as amateurs were almost impossible to defeat. During one stretch, they won 14 of 15 Area tournaments. Because of the Darwin brothers and their success and unwillingness to move up to the Pro ranks, the Area tournament rules were changed so no two State Amateurs were allowed to play together. Soon after this rule change, both turned Pro. The rule stands today.

George has had many, many accomplishments in shuffleboard, is a fierce competitor and has won countless tournaments over the years. Two of his most cherished and notable feats were winning seven District Pro Masters and his induction into the Central District HOF in 2007.

George’s contributions to the Zephyrhills Shuffleboard Club go way beyond his accomplishments on the courts though. In 2007, because of the new Club ownership, he became interested in working at the club, primarily seeing that renovations and improvements were done correctly. He was elected to the original Board of Directors and continues to serve today. George evolved as the “straw boss” for the summer crew and has worked on almost every project in the past five years. He seems to have an unrelenting passion for work.

Not only does George work at the Club but, after collaborating with Henry, developed a system for refinishing and protecting the courts by using sealer and imbedding glass beads. After our courts were completed, word spread of our success and now George and his crew of volunteer members have refinished courts throughout Zephyrhills and beyond. The proceeds benefit our club monetarily. George isn’t slowing down and has already lined up more courts to do this coming season.

Harold Eshleman lived in Cleveland, Ohio and worked for a Ford dealership and Avis Rent –A- Car before deciding to move to Florida in 1961. Harold owned and operated several service station-auto mechanic garages in Tampa before deciding to retire in 1984.

Harold moved to Zephyrhills and settled in Zephyr shores MHP. He is currently one of the longest residing residents of the Park.

Harold has been married twice. His first wife passed away in 1983 and his second succumbed in 1998.

Harold was introduced to shuffleboard at the Zephyr Shores courts. He said he enjoyed playing once in a while but he was usually too busy to get serious about it. Harold was semi-retired and was taking on jobs in the Park, working part time for Buddy Foster Chevrolet and Citrus Chrysler in Dade City. Harold was a longtime member of the Tourist Club and took care of the place during the summer.

Harold played started to play a little more often at the Tourist Club and began competing in a few tournaments. Harold and Phil Thornton once teamed up for a Pro tournament at Betmar and drew Hall of Famers, Paul Prescott and Dale Williams in the first round. The two amateurs took out the dream team with an unrelenting barrage of kitchen shots. Earl Ball coined him, "Kitchen Harold."

Harold is one of our most popular members and can be found at the Club almost every morning continuing to play his "kitchen" game. He said he enjoys playing for the fun of the game and really isn't interested in playing many tournaments.

It seems that Harold works at the Club more than he plays. He was appointed the "Maintenance Supervisor" by the original Board and he sure takes those duties seriously. Harold is a member of the summer crew, mows and trims the lawns, makes sure the trash is out on trash day, waxes the blocks at every tournament, he's constantly working to repair roof leaks and many other jobs too numerous to list. Harold is a good thinker and can come up with solutions to most all problems. George said, "Harold is an all-around mechanic and can fix anything."

Steve Barnett said one day, "What's wrong with this picture? The younger guys are playing and our oldest members are doing all the work." Harold was on the roof and George was working on the gutters. We are very fortunate to have both George and Harold at the Zephyrhills Shuffleboard Club.

Thanks to both for all you do to make our club one of the best in the State.

Chuck Moulton