

## “And the Ball Stopped Here” by Steve Lillis with Tom “Dr. Cue” Rossman

Tom “Dr. Cue” Rossman (ten time WPA World Champion in the “sport gift” of Artistic Pool and five time ESPN Trick Shot Champion) combined talents with Steve Lillis (former world ranked professional pool player, accomplished trick shot artist, and President / Founder of Gospel Trick Shot Ministries, Inc.) to journey to Quebec, Canada through upstate New York July 20<sup>th</sup> to August 6<sup>th</sup>. The Gospel Trick Shot portable pool table invented by Fred and Devra Robledo, who own and operate Wildlife and Wood in Anaheim, California (a top producer of pool table legs for major pool table manufacturers in the USA) accompanied them in their travels.

Our journey starts with a Gospel Trick Shot Show at a Christian youth camp in the Albany, New York area for about one hundred and fifty underprivileged inner city New York / New Jersey junior high school youths and ends 16 days later with a Gospel Trick Shot Show for another one hundred and fifty 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade high school youth from Newfoundland, Canada attending a summer French training program on a college campus in Quebec City, Canada. Tom and Steve have journeyed to 21 countries over the last 15 years to minister on pool tables with trick shots and instruction with a Christian message of hope and encouragement. Here is our story entitled “And the Ball Stops Here”!

To set the stage, we need to back up about two weeks to Illinois to a training site where Tom “Dr. Cue” Rossman teamed up with BCA Hall of Famers and superstars of American pool Nick Varner, Johnny Archer, and Jeanette Lee to work with the Billiard Education Foundation (BEF) in training young American pool players for the upcoming Atlantic Cup Challenge. Tom’s responsibility was to work on the mental, mathematical, and emotional side of the game. Back in February of this year he published a training manual, which also included the spiritual component of the game and came away from that event with a burning desire to touch the lives of more young people. It just “so happens” that Steve Lillis was attending a Christian youth camp at the same time with his 8 year old grandson Jayden, who had just performed his first Gospel Trick Shot with “Pop Pop” on the Gospel Trick Shot portable pool table the week before at an outreach to underprivileged inner city young people in Paterson, NJ.

Now let’s get back to that first Gospel Trick Shot Show with Tom and Steve at the Christian camp in the upstate Albany New York area on July 20<sup>th</sup>. This show was scheduled by Steve many months before with Steve totally unaware of the sequence of events that would follow. Additionally Gospel Trick Shot Ministries, Inc. (GTS) had donated a slate top pool table to that same camp two years before that! Steve picked up Tom from the Newark Airport on the afternoon of July 20<sup>th</sup>. They needed to head north to do a Gospel Trick Shot Show that same night, which included the setup of the GTS portable pool table. Running late they arrived 30 minutes before one hundred and fifty young people would file into the building. Because of steps, the terrain, and other

obstacles there was no time to back in the truck and trailer, unload the portable pool table, and roll it into place. Normally the table sets up and is ready to go in 20 minutes. Tom took a look at the GTS donated slate top 1,000-pound pool table in the other room of the building. Based on his years of experience of owning a retail billiard store and billiard room back in the 1970's and 80's declared that we could move the table on rollers in a matter of minutes. Rollers were provided and setup was completed with 10 minutes to spare to warm up for the show. As the over amped group of one hundred fifty junior high campers filed into the building Tom and Steve wondered what they would say during the show. Yes, the trick shots would be routine with a combined many thousands of shows under their belts, but what do you say to young people who hear gun shots almost every night back home with gang violence all around them and with maybe one parent or grandparent to care for them.

Tom usually leads off with his vast array of rapid-fire shots tempered with witty phases and instruction while sharing the joy of the roll combined with stories of hope and faith. Early in the show a ball "accidentally" fell out of a pocket and began to roll on the hard wood floor. Tom declared to the young people: "wait, watch where it stops" and, in unison, the entire group of one hundred fifty young people rose to their feet and watched every turn of the ball until it stopped some 10 feet away from the table. Then Tom prophetically said "and the ball stopped here"! Tom began to explain that in the expanse of God's creation the ball stopped there and similarly each person in the room, at that moment, had stopped exactly where they were at an appointed place in time and space. The young people got it, as they realized that it was no accident that they were there.

Every one of them had been given scholarships by a multitude of people who wanted them to get out of the city for one week to experience God, peace, and joy in the woods of Upstate New York. This set the stage for Steve to be the closer with his thought provoking array of trick shots, which are, illustrated messages using position, colors, numbers, and direction of the billiard balls to reveal life lessons with Christian application of hope and encouragement. Steve felt led that night to share the story of Ella with the pool balls. Ella was Steve's 2 ½ year old granddaughter who died tragically in a shuttle bus accident over two years ago. This story had moved the hearts of many before and tonight these one hundred and fifty young people were touched to the core of their inner being! For Steve Lillis and his family the passing of Ella was a representation of: "and the ball stopped here". What do you do when "life happens" to you like that? This amazing story gave hope and encouragement that night, as many of the young people looked to Jesus for hope and encouragement because of their desperate situations back home. This night became the pattern for a sequence of amazing events over the next two plus weeks.

I could go on and on and share about the three billiard room shows with one televised to the people of Canada. I could detail the outdoor shows on the GTS portable pool table by the St. Laurence Seaway and in old downtown Quebec City in the city center square.

I could talk about the park shows on the GTS portable pool table in and around Quebec, but I will end with the last show for the one hundred and fifty youth on the campus where we stayed with one hundred and twenty outreach international team members, who were there to also give hope and encouragement to the people of Quebec. On that last day in the parking lot, outside the cafeteria, we set up the portable pool table and students filed out and circled the pool table to see the show. Tom and Steve had a special quest Gospel Trick Shot Artist traveling with them named Chuck Dutcher from Salem, New York. Chuck had performed with Tom and Steve the prior two weeks and was in training to hone his skills. So when Steve set up a six ball trick shot representing his family of six, Chuck approached the table with confidence, having made that particular shot perfectly many time before. Chuck got down and stroked the cue ball, and only one ball went in, disappearing from the table surface. Chuck was perplexed and tried to grab the balls to make a second attempt, but Steve yelled: "stop" with a follow up declaration: "and the ball stopped here". You see, that was a "perfect" illustration that Ella is gone and the other five family members remain and there is hope for those remaining. Not one of those young people in the audience that day in the parking lot outside the cafeteria moved as they held their position in time and space to hear the eternal message of hope and faith through Jesus Christ!