

★ "COWBOY" JIMMY MOORE ★

"Cowboy" Jimmy Moore, the 63rd inductee into the Albuquerque Sports Hall of Fame, is awash in Horatio Alger rags-to-riches stories.

Today, at age 86, Moore is a member of both the International Pocket Billiards Hall of Fame and the Billiards Congress of America Hall of Fame. He was 72 when he joined the IPB Hall and 83 when the BCA honored him in Las Vegas, Nev.

The son of a Georgia blacksmith, sheriff and streetcar conductor, Moore as a boy would help his family make ends meet by picking 100 pounds of cotton for 35 cents, manage a fruit stand, deliver newspapers and even ran poker games on the sly.

At age 18 when his family moved to Detroit, Moore set bowling pins for six cents a line at the Car Barn bowling alley. He became a good bowler and once carried a 233 average.

"There were billiards in the bowling alley and I took a cue stick in my hands for the first time," he said. "It all started there. I immediately fell in love with the game."

Moore was an instant success. In early 1929, still 18 years old, he won the Michigan State pocket billiards championship. He repeated as champ in 1930, 1931 and 1932 then the tournament fell through when nobody would challenge him from 1933 through 1936.

During the Great Depression, Moore joined an exhibition tour with Ray St. Laurent, who promoted himself as "The Red Devil." Moore ran the table on the great Don Willis in Canton, Ohio, after Willis had beaten St. Laurent.

Moore excels in running the table. He's captured many come-from-behind wins with precision shots, including a much-publicized beating of Irving Crane. After trailing, 148-8, Moore hit 142 straight to win, 150-148.

"I once ran 236 straight in Detroit. It was my biggest one-ball streak," Moore recalls.

The dapper Moore earned a living competing professionally in pocket billiards for 66 years. Purses were meager during the early days, nothing like today's payoffs in the \$100,000 plus category, he says.

"The richest purse I ever won was \$10,000 in The Legends

Tournament in New Jersey in 1993," Moore said. I played for only a few bucks in some matches. Most of the time for \$100 to \$500. During the Great Depression we played for as little as 25 cents odd ball."

Some publications in the 1960s including Esquire Magazine referred to Moore as "pool's underpaid prince."

In 1965 he won the world title in a 9-man round robin at the Riviera Arena in New York City. Records show that in 1971 Moore cashed \$1,000 for first in One Pocket, \$600 for sixth in Nine Ball and \$500 for 10th in the 14.1 finals among 148 entries in the \$40,500 Pocket Billiards Championships in Los Angeles, the then richest tourney in the world.

A native of Hogansville, GA, Moore became Albuquerque's goodwill ambassador representing the city in many international tournaments. He moved here in 1945. Moore was co-owner and operator of the Cue Billiards Hall adjacent to Lobo Theatre in the mid-1940s.

Moore competed against and defeated some of the greatest names in the game, Willie Mosconi, Joe Balsis, Don "Cincinnati Kid" Willis, Joe Procita, Luther "Wimpy" Lassiter, Steve Mizerak, Andy Ponzi, Irving Crane, Eddie Taylor, Eddie McGehean and Larry Johnson.

Two of his matches against Mosconi were held at Albuquerque's old Chaplin Alley on March 21, 1956, and at Highland Bowl on Oct. 31, 1958. The Albuquerque Convention Center on Second Street N.W. now sits where the Chaplin site was located.

Other more-heralded Moore-Mosconi matches were in Winston-Salem, N.C., Philadelphia, Chicago and Johnson City, Ill. He won all-around honors at Johnson City in 1964 and the first-ever U.S. Open Pocket Billiards Tournament in Chicago in 1966.

He has appeared in many exhibition tours (including one in 1964 with Dean Chance, the former major league pitching great who now is president of the International Boxing Association).

He says he got his "Cowboy" nickname when he showed up at the Commodore Hotel championships in New York City during the 1950s wearing a tuxedo with cowboy boots and a big white cowboy hat.

He married Julie Chavez here 48 years ago and has seven children, sons Jamie, Raymond and Tommy and daughter, Pamela Nathan, Kolma Moore, Emily DiLorenzo and Linda Bates.