

## Jerry Briesath

The Grand Billiards Club possesses something that billiards clubs around the country don't have. And that something is having a club member named Jerry Briesath. Jerry is widely regarded as one of the most influential instructors in the history of pocket billiards. As proof of that, in 2022 he was inducted into the Billiards Congress of America, BCA, Hall of Fame. I have been tasked to provide some background about Jerry to give our club members a sense of how wonderful and talented a person he truly is. Hopefully, after reading this, you will appreciate Jerry as much as many in the pool playing community does.



Jerry was born in March 1937 in Winona, Minnesota. While at Winona high school, Jerry's first love was golf. In fact, he was good enough to play varsity as the number one golf team player. This experience taught him athletic movement, rhythm, and repeatable mechanics rather than guesswork that contributed to his later teaching philosophy. Jerry also discovered pocket billiards at that time by playing at the local Winona YMCA. After he graduated from high school, he moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While in Milwaukee, a friend brought him into a local pool hall. He became fascinated by the game and started playing frequently. During that time, he became friends with that pool hall owner, Willis Covington. Through their friendship, Willis's influence helped him cultivate and elevate his level of play. During that time Jerry learned to fall in love with the precision and patterns of the game of pool.

Jerry started competing in regional pool tournaments in 1957. He achieved his first state championship in 1961. It was then he felt he had the skills to compete at a world class level. As an active player, he competed during the 60's and early 70's in regional and national events building his reputation. He became a formidable competitor on the Midwest Professional Tour and national events during that period in his life.

Jerry's friend, Willis Covington provided pool training at the local Milwaukee YMCA. In 1965 Willis unfortunately suffered a stroke and thus couldn't perform his training duties. Willis asked Jerry to fill in for him. Jerry did such a good job at training that the number of students increased dramatically. Looking back, the unfortunate medical incident that happened to his friend resulted in the beginning the foundation of this pool training career.

In 1967 he received a call from a pool hall owner in Madison, WI. Jerry had participated in some pool tournaments that were held there and the owner was impressed. The owner's manager had left and he needed a replacement. He asked Jerry if he would manage the place. At that time, Jerry's day job was working for the Wisconsin Power Company. The owner offered Jerry a comparable salary to what he was making. But being able to be involved with the sport he loved full time convinced Jerry to take the offer. Based on that decision, Jerry and his wife moved to Madison.

Unfortunately, in 1970, Jerry removed himself from professional competition as he came down with a medical condition called Essential Tremor. This condition resulted in Jerry not being able to hold the cue steady enough to be competitive.

After several years, Jerry decided to open a pool room of his own. An opportunity opened up for a building for a potential pool hall and Jerry bought it. He rehabbed the building into a pool hall venue and opened it in 1973. He was thinking one night in bed and came up with the novel name Cue-Nique which became the pool hall name. There was a part of the pool room that Jerry felt needed something different so he had a large 100-gallon

fish tank installed. He felt this tank would make his facility unique and have players obtain a tranquil feeling. Jerry provided free pool lessons as a benefit to all his customers. This policy increased his customer base which resulted in Cue-Nique becoming a very successful business. Even though the Wisconsin State Championship Pool Tournament was always held in Milwaukee, many of the state's top players were from Cue-Nique in Madison.

Cue-Nique wasn't just a pool hall, it became a true training environment. Jerry utilized his skills to clearly explain how and why things happened on a pool table. It was a place where lessons were central to the identity of Cue-Nique. His teaching philosophy of structured, methodical, and repeated fundamentals are his primary training objectives that has benefited aspiring and seasoned pool players alike. That Pool School concept would spread far beyond Madison. He helped launch the BCA Certified Instructor Program in 1992 which created a way for younger players to learn to play the game correctly from the beginning. Jerry contributed to pool educational materials by creating the BCA "How to Play Right" book and video. From his Wisconsin Pool School, he is identified as a founding figure in modern pool instructor certification.

During the 70's and 80's his pool training business took off. At that time, he was the only recognized trainer that traveled domestically and internationally to instruct pool players. In fact, he made several trips to help players in Germany and Switzerland. Over the years, Jerry's student list spans champions and respected leaders in the sport. Notable individuals include Jeanette Lee, known as the "Black Widow", Tyler Styler, Mark Wilson and Randy Goettlicher. Jerry helped all of these players improve their game and teaching techniques. Mark and Randy have since become some of the current top-rated pool instructors. Randy Goettlicher in particular is one of the original four Master Instructors certified by the Billiard Congress of America. Those four include Randy, Jerry Briesath, Leslie Rogers and Richard Rohr.

Jerry sold the Cue-Nique pool hall to his manager in 1995. He also owned a second pool room with a partner in Madison called the Grand Room. He sold that pool room in 2001.

After Jerry retired from pool hall ownership, Jerry and his wife Carole moved from Madison to Surprise, AZ. They decided to make the move to get out of the cold Madison winters. Unfortunately, during their time in AZ, Carole suffered from cancer and passed away. He now lives alone but still maintains a very active lifestyle. In addition, Jerry goes back to Wisconsin to visit friends and family in the summers to escape the Arizona heat.

While in Arizona, Jerry has continued his pool teaching ways. Jerry is still in constant demand being called for one-on-one coaching either locally in Arizona or being flown to private homes across the country.

At 89 years young, Jerry is still strong and active. He is still playing his second favorite sport of golf. In addition, Jerry is also keeping his mind active by solving Sudoku puzzles. Being involved in all these activities is an impressive feat for someone his age.

I asked Jerry where he sees the future of the sport of pool. He responded by stating that in the past, most professional pool players are hurting financially. However, he feels the future is improving. Tournaments are starting to increase prize money and there is more endorsement money available. In addition, the BCA has taken a more active role in promoting the sport. He would like to see the more skilled players getting involved by teaching the up-and-coming players the needed skills to become better players.

People everywhere in the pool playing community are lucky to have interacted with Jerry. The game of pool is so much better due to Jerry's love of the game. Thank you Jerry for the incredible contributions that you have made to improve the sport of pool. Our Billiards Club is truly honored to have Jerry Briesath as one of our cherished members.

