

ORA C. MORNINGSTAR. San Diego has been the residence of one of the world's greatest billiardists since 1914.

Ora C. Morningstar was born at Rochester, Indiana, November 26, 1874. His varied talents come from his father's side of the family. His father was a violinist, and his father's uncle John Morningstar was also a violinist and leader of the orchestra at the People's Theater at Cincinnati. The training ground for Ora C. Morningstar was the wood shed of his father's home. At the age of twelve, with broom handles for cues, he began playing billiards on a 2½x5 home made table placed on a store box in the wood shed. In the same room were a punching bag, Indian clubs, dumb bells, and the practical side of his physical education was developed with a buck saw and axe to cut up 4 foot wood for the stoves. His outdoor training consisted of baseball, swimming, rowing and sailing on Lake Manitou, and in the winter he skated both on ice and rollers, and tobogganed. Always there was billiards intermittent with these pasttimes. He acquired a good literary education under Professor James A. Schull.

At the age of sixteen he won the roller skating championship of Indiana, the trophy being a silver and gold lined cup. After this event his father consented to his playing billiards in the Commercial Hotel billiard room, where there was one table. Ora's father was proprietor of the hotel. His progress was rapid both in billiards and baseball. At the age of eighteen he won first honors in a tournament at Rochester, attended by several good players. At nineteen he challenged Parker A. Byers of Lafayette, Indiana, for the State championship. Byers donated the emblem to Morningstar, saying he knew he had no chance with the talented young player.

About that time Ora Morningstar visited Chicago to see a match game of billiards between (Grey) Tom Gallagher and William A. Spinks. Ora played a practice game with Gallagher who was surprised at the young Hoosier's ability and gave him his first encouragement for championship honors. Morningstar's reputation as a baseball player had come to the ears of the grand old man of our national sport, Captain Adrian C. Anson, whom Morningstar had the pleasure of meeting during his Chicago visit. It was the captain who really made Ora a billiardist. Anson was one of Chicago's strongest amateurs in the sport, and after he was defeated in several games by Morningstar they engaged in baseball talk. The young Indianan finally asked Anson's advice as to which was

best, to try to make the big league or star at billiards. Anson replied: "You might last ten years in the big league if your habits were perfect and you had no serious accident, whereas you can play billiards all your life, but it is far more difficult to win the championship at billiards than to become a star at baseball." Morningstar chose the more difficult role and at the same time adopted Chicago's motto "I will". Success came to him after fifteen years of the hardest work, made possible only by his wonderful stamina and physical training as an athlete. The culminating honor was reached when he won the world's championship tournament at the 18-2 style of balk line billiards at Madison Square Garden, New York, April 3, 1909, where the other contestants were George Slosson, George B. Sutton, and Louis Cure, French champion, Harry Cline, Calvin Demerest, and Bert Cuttler. Maurice Daly became interested in young Morningstar through Tom Gallagher, and gave him a position in his New York Billiard Palace and assisted in developing his talent. In this environment Morningstar, then just twenty years of age, made rapid progress. He had the opportunity of studying under Daly, a former champion, Gallagher, Frank C. Ives, George Slosson, the great student, and Ed McLaughlin, all of New York. Four years later he made a tour with Jake Schaefer, the great wizard of the cue, and this helped to broaden his reputation and his ideas of the game. On returning to New York he accepted a position as instructor of billiards at the Metropolitan Club or Millionaires Club, with which organization he remained three years. Then followed an engagement to go to Mexico City where he gave daily exhibitions at the Hotel Iturbide for three months. He then returned to Chicago and taught billiards a short time, but his love for Maurice Daly led him to return to New York, and he was a teacher in billiards in Daly's hall nearly a year. He won the "short-stop" tournament promoted by Daly. The contestants in that match were Tom Gallagher, Ed McLaughlin, Adrojan, the Hungarian champion, Oritz, the Spanish expert, Ben Sailor and Morningstar.

About that time Mr. Morningstar married Helen C. Cornelle of Philadelphia. Their honeymoon trip was made to Mexico City where they remained six months. Here Morningstar played an exhibition game for the late President Porfirio Diaz at the Castle of Chapultepec in 1903. Then came his decision to go to Paris, France, to play at the Billiard Academies. Four years were spent in Europe, where he competed against all the great European masters including the French champion, Cure, Fourneil, Ducasse, Guiblin, Beau, Marva, the champion of Spain, Schancez, Trebar, German champion, Adrojan, the champion of Hungary, Gloreaux, Rasquene, and Garnier, the Belgium champion. America was well represented by Jake Schaefer, George Sutton, Joe Capron, Willie Hoppe, the boy wonder, Leonard Howison, Maurice Daly, George Slosson, Ben Sailor and Al Taylor. Morningstar studied all their styles of play and finished his billiard education there. He challenged Maurice Vigneux, world's champion, for the title, but Vigneux declined to play because he feared the young American who had defeated Gloreaux in a match game at Brussels of 1,500 points, 18-2, in which he established a high run record of 224. This failure to meet Vigneux was a great disappointment. The last year of the Morningstars' stay in France was saddened by the death of their infant son.

