



Gaming Hall of Fame Announces Class of 2017

Diana Bennett, John Breeding, Joe Kaminkow and Melvin B. Wolzinger will be presented with industry's highest honor at G2E 2017

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LAS VEGAS – The American Gaming Association (AGA) announced the four honorees who will be inducted into the Gaming Hall of Fame's Class of 2017. The inductees are: **Diana Bennett**, a casino management luminary and renowned philanthropist; **John Breeding**, the visionary behind the electronic card shuffler and proprietary table games; **Joe Kaminkow**, the legendary slot game designer who pioneered the industry in licensing branded games; and **Melvin B. Wolzinger**, a prominent Nevada businessman and Las Vegas community leader.

An invitation-only ceremony honoring the inductees will be held the evening of Wednesday, October 4 at the Chairman's Reception during the annual Global Gaming Expo (G2E), presented by AGA and Reed Exhibitions.

"The Class of 2017 was instrumental in shaping the casino-gaming industry," said **Geoff Freeman, president and CEO of the AGA**. "From revolutionizing the way games are seen and experienced, to reshaping employee operations and business development, these leaders' achievements extend throughout the nation, and even the world."

G2E registration for attendees and media is open. Follow the links below for more details:

- **Media Registration:** bit.ly/G2E2017MediaApplication
- **Attendee Registration:** g2e2017.com/pressrelease1

Since its formation in 1989, the Gaming Hall of Fame has awarded the industry's highest honor to leaders who have distinguished themselves through significant contributions to gaming. This year, more than one hundred accomplished candidates were nominated for the prestigious recognition. The selection committee comprises seven industry stakeholders, including **Bo Bernhard**, executive director at the International Gaming Institute at University of Nevada-Las Vegas; **Phyllis Gilland**, senior vice president and General Counsel of American Casino & Entertainment Properties; **Roger Gros**, publisher of Global Gaming Business; **Ryan Growney**, general manager at South Point Hotel and Casino; **Gavin Isaacs**, Vice Chairman of the Board at Scientific Games; **Jim Murren**, chairman and CEO of MGM Resorts International; and **Victor Rocha**, owner and editor of Pechanga.net.

Headshots of the Class of 2017 inductees can be downloaded for editorial use by [clicking here](#). The 2017 inductees' accomplishments include:

- **Diana Bennett, *Casino Operator Maven, Game-Changing Philanthropist*:** Upon entering the industry at Flamingo Las Vegas, Bennett quickly ascended into the management ranks before eventually joining her father, industry icon and Gaming Hall of Fame inductee William Bennett, at Circus Circus Las Vegas. As an executive of Circus Circus Enterprises' leadership team, she led the development of several landmark properties, including Luxor Las Vegas and Excalibur Hotel and Casino. Bennett earned a reputation as an expert in establishing gaming systems during her time as the president of Casino Data Systems (CDS), where she planned, grew and managed one of the major gaming manufacturers in North America. Following the formation of Paragon Gaming in 2000, Bennett, considered one of the most influential women in gaming in the United States, spearheaded development of the River Cree Resort and Casino in Edmonton, Alberta, and led revitalization efforts at Las Vegas' Riviera Hotel. Under her stewardship, Paragon expanded further by assuming operations at Westgate Las Vegas and the Hooters Casino-Hotel, acquiring the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Lake Tahoe, and developing Parq Vancouver, which is set to open Sept. 29. Bennett instituted a philosophy of the "circle of service," which empowers employees to address issues of concern without the burden of bureaucracy, forming a personal connection with the customer and ensuring a positive experience at every level of the organization. As president of the Bennett Family Foundation, Bennett has become one of Nevada's most recognized philanthropists, leading charitable efforts to support youth and women's organizations, educational and health initiatives, and the arts.
- **John Breeding, *Inventor of the Shuffle Master and Iconic Table Games*:** After reading about blackjack card-counters beating casinos in Atlantic City, Breeding envisioned the automatic shuffler in the early 1980s while working as a long-haul truck driver. The company he started in his home evolved into one of the most influential casino suppliers in history of the industry. Breeding developed dozens of card shufflers, electronic table games, slot machines, internet games and legendary table games – including *Let It Ride*. His company was a global juggernaut with 800 employees and products in six-of-the-seven continents. Breeding's Shuffle Master remains one of Scientific Games' strongest and most profitable product brands.
- **Joe Kaminkow, *Pioneer of Pop Culture in Gaming*:** Kaminkow became a legend in designing slot machines when he led the industry to develop slot games tied with licensing brands from movies, TV shows, quiz shows and even personalities. His works have become some of the most successful and much-loved games on the casino floor including *Wheel of Fortune*, *Sex and the City*, and more recently *Game of Thrones* and *Britney Spears*. Kaminkow began his career at IGT and has made a reputation pushing the envelope on art, math and style-making, as he says, "little movies" out of slot machines. Seeing the future of internet gaming on the horizon, Kaminkow founded his own online social gaming company before being tapped by Aristocrat to bring his games to the casino floors, and create thrilling gaming experiences with extraordinary content and new-age cabinets. Kaminkow also lends his gaming expertise to the free-to-play social slots industry. He is currently Chief Game Designer and Senior Vice President of Casino Games for mobile game developer Zynga, and the original creator of the company's social slot machine games *Hit It Rich! Slots* and *Wizard of Oz Slots*.

