

Confessions of a Clay Target Shooter

2001 NSSA Skeet HOF -

Three shooters would be inducted into the NSSA Skeet Hall of Fame in 2001 at the World Shoot Awards dinner. Ellen Nelms; John Shima and Hervey LaLiberte - the Boller Award winner.

Ellen Nelms-

After watching her husband Bob shoot for several years, Ellen suddenly decided she did not want to sit on the sidelines any longer. Her first venture on a skeet field was at the Cold Duck Open in 1971. She broke 54x100 that day- she had not shot one practice round prior to shooting this 100 targets !!! People were impressed and suggested she start shooting more often. With the help of her husband Bob, he taught her in the beginning. Later she would attribute Buck Stark, a shooting legend from the Dallas GC, that he taught her much about skeet.

In the mid 1970's she would stop shooting for a few years because her husband had stopped. This lasted for a short period of time as a close friend asked Ellen to come out to the gun club with her and start shooting again. This would lead to their taking a trip to Sea Island, GA where the Fred Missilidine taught them to shoot. From there, they went to a couple of shoots and she was hooked !!

Her first selection to the Lady All American Team was in 1985 - after a lot of practice and going to the shoots. She would remain on the Ladies All American First or Second Teams numerous years - in 2000 she was Captain of the Ladies Team. She attended close to 25 -World Shoots and claimed numerous Lady titles - the 12 gauge in 1985 with 250x250; the 28 gauge in 1986; the 410 bore in 1996 and 1999 and the Champ of Champs in 1996. She would also capture the Ladies Mini World HOA titles in 1995 and 1996.

In addition to her wins at the World and US Opens, she earned Lady HOA titles at the Bluegrass; Pan American; Big D; North/South; Zone 6 and many others. Much of her success she claimed from the squad she always shot with - Jim Prall; Doc Shima; John Shima; John Imbt; Kevin Prall and Fred Peters. I had the honor to shoot with that squad on numerous opportunities and Ellen was a joy to shoot with and was a great gun pointer. Ellen, like the legendary Carola Mandel of a few years earlier, would become the Lady Skeet Diva of the 1980's. She was truly impressive wherever she went and always had the great attitude that when in those rare times, she would not win, she would be happy for the person that won !! Based on her beauty, class and competitiveness plus everything she won, she truly was a Clay Target Legend and deserved this honor.

John Shima-

It was rare that two shooters that shot together on the same squad, would be inducted in the same year. This would change as John Shima would join Ellen for these 2001 inductions. Being close friends, this was a great occasion to celebrate these two greats.

Skeet was part of the Shima Family for over 40 years- the love of the sport was the legacy that John's dad, Dr. Arthur Shima taught John, his youngest son. John would not

actually begin to shoot skeet until he was about 8 years old. Being around skeet fields and shooters since his early childhood because he traveled to the shoots with his dad, one of the first jobs that John ever learned was gathering up spent shotshells so his Dad could reload them !! I remember that too with my Dad and it brings back great memories.

It all actually began on John's 8th birthday when his father took him out to try skeet shooting for the first time. In 1967, at age 10, John participated in his first registered shoot. He would go on to break his first 100 straight three years later in 1970. In 1971, John would attend his first World Shoot and it would continue as he now has attended over 51 World Shoots . In 1973 he was named to his first All American Team and this would continue for many years.

John had his first big success at the World Championships in 1977 - he won the 28 Gauge World Championship and the HOA with 548x550. In 1981, he would win the 12 Gauge and the Champion of Champions events. 1982 saw John and Al Magyar have a 32 round shootoff in the 12 Gauge and John would emerge as the Champion for the second consecutive year.

During his career, John would win Open and HOA titles at the Great Eastern; Bluegrass; North/South; Motor State and other notable shoots. He also won State titles in both Illinois and Texas plus had 6- 400x400's in his career.

John during his college years attended Trinity University in San Antonio, TX which was coached by Colonel Tom Hanzel. John credits Hanzel for really teaching him skeet - both how to shoot and instruct it. At Trinity, he'd meet Todd Bender and a strong friendship developed that led to them forming a Shooting School and conducting shooting clinics across the US. Later in his career, both John and Todd would become the first Master Class instructors in the NSSA.

I've had the honor to know John; his Dad and Mom plus brothers over the years. We've spent hours talking skeet and the great experiences, we both have had. Living still in San Antonio, John still writes for numerous shooting publications and has authored several books on shooting. He still loves the game and helps shooters throughout the world to become better gunners. Truly a Clay Target Legend, John has distinguished himself both on and off the skeet field and I'm honored to call him a friend.

Hervey La Liberte - Boller Award

No one did more for skeetshooting and League Shooting in the Northeast and East Coast than this gentleman. Beginning in the early 1950's, Hervey was out developing shooting facilities and gun clubs. In 1962, the Eastern Connecticut Skeet League was formed and was made up of eight clubs with one team each, five shooters to a team. Hervey formed this league as a result of his own club not being accepted to the New London County Conservation Group. This league would later grow to over 60 teams - Herve would be its President numerous times.

In 1974, Herve would receive an award for his involvement and developing the Eastern CT League - well deserved. In 1982, the Connecticut State Skeet Association recognized

him for his outstanding contributions to Skeet over the years. He would be inducted into the Connecticut Skeet HOF in 1987.

Besides organizing leagues, Herve served as President of the CT Skeet Association three years plus also was the Comptroller. He would later run to be an NSSA State Director and he'd serve numerous times representing Connecticut. Herve also was a great promoter of shoots like the "Little Muk" shoot and he developed the popular "B-C- D -E shoot".

In addition to his support behind the scenes, Herve won his share of Open titles and fared well on the skeet circuit. In the 1970's he performed well at the Great Eastern and won awards at the major clubs in the Northeast. At World Shoots, he has a member of a World Championship Five Man Team and captured several Senior awards during his long career.

I never had the honor to meet Herve, but I always heard about all the great things he did for skeet in the Northeast. Guys like this are what has made Skeet and the NSSA great !! Truly considered a Clay Target Legend, many thanks for all you did for our game.

What a great group of 2001 inductees !! Next time, we'll start our discussion of 2002 and cover the major shoots and show the top scores.

Until next time