Bill McMillan chuckles as Earl announces that “Bill's doctor has told him on a number of occasions that he won't be with us much longer!!” In reality, the doctor has stopped telling him that he won’t be with us much longer and has instead begun telling him: “I’m amazed you're still with us.”

The sobering diagnosis came about eleven years ago. Bill, then managing a hotel in upstate New York with wife Vivienne, was prompted to visit his doctor after a particularly restless night. The doctor told Bill there was good news and bad news. Bill recalls it this way:
I said: “Well shoot Doc; give me the good news.”
Doc replies: “You've got pneumonia.”
Bill responds: “Skip the bad news, Doc.”!!

The doctor didn't oblige. Bill had congestive heart failure or in more clinical terms, cardiomyopathy. His heart was pumping at about 35 percent of its normal rate. Now, it's down to 15 percent. But that wasn't the reason Bill found himself gasping in a different doctor's office five years ago. Another examination had revealed that Bill had multiple myeloma - bone marrow cancer. Chemotherapy was ruled out because of his heart condition.

**Turns out a cue stick has proven infinitely more effective than chemo. Bill never has played better.** I think [shuffleboard] is what's kept him going for the last five years says wife Vivienne who celebrates her 41st wedding anniversary with Bill next month. Bill, who spent a couple of years as a first baseman in the St. Louis Cardinals organization, concurs. I'm usually ice cold when I'm shuffling because of the circulation; it just can't pump, as Bill explains. So shuffleboard is a natural marriage, (Also see page 2 below)
if you will, because we can “push em down” ~ sit for a few minutes while the other end pushes back; heart builds up and I'm getting good exercise.

Bill spent the initial stages of his retirement on the golf course only to be converted by the diverse elements of the game those go unrecognized by those who gravitate toward mainstream sports. You know; you can play offense and defense, said Bill who retired from the hotel management business but also spent 24 years working for a major propane gas corporation.

In speaking about shuffleboard Bill explains it this way: “There's strategy, there's a little bit of everything in the game. I had played sports all my life, so I could see a little bit of all the sports that I was comfortable with in the game of shuffleboard. So then I started playing. Then I wanted to move to the next level. That's where Earl came in, adopting Bill as his de facto protégé. Each day, the two would convene at Betmar's sprawling club - featuring 24 courts surrounded by dozens of wooden benches and cooled by 48 ceiling fans - for their 1 o'clock invitational.

Bill and Earl teamed to compete at Lakeside, OH in the US Nationals of 2004 and did so most successfully ~ meeting Bergeron and Farris in the opening round ~ and beating them!!! While they did not win the Tournament they did finish in a respectable 2nd place.

The Shuffler is pleased to add a new and significant dimension to this story. (We apologize for not having a more precise date, but at that time we did not take the same care in recording the date of our articles.)

The New Dimension: Vivienne (McMillan) has now taken up the sport and is first and foremost experiencing great enjoyment!! I spoke with her while in FL in March of 2007 during one of her matches and I can report that she will experience more than “great enjoyment”; she will also frequently experience the joy of winning!!

Bill and Vivienne McMillan are a great couple for whom Shuffleboard has become their lives. We salute them both.

The pic in the margin is of Vivienne and Bill.

Original Story by Earl Ball;
Adjustments by Stan on 2007 05 14.