

"A morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable." ~Thomas Jefferson



WiLdWood by-the-sea: Nostalgia & Recipes

Shuffleboard in the Wildwoods

Anita Hirsch, Author of the recently published book
"Wildwood-By-The-Sea: Nostalgia and Recipes"

Thomas Flud didn't aspire to be on the United States Team competing in International Shuffleboard.....it was one of those things that just happens in life. In 1966, when he was looking for a summer job, he was hired to oversee the Shuffleboard Courts in Wildwood, where generations earlier, his great grandfather, **Oliver Bright**, had served as City Commissioner.

There were 24 free courts on the beach block between Taylor and Andrew and a shed that housed the shuffleboard equipment: 2 cue sticks and four yellow and four black discs for each court.

Tom would open up the shed at 9AM to be greeted by a line of folks waiting to play. All day and every day, he would be there to hand out equipment, assign a court to the players, time the players to make sure they were there just an hour, or maybe if no one was waiting, he would say they could play longer, and then close the courts at dusk and lock up the shed. During the afternoons, business was slow, because most went to the beach, so Tom would practice in the afternoons and try the pointers and methods of the better players.

In Wildwood, in 1947, during the days when **EZ Fox** was Recreation and Parks Director, six shuffleboard courts were built on the land between the Boardwalk and Ocean Avenue and between Taylor and Andrew, an extension of Fox Park. They were beautiful and well made courts...very smooth and professional and surrounded by grass and flowers. River bank gravel was used in the cement to keep the smooth surface for the discs. This became important on the competitive level. **Nick Silvidio**, a tireless Wildwood co-worker of EZ Fox, helped with the building of the Shuffleboard Courts.

Shuffleboard was very popular in the late 40s and early 50s. Free city owned and sponsored courts were an attraction for tourism, so 18 more were added in the 1950's....there were then 24 courts in all.

While **Tom Flud** was watching over the shuffleboard courts in Wildwood, there might have been 1000 shuffleboard courts all up and down the East Coast. Most seaside resorts had shuffleboard. Now there are far less.

Besides the public shuffleboard courts in Wildwood, most of the motels had their own courts. There are still a few motels that have a court for guests: the **Jolly Roger**, the **Imperial 500**, the **Tangiers**, the **Villa Nova** and the **Caribbean** in Wildwood Crest. In the late '70's a Green Acres grant was received by the city of North Wildwood to build **Allen Park** which included four shuffleboard courts. They are still there and used for family recreation.

The first Wildwood appointed Director of Recreation to administer the Shuffleboard Courts was **Charles Juliana**, who kept that position until his retirement in 1968. "Mr. J", established the annual tournaments which were open to men and women of all ages.

There were separate shuffleboard rules for those just enjoying the relaxation and exercise of it, and rules for championship play. Shuffleboard tournaments were held and were



Shuffleboard winners: L-R: **Michael Prete** from Phila., **Tom Flud**, Wildwood's Tournament Director, and **John Bejsiuk** from Washington Twp., NJ



Pictured at the Shuffleboard shed is **Les Cline** who helped **Tom Flud** run the tournaments in the city of Wildwood when shuffleboard was so popular. Les is the current Chief of the 15th Street Volunteer Fire Company.

well attended in Wildwood. There were no entry fees. The city awarded prizes including trophies and silver plates to the winners and runners-up.

As many as 20 Shuffleboard Clubs were formed in New Jersey when shuffleboard was in its prime. Now the Ocean Grove and Ocean City clubs are all that remain. Tom Flud joined the Ocean City club, formed in 1941, for the purpose of competition and won many state shuffleboard championships over the years. Between 1976-1980, he was the top ranked player in New Jersey.

In 1984, the New Jersey Shuffleboard Association authorized a State Hall of Fame and in 1997, Flud was inducted into the **New Jersey Shuffleboard Hall of Fame**. With the beginnings as the person watching over the shuffleboard courts in Wildwood, he went on to be named to the first United States team to compete in International competition against Canada and Japan.

During his years at Fox Park, Tom enjoyed being recognized by residents and tourists as the "shuffleboard man." Years later, he served Wildwood in other capacities including City Administrator, Director of Public Safety, and lastly as Superintendent of Public Works. Through his public career, he continued to attribute his joy in working with people to his initial experiences teaching his favorite sport and encouraging friendly competition.

As in many other resort communities, the decades of free shuffleboard in the Wildwoods ended when the new Convention Center needed parking for the new facility and also the city decided that they needed to generate revenue from the shuffleboard property.

Thank you to Thomas Flud and to the Wildwood Historical Society for assistance with this article.



In 1947, city administrators, including EZ Fox on the right, look over the 6 shuffleboard courts. (Wildwood Historical Society)



This old postcard shows the first six shuffleboard courts, surrounded by grass and flowers and paths.



The 24 shuffleboard courts in Wildwood built in the 50's. (Wildwood Historical Society)



The 24 shuffleboard courts in front of the Rio Motel. (Wildwood Historical Society)

Capt'n Mac's Crab Imperial

This recipe comes from Tom Flud's good friends, brothers Steve and Dave MacDonald, who owned Capt'n Mac's Seafood House (formerly Sunberg's Restaurant). It was located at Second and New York Avenues in North Wildwood and thrived from 1985 to 1995.

2 lbs. lump crab meat
1 cup mayonnaise
2 ounces finely diced green pepper
2 ounces finely diced canned mushroom (squeeze out liquid)
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon A1 sauce
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1/2 teaspoon veggie seasoning
Salt and pepper to taste
Lemon wedges



Pick through crab and remove all shells. In a large mixing bowl, mix all ingredients except the crab meat. Gently fold in crab meat, trying to keep pieces intact. Do not overmix. Place 5 to 6 ounces of the mixture into individual greased scallop shells or casseroles. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 20 minutes or until golden. Serve with lemon wedges. Makes 8-10 Servings.