

Chatten honored with Porter Award

By Vern Roberts

Having worked with Chatten for the past quarter century, it was an honor to join with the players in Portland for a fun night and show of appreciation.

We were there to show our love and to honor someone who doesn't play. But she loves handball and handball players like no one else.

She's an icon in our sport...maybe the only person who can be recognized with just one name. I've been honored to work with her...and, I've learned from her — as much as I've learned from anyone. And, all of us have enjoyed what she's brought to the Perfect Game.

Chatten started helping with tournaments and the Oregon State Handball Association. She helped bring the top pros to Portland for over a decade for an event that included her trademark: FUN! The pros teamed with locals at the Portland Pro/Am.

Then Chatten set her sights higher, promoting handball and its players on the national level. Her Court Chatter column is going on two decades of fun in this magazine. Chatten's press conferences at the nationals landed handball in the news — just as it did in Portland — as well as several pieces in Sports Illustrated and USA Today.

Then she went for the fences. Chatten upgraded our nationals productions and produced three made-for-tv matches. Then, she put on the all-time best handball show with the "magazine" format that took place here at the MAC. Chatten hired the best people in the business to catch the great action interspersed with personal interviews of the players and some history of the sport. If you'd like to see it, just give us a call at the office.

Vern Roberts presents Chatten the Carl Porter Award along with a photo of the icon from the 2004 Nationals' banquet in her famous red dress.



Many handballers may not have known of Chatten's involvement in those efforts but when it came to the 2004 Nationals and the '09 Worlds, Chatten was front-and-center. She was the reason those two will go down as the best events our community has enjoyed.

So, for all the things she taught me and for all the wonderful experiences she has given handball players, it was an honor to present her with the Carl Porter Award for your contributions to the perfect game. Thank you from all of us.



Chatten's Acceptance:

In recent years, I've begun referring to my handball family as "The Tribe," probably because I'm a fan of that ridiculous TV show "Survivor," (there, I've admitted it ...). Thinking of you makes me happy, and somehow the reference fits and amuses me, giving me a little extra smile. And you didn't "vote me off!" You voted me this beautiful honor, and I thank you.

Incidentally, my connection to handball began on my first date with David Steinberg, at San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf in March of 1986, when he bought dinner with money won in the only Doubles Pro Stop ever held. (That was with partner Dave Wyrsh, for you trivia buffs.)

From the minute I came around, I loved handball. I've always wanted handball to be a better "place." By which I mean, I saw how incredible the athletes were, and how special the camaraderie was, and I wanted the rest of the world to know.

In 1987, I attended my first nationals (Baltimore, trivia buffs!) and saw a brochure for Handball Camp. I figured that was a better way to learn to play than having David try to teach me. Isn't this every parent's reason for paying for Driver's Education?

Anyhow, I went to Handball Camp in Steamboat Springs. Vern was there with his very young family, and the first evening the group sat outside on the pool deck introducing themselves. Vern addressed us, saying, "We have to search far and wide to find people who care about handball as much as we do."

I teared up then, under the crystal night sky. I have no idea how I knew I was one of those people 25 years ago, but the emotion I felt when Vern spoke indicates I did know. And two-and-a-half decades later, I'm proud to still be one.

I enjoyed Camp for three summers, but I knew I was never going to put in the time to be a player. However, I'd already begun making a difference in the areas I most certainly excelled at: shouting about The Perfect Game from the rooftops, so to speak. I went about getting media attention of any kind, improving existing tournaments and starting new ones, developing strategies to bring the game to wider audiences, and writing about the people in our obscure sport who were doing interesting things off the courts.

My efforts in these areas have overlapped and spun off in many directions, some successful, some not, and I'm humbled that some of those accomplishments laid foundations for later efforts. And I've written some big checks along the way, because dreaming, experimenting and investigating cost plenty, and these were always gambles I wanted to make.

So, my Tribe, know that my involvement in Handball is, always has been, and always will be an immeasurable joy to me. Of course it's you people in our handball family who have become beloved stand-ins for the grandparents, parents, sisters and brothers I never had. Again I thank you, and I'll see you soon: from my vantage point behind Tournament Control, in the Hospitality Room, or on the pages of Court Chatter.

Don't forget: Send me your fun stuff!

Love, Chatten