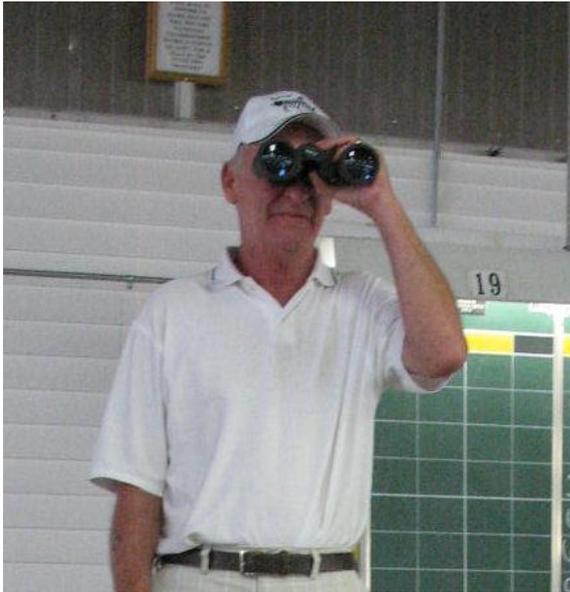


Tom "Blind Guy" Churchill



Tom Churchill worked for the U.S. Post Office for 18 years and as a conductor for the CSX railroad in Benton Harbor, Michigan for 7 years prior to becoming legally blind in 1993, at age 43. Tom had perfect 20/20 vision; went to bed one night and woke up with 260/200 vision. Doctors informed him it was caused from macular degeneration that gave no warning and with no cure. It left Tom unable to see anything but a blur at distances and unable to read, unless extremely close.

Of course, this disability caused Tom to retire, and in 1995 he and his wife, Newey, moved to Winters Park. In Michigan, Tom was an avid hunter and fisherman, but because of his lack of sight he had to give up hunting. Tom still enjoys saltwater fishing, especially on chartered trips and with Steve Barnett, in the Gulf.

It wasn't until the year 2000, that he was introduced to shuffleboard. R.L. Lay and Tom stopped by the Winters courts one day and met Marshall Leigh. Tom showed interest in the game and Marshall said he would try to help

him. Things didn't go very well for the first month or so and Marshall thought he probably wouldn't be able to do it. Tom had a pair of binoculars at home and decided to give them a try. He has been using the glasses ever since. When questioned on how he does it, Tom said, "I look through the binoculars at the spot I want to hit, then aim and shoot from the same area at my end."

With Marshall's tutoring, Tom continued to progress and in 2001 he started playing in Park tournaments. After really enjoying the game and having some success, he moved on to compete in District and State tournaments in 2002. Four years later in 2006, Tom qualified for the Central District, District Amateur Masters (Reiney) tournament and captured 1st place, an almost unbelievable accomplishment for someone that is legally blind. Tom continued his tournament play and in 2007, acquired enough points for FSA Pro status.

Dini Rushton's sister, Josephine Duthie, from Winters Park, watched Tom at tournaments last season, and was so inspired by his play that she painted a picture of him. Tom inspires us too, and we're happy and proud that he is a member of our Zephyrhills Shuffleboard Club. He takes a lot of good natured ribbing from his many friends, but we congratulate Tom on his incredible accomplishments and wish him the very best in shuffleboard.

Chuck Moulton