

Shoe Biz Profile - January 1997

KENNY POGUE

Originally Written by Jeanette Claas

Many of you fellows out there who have served in the armed services know what "KP" stands for; but in the horseshoe circuit both in Missouri and Illinois "KP" has only one meaning - Kenny Pogue! No matter where Kenny pitches there is always excitement, conversation and good friendly competition.



A home grown product of MO, Kenny was born in the southeastern farming town of Ellington on September 24, 1930. He moved to St. Louis County in 1950. After serving several years in the Marine Corps during the Korean War, Kenny worked for Continental Can Company until he retired in 1980 moving back to Ellington on his 300 plus acre farm. Kenny married his wife, Ann, 44 years ago in 1952. They have two daughters and are now enjoying four grandchildren. Kenny and Ann are spending their retirement years traveling to horseshoe tournaments across the USA in their motor

home enjoying the camaraderie of the people they meet at the horseshoe tournaments. Kenny says his "shoes" have taken him places he never would have gone. In his travels Kenny likes to drive the small highways, avoiding turnpikes and toll roads like a plague; refusing to pay a toll when you can't see anything (and you already pay taxes).

Kenny was a late bloomer when he began playing horseshoes. While working at Continental Can, a fellow worker named Joe Douchant got him interested in horseshoes. Kenny bought his first horseshoes, a pair of Gordons that had been cracked and welded down the middle, from Joe for \$5. Joe is from Illinois and managed the Tri-County Horseshoe League; Kenny joined that league in 1977. Kenny says he has probably pitched more horseshoes in IL than MO due to his early ties.

He never felt he pitched well enough to play in tournaments, but Ann encouraged him on. Kenny became a NHPA member in 1984 and entered his first tournament in Springfield that year pitching in Class F. He pitched so well that from from that time on he was always placed in Class "A". Kenny entered his first World Tournament in 1984, at Huntsville, AL where he qualified with a 65%. He has missed only three World Tournaments since then.

Kenny has acquired quite a collection of trophies, patches and accomplishments during his horseshoe years. Although Kenny has never been a MO State Champ he has always finished high in the Championship Division. Most recently at the 1996 MO State Tourn., Kenny tied for 2nd place, finishing third with a ringer percentage of 66%. Kenny was on the Team World Championship team in 1991 along with Vicki Winston, Stan Griggs and Sam Carter in Beloit, WI. It was the only time MO won that event. He has participated seven times in the Las Vegas Open Tourn. held in January each year. Kenny has pitched with and won against many World Champions including Walter Ray Williams Jr, Alan Francis, Jim Knisley, just to name a few. In 1986 when Alan Francis moved from the Junior Div. to the Men's Div. in the State Tourn., Kenny won the first game that Alan played. Kenny was the only player that ever beat Alan in the MO State Championship Class.

Kenny has his own unique pitching style; starting off on the wrong foot, holding his shoe somewhat differently. He says he never realized his style was so wrong until he entered tournaments and noticed how the other fellows pitched. By this time he was pitching about 60%, "Why change now?"

Kenny is a member of NMHC, where he is active in tournaments and shows up on occasion for open play on Sundays. He is also a member of the Mineral Area Horseshoe Assn. and a member of the Tri-County League in Cahokia, IL.

A bit of bad luck stuck Kenny back in 1988 when he fought a battle with cancer of the kidney. And then again in 1992 while attending the Las Vegas Horseshoe Tourn., he collapsed on the courts suffering a heart attack and underwent open heart surgery. At the age of 66, Kenny is feeling strong and taking his horseshoes dead seriously; and is still a fascinating pitcher to watch on the courts. Just how much does Kenny enjoy playing horseshoes? Kenny drives 150 miles from his home to Cahokia, IL to pitch in a league once a week. You gotta love it!