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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gil & Andee Atkisson Honored with Billiard Congress of America 2012 President's Award

Broomfield, Colo. – July 9, 2013 – Each year the Billiard Congress of America (BCA) recognizes an outstanding individual who made significant contributions to the billiard industry with the presentation of the BCA President's Award. This year the BCA has chosen to recognize Gil and Andee Atkisson. Gil and Andee, who both recently passed away this year, served as owners, partners, and founders of the pool table manufacturing company Peter Vitale Manufacturing Co.

"The high quality and creative design of Vitale Tables raised the standard of pool table manufacturing in the United States," said BCA Chairman Mike Serra. "I am honored to recognize Gil and Andee for the contributions they made to the BCA and the billiard industry, as well as their lasting impact in pool table and game room design."

Before manufacturing pool tables, Gil Atkisson played professional pool for about eight years. While playing he developed an appreciation and understanding for the finer points of game and for the pool tables on which he played. As Gil decided he had enough of the road player lifestyle and less-than-comfortable paychecks he started repairing and selling pool tables. Shortly after Gil and Andee sold their first pool table, Gill quickly realized that he would rather make and sell pool tables than compete on them, so he and Andee became partners in business, took the financial plunge and started manufacturing top quality billiard tables that lived up to their own high standards.

"Andee and Gil had and still have a huge influence on the billiard industry," said Ron Blatt of Blatt Billiards. "Andee was a fantastic designer and hugely talented hand carver, whose talent was envied by most everyone. Gil was the factory and production person, and together they made an unbeatable team that is sorely missed by the industry. The Vitale exhibits at the BCA Trade Show were always the jaw dropping hit that everyone spoke about, and were the highlights of the show every year."

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They built their company slowly and carefully, like they did every table, naming the company after one of Gil's coaches and mentors: Felix Peter Vitale. Once they expanded the company and moved from California to North Carolina, they recruited BCA Hall of Famer, and World Champion Nick Varner to be a company spokesman. "Andee came up with incredible designs and was a true artist in table making," said Nick Varner. "Vitale Tables not only raised the bar for all table manufacturers but also for what pool table consumers came to expect when purchasing a high quality, great playing and elegantly designed pool table."

Andee was the lead designer and master carver for all of Vitale's pool tables and game room accessories. She was proud of her work and always insisted on top quality materials to compliment her innovative designs. "Andee was a very talented designer and wood carver and she worked very hard to make beautiful products and tables," said Dan Janes of Joss Cues. "They should have received the BCA President's Award years ago for their insight and ability to reinvigorate pool table manufacturing."

Vitale Tables had an outstanding reputation for their beautiful designs and unwavering playability and were very popular among celebrities. It's rumored that Paul Newman had three of them, and that hip-hop mogul Master P still proudly displays his \$100,000 Vitale in his Beverly Hills home game room. Robert Di Nero, Ross Perot, Jack Nicholas, countless Nascar Drivers, dozens of Major League Baseball Players, and many more celebrities from around the world own tables manufactured by Vitale and personally designed by Andee.

Gil and Andee not only worked tirelessly designing and creating new products but they were also both very passionate about promoting and supporting their industry. "When Gil was on the BCA Board, he called nearly everyone he knew and badgered them to join the BCA. I know I was one he called a lot," said Kurt Schmidt of A.E. Schmidt Billiard Company. "When the BCA was nearly broke, Gil's efforts, plus the trade show, put the BCA back on solid ground."

The impact Gil and Andee had on the billiard industry will last for generations and has been forever immortalized on the Travel Channel's program, *Made in America with John Ratzenburger* (watch full video: <http://tinyurl.com/vitaletables>).

About Billiard Congress of America

Founded in 1948, the Billiard Congress of America is a non-profit trade organization dedicated to growing a united, prosperous and highly regarded billiard industry through BCA leadership. The BCA seeks to enhance the success of its members and promote the game of billiards through educational, marketing and promotional efforts, annual industry trade shows, tournaments and other programs designed to encourage billiards as a lifestyle and make pool everybody's game. For more information, visit www.bca-pool.com or call 303.243.5070.

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