

BOB WILKE



This 1984 Wisconsin Horseshoe Pitchers Association Hall-of-Fame award is presented to Bob Wilke.

Bob started pitching horseshoes when he was a five-year-old, using the smallest pair of pony shoes he could find in his father's blacksmith shop. Horseshoe pitching was his father's favorite pastime and soon became his as his father's partner. In 1923 Bob started pitching with the Mossman shoe, which was shaped like a horse's shoe but made for pitching. Eight years later he started throwing the Gordon, and eventually the Ohio.

Bob held the Oshkosh city championship for seven consecutive years, 1930 through 1936. He pitched in his first state tournament in 1932. Although he never won the class A championship, he consistently won trophies at the many tournaments he entered throughout the state.

The state tournament was held at State Fair Park and, until about 1960, prospective pitchers went to Milwaukee to qualify by pitching 100 shoes. On Sunday morning the 16 top qualifiers started playing round robin, 50-point games, and finished between 9 and 10 o'clock Sunday night.

Bob also pitched with several "World" champions, and will never forget one of them. His biggest thrill in horseshoe pitching came when he challenged Dan Kuchinski during an exhibition at Park Plaza in Oshkosh, and beat him! Bob says it was "just luck," but he did pitch 20% better than his average.

Bob writes, "I have had the pleasure of pitching horseshoes with everyone that has held the state championship since its very beginning in 1923 up to 1982—except the very first two—namely Ed Mitchell and Seymour Johnson. This includes my having pitched horseshoe with Casey Jones before he was even a teenager as well as later on in life."

Bob has been retired the past five years; prior to that, for about 30 years, he was a vegetable grower on the farm where he grew up. For 20 years before that he worked in a greenhouse, drove truck and ran a parking lot in Milwaukee. For the past 38 years he has lived on the farm where he was born 75 years ago.

Bob and his wife, Dorothy, to whom he has been married for 39 years, have one son, two daughters, two grandchildren (plus one on the way). Their address is R. 3, Box 304, Berlin, Wisconsin 54923.

Congratulations to Bob Wilke for his many years of participation in the sport of horseshoe pitching and his success in the many tournaments he entered.

We are sorry that because of a heart condition, Bob is unable to continue tournament pitching.