Melvin B. Wolzinger, *Champion and Visionary for Las Vegas: "A Founder of Las Vegas"*

- With passion, energy, and a sincere dedication to the good of the community, Mel Wolzinger has become one of Nevada's most accomplished visionaries. For the past seven decades, Wolzinger has applied his sharp business acumen to support the evolution

of the Las Vegas business landscape. After he retired from the Air Force in 1946, Wolzinger moved to Las Vegas and built a cutting-edge slot route – the first of many successful business ventures in Las Vegas. In 1962, he opened Ernie’s Bar on the north end of town, when there was no other development in the area. Growth has since brought many businesses to North Rancho Drive, including Texas Station and Fiesta resorts. Wolzinger has always had the foresight to recognize sound business opportunities, such as when he invested with Steve Wynn in Golden Nugget Las Vegas in the early 1970s. Wynn ultimately turned the Golden Nugget into downtown’s largest resort. Wolzinger served on the Board of Directors of Mirage Resorts from 1973-2000, and was instrumental in the development of Strip palaces such as The Mirage, Treasure Island and Bellagio. When MGM Resorts acquired Mirage Resorts in 2000, Wolzinger joined the MGM Resorts Board of Directors. He served on the Board through 2012, when he was named director emeritus of MGM Resorts. He is a generous supporter of University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and is a trustee for the UNLV Research Foundation. Wolzinger also has served as a champion of many nonprofit organizations spanning education, athletics and the Jewish community. He is known as a humble and gentle soul who does not take to limelight or fanfare.

Last year, AGA inducted five honorees into the Gaming Hall of Fame: **John Acres** of Acres 4.0, **Lyle Berman** of Grand Casinos Inc.; casino landscape architecture **Don Brinkerhoff**; **Redenia Gilliam-Mosee**, Atlantic City’s first female African-American casino executive and **Richard A. “Skip” Hayward**, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation member and visionary of Foxwoods Resort and Casino. [Click here](#) to see all previous Hall of Fame inductees.

About Global Gaming Expo

Global Gaming Expo is “the show” in the casino-entertainment industry, showcasing the technologies, services and products of exhibitors while providing an atmosphere to explore, network, do businesses and learn. G2E offers the most comprehensive look at international gaming, hospitality and innovation.

About AGA

The [American Gaming Association](#) is the premier national trade group representing the \$240 billion U.S. casino industry, which supports 1.7 million jobs in 40 states. AGA members include commercial and tribal casino operators, suppliers and other entities affiliated with the gaming industry. It is the mission of the AGA to be the single most effective champion of the industry, relentlessly protecting against harmful and often misinformed public policies, and paving a path for growth, innovation and reinvestment

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