

Doyle Brunson (1933-2023)

The death has been announced, on May 14, of the legendary American poker player Doyle Brunson.



Before going any further, if you don't know how to play poker, don't learn. Whatever you may have heard, only a tiny number of players are winners in the long run, even Stu Ungur, widely acknowledged as one of the greatest players of all time, died flat broke at just 45. Doyle was a winner though in every sense of the word.

Doyle's life has been well documented, so this obituary includes a few things you won't find on his *Wikipedia* page.

Poker is a thoroughly American game, and is believed to have originated [in the 1820s](#). If you watch old cowboy films you will see five card stud, draw poker, but not hold 'em, at which Doyle excelled and which he did much to popularise.

Hold 'em is believed to have been played for the first time in Dallas, in 1925, its full name being Texas hold 'em, though it wasn't until the 1960s that it really caught on. Doyle was a native Texan, born August 10, 1933, and would almost certainly never have taken up the game professionally but for an horrific accident that trashed his career as an aspiring professional basketball player. While working a summer job at a gypsum plant, a stack of sheetrock fell off a truck and mangled his right leg. Doyle said he was lucky not to have been killed, but although the doctor who treated him did a "wonderful job", his basketball days were over.

He started playing poker seriously while studying for a master's degree in administrative education and business administration, then went to work for the Burroughs Corporation, which no longer exists.

Doyle met his wife Louise in 1959, and the couple married three years later. He dedicates his 2009 autobiography to her, and if you read it, one incredible anecdote in particular, you will understand why. Louise died in 2021.

The 1970s saw an explosion of poker, including the World Series which is held in the gambling capital of America, Las Vegas. Doyle would win his first two bracelets in 1976, for 2-7 draw and hold 'em. His last significant WSOP performance was in 2005 when he picked up another bracelet for hold 'em.

His success at the table was complemented by tragedy in his personal life when his eldest daughter, who was named after him, died aged just 18. In 1979, she was diagnosed with *anorexia nervosa*. After her death he took a year off poker.

If gambling is a vice or even a sin, recreational drugs are more so; this was something Doyle avoided.

Away from the poker table, but not that far away, Doyle put his name to an on-line poker site. Doyles Room (no apostrophe) was opened in 2004, but like many others was closed down when the American Government lost its collective mind with the [Black Friday Domain Seizures](#).

In addition to his autobiography, Doyle published a number of books, in particular *Super System*. The expanded edition, *Super System 2*, includes contributions from other leading poker players and is probably the only poker book anyone foolish enough to learn the game ever needs to read.

As well as one of the best players in the world, Doyle was one of the game's true characters with a big cowboy hat and unshakeable table image. It was fitting that Texas Dolly would die in Las Vegas, but there are many hours of him on YouTube at the cash and tournament tables for aspiring and seasoned poker players to relive.

<https://theduran.com/doyle-brunson-1933-2023/>