



2021 Hall of Fame Inductee – John Meyer

John Meyer was born in 1947 to Annabelle and Howard Meyer. John grew up in North Fond du Lac with his parents and 3 younger sisters, Barbara, Judy and Linda. He enlisted in the Navy when he was a senior in high school and went to Great Lakes Boot Camp shortly after graduating in 1965. John moved on to electronics school in Memphis, Tennessee and then onward to VA-72 aboard USS Independence, serving his first of two tours of duty in Vietnam. John left the Navy in 1969 and was hired at Mercury Marine in Fond du Lac. He started out as a stockman and transitioned to other positions while working at Mercury. John married Sandra Bernath in 1970 and the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last July. John joined the U.S. Naval Air Reserve in 1971. He worked on aircraft in Glenview, Illinois in addition to working full time at Mercury and starting a family with Sandra. The couple had 4 children over those next eight years, Traci (1971), Steven (1973), Brian (1976) and Ericka (1979).

John was introduced to horseshoe pitching in 1972. His neighbor needed a sub and asked John if he would fill in. John agreed and went down to FDL Club's courts at Goodrich High School as his neighbor's partner. John stayed on as a sub and came back in 1973 to play full time in the Club. Little did anyone know that this young John Meyer was pitching league with "future" WHPA Hall of Famers C.L. "Skinny" Ollerman and John Secord throughout the rest of the 1970's. Skinny Ollerman was notorious for recruiting league pitchers to sign up to play in tournaments around the state. In 1974 John took Skinny's bait and signed up to pitch in his first tournament at the fairgrounds in Waukesha. John pitched a flip shoe and averaged 20%. John lost every game that day but was hooked on the experience. He signed up for more tournaments and he could be found competing in Eagle, Fillmore, Combined Locks, Green Bay, Sheboygan, Goldendale, Mountain and others over the next few years. John excelled at horseshoe pitching and won the Fond du Lac County Pitcher of the Year award in 1977. He switched from pitching a flip to a 1 ¼ turn in 1978 and has stuck with the turn since then.

John kept pitching in some leagues and tournaments throughout the 1980's and 1990's but had to take breaks from time to time as he decided to go back into the Navy in 1980. John's assignments included stops at VP-8 out of Brunswick, Maine, Great Lakes in Northern Illinois, an assignment on the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D Eisenhower in 1988, a return to Great Lakes and then on to VA-32 in Virginia Beach in 1996 that included an assignment on the USS Theodore Roosevelt. He retired from the Navy in 1997 after proudly serving our country as a member of the military for 31 years.

John returned to Fond du Lac and pitching shoes after retiring from the Navy. He also joined the Deansville Club to pitch leagues in the winter months in 2010 and eventually was pitching two nights per week year-round between the two clubs. John accepted the position of Secretary for the Fond du Lac Horseshoe Club in 2002 from then Secretary Gary Colton who needed a person to take over. John is only the 4th person to hold that position in the club's long history. Skinny Ollerman held that position the longest (50+years) and has left quite a legacy to follow. John has been an outstanding servant to the club since taking on this role. The Club was formed in 1922 and is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and is the longest continuously running horseshoe club in Wisconsin. John has a lot of pride for the club as he finds it remarkable that a league can maintain a young group of pitchers to keep a club in existence for 100 years. The total club membership of nine pitchers that John was a part of in 2002 has grown to as many as 60 members since his return. John's leadership and dedication to not just maintain, but nurture and improve the club with increased membership and reinvigorating the facility has allowed the club to look forward to continuing into its 2nd century of continuous existence. John has also been accumulating an archived history of the Fond du Lac Horseshoe Club over the past several years that includes league and tournament results dating back to when the club first started.

John has also made contributions in supporting horseshoes at the WHPA and NHPA level. John continues to be tournament director for tournaments hosted in Fond du Lac. He has also co-directed with Jim Haupt in Goldendale and continued as director there for 2 years after Jim passed away. John accepted the position of NHPA Regional Director for Wisconsin in 2010. In that role he was responsible for sanctioning courts throughout the state, assigning NHPA sanction numbers and maintaining the schedule of tournaments over the course of the year and ensuring that recognition patches get to each tournament director. John held that position for the next 8 years and was recognized as the NHPA Regional Director of the Year in 2017. John was also a WHPA Hall of Fame committee member for three years.

John's contributions to the WHPA and NHPA, leadership in the Fond du Lac Horseshoe Club, accomplishments as a horseshoe pitcher and his coaching and mentoring to numerous pitching enthusiasts make him a well-deserved addition to the WHPA Hall of Fame.

NHPA Award

- > National Regional Director of the Year (2017)

League Pitching Accomplishments

- > Fond du Lac County Pitcher of the Year (1977)
- > Deansville Player of the Year (2016)
- > Fond du Lac Singles League Champion – 14 times
- > Fond du Lac Doubles League Champion – 7 times
- > Waukegan, IL Scratch and Handicap League Champion – 4 times each in 4 years there
- > Deansville Tuesday and Thursday League Champion – 3 times each

Tournament Pitching Accomplishments

- > State Tournament Elders Championship Class 3rd Place (2019-20)
- > State Tournament Class 'A' Men Runner-Up (2015)
- > State Walking Doubles Tournament Class Champion (3 times, 2005, 2014, 2016)
- > Pitched a Perfect Game Twice (Deansville 2016 & 2019)
- > Pitched in 7 World Tournaments
 - o Made Championship Bracket 3 Times (Twice in Elders, Once in Men's)
 - o Pitched 23 ringers in a row in a game (2017)
- > Pitched in 12 Team World Tournaments since 2008
- > Club Team (Deansville) 'A' Division Champions (2 times)
- > Pitched 26 consecutive ringers in a game (Beloit 001' 2020)
- > Pitched 20 ringers in a row for his first time in a tournament (Arena)
- > Won many tournament titles throughout Wisconsin