Resuming his residence in America he spent a year in New York City, and at St. Louis defeated Jake Schaefer in an 1,800 point match at 18-2. The following week he defeated George B. Sutton, 18-1 champion in an 1,800 point match of 18-2 balk line. In these matches Schaefer scored 1,165 and Sutton 1,232 points. Neither was for the championship title.

The crowning success of Morningstar came in 1909 as above noted. This was open competition for the world's championship. Following this Morningstar became instructor and manager of the largest billiard institution in the world, The Grand at Pittsburgh, operated by the Harry Davis Enterprise Company. The Grand contained ninety-seven tables. He remained there three years, 1911 to 1914. While there he challenged the winner of the Hoppe-Sutton match at 18-1 style of balk line. In this match Sutton defeated Hoppe and Morningstar won the title from Sutton in Chicago in May, 1911. Sutton then challenged Morningstar for a return match which was granted, and in October Morningstar defeated Sutton at Pittsburgh; Hoppe then challenged Morningstar and defeated the Pittsburgher for the emblem.

While at Pittsburgh Mr. Morningstar developed the idea of lecturing on billiards to the public, explaining the shots and demonstrating the method of making them and also general cue strategy. He gained a world wide reputation as an original lecturer on billiards and thousands of people throughout the United States have heard him on his exhibition tours.

June 28, 1914, a son was born into the Morningstar home and the failing health of Mrs. Morningstar caused the family physician to advise them to come to California, which they did in the fall of 1914. The wonderful climate of San Diego soon restored her health. In San Diego Mr. Morningstar opened one of the finest billiard rooms to be found anywhere, in the Union Building, with twenty-seven tables. One feature is a billiard theater seating two hundred people, for exhibition and match games. The Morningstars are exceedingly fond of California, and a recent happiness given them here was the birth of a daughter June 14, 1920, at their home at 2929 Front Street.

During the winter of 1917 Morningstar and Koji Yamada, the Japanese champion, made a tour of all the important cities throughout the Northern States, playing exhibition games, in the course of which Mr. Morningstar delivered short lectures both on billiards and on the wonderful San Diego climate and other advantages. The winter of 1918-19 he rendered service as an instructor and entertainer at The Recreation at Detroit, Michigan, then the largest and finest billiard establishment in the world. While there he also wrote a series of billiard lectures for the Detroit Free Press. One of his pupils, Mr. Corwin Hueston, won the Class A amateur championship held in The Recreation. Recently Mr. Charles Heddon, amateur champion of Michigan, made a special trip to San Diego to have Morningstar teach him, and when he returned East he won the National Class A amateur championship tournament at Cleveland, making a new high run record of 139 at 18-2 balk line.

During the last season Morningstar competed in an elimination championship tournament at San Francisco, losing two games by being eliminated from contesting with Hoppe for the championship. Here he established a new high run record of 272 for competitive billiards. This mark he has passed many times in exhibition games, one of 405 unfinished being made at Paris, and another of 456 at Los Angeles. Nearly all the other great masters of billiards have made runs of over four hundred, some exceeding five hundred, but unfortunately they are not records because not made under championship conditions, really constituting a reflection on championship conditions and management. In the course of his career Mr. Morningstar has entertained hundreds of notable personages, including Grover Cleveland, Prince Henry, King Alfonso, and former President Diaz of Mexico.

Mr. Morningstar finished second in a world's championship tournament for the 14-1 style of balk line played in 1913 at the Hotel Astor in New York. In 1914 he finished third in a world's championship tournament at the 18-2 style of balk line. He did not compete again for the title until 1920 on account of his wife's health. In this year he finished second in the tournament for the championship, rated as a remarkable performance because he had been out of competitive matches for five years. In 1917 he challenged Hoppe for the world's championship, but the challenge was not accepted.

Worlds Championship tournament at 18-2 balk line billiards was played at Chicago, Illinois, in the Congress Hotel, November 14 to 22, 1921. The contestants and order in which they finished are as follows: Jake Schaefer Jr., Wm. Hoppe, Walker Cochran, Roger Conti, champion of France, Ora C. Morningstar, Edward Horemous, champion of Belgium, G. Butler Sutton. Morningstar defeated both European champions finishing fifth in the tournament. His high run was 237, high average 50, grand average 28. All contestants played better billiards than was ever played before which shows how the game has been improved by the present day masters.