



# Washington Park Tennis Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Recognition

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TENNIS THROUGH THE MILLENNIA

Started in northern France in monastic cloisters in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the indoor sport referred to as “real tennis” was initially called “jeu de paume” with the ball hit with one’s palm and later a glove. Through the millennia, the game has proved dangerous for some. In 1437, King James I of Scotland was trapped by assassins because his escape route, through a drain outlet, had been plugged to prevent the loss of tennis balls.

It took three hundred years before rackets were introduced to the game. In 1506, a game was played at Windsor Castle by Philip, King of Castille with a “rackete”, which is an Arabic word, “rakhat” meaning the palm of the hand. France’s King Charles IX in 1571 established the first Corporation of Tennis Professionals with its three levels: apprentice, associate, and master. Indoor “real” tennis continued to be popular among European nobility and gentry through the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. A crude outdoor version called “longue paume” was played by the general populace.

Two unlikely technological advancements paved the way for the contemporary game. The lawn mower was invented in 1827 easing maintenance of smooth, flat croquet lawns and in 1840, Goodyear invented vulcanized rubber that allowed tennis balls to bounce consistently. Circa 1865, English Major Harry Gem along with his Spanish friend, Augurio Perera had created a simplified version of rackets combined with the Spanish game “pelota” played on a croquet lawn, which they called “lawn rackets” or “Lawn Pelota”. In late 1873, a canny Welshman, Major Wingfield packaged and marketed a similar game he called “Sphairistike or “Lawn Tennis”. Early in 1874, Mary Outerbridge was the first to import Wingfield’s game to the U.S.

Over the next 50 years, the distinction between amateur and professional was intended to differentiate social status. “Open to all amateurs” was meant to exclude working class players from competitions; none were paid to play, officially. In 1926, a professional tennis tour formed of French and Americans to play exhibition matches before paying audiences. These “pros” were not invited to play in the major (amateur) tournaments. In 1968, this distinction changed significantly with the new “Open” era. Amateurs continued to be invited to play in the Grand Slams but, were now allowed to compete against professionals in other tournaments as well.

Four years later in 1972, 81 men formed a union, the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP). The following year ATP members successfully boycotted Wimbledon to support another who had been suspended from playing. This successful action broke the 90-year hold national

federations had over “amateurs”. Twelve months later, ATP established its own rankings based on player results, which differed from the preferential lists of amateurs invited to play in Grand Slams. Tennis had entered its modern era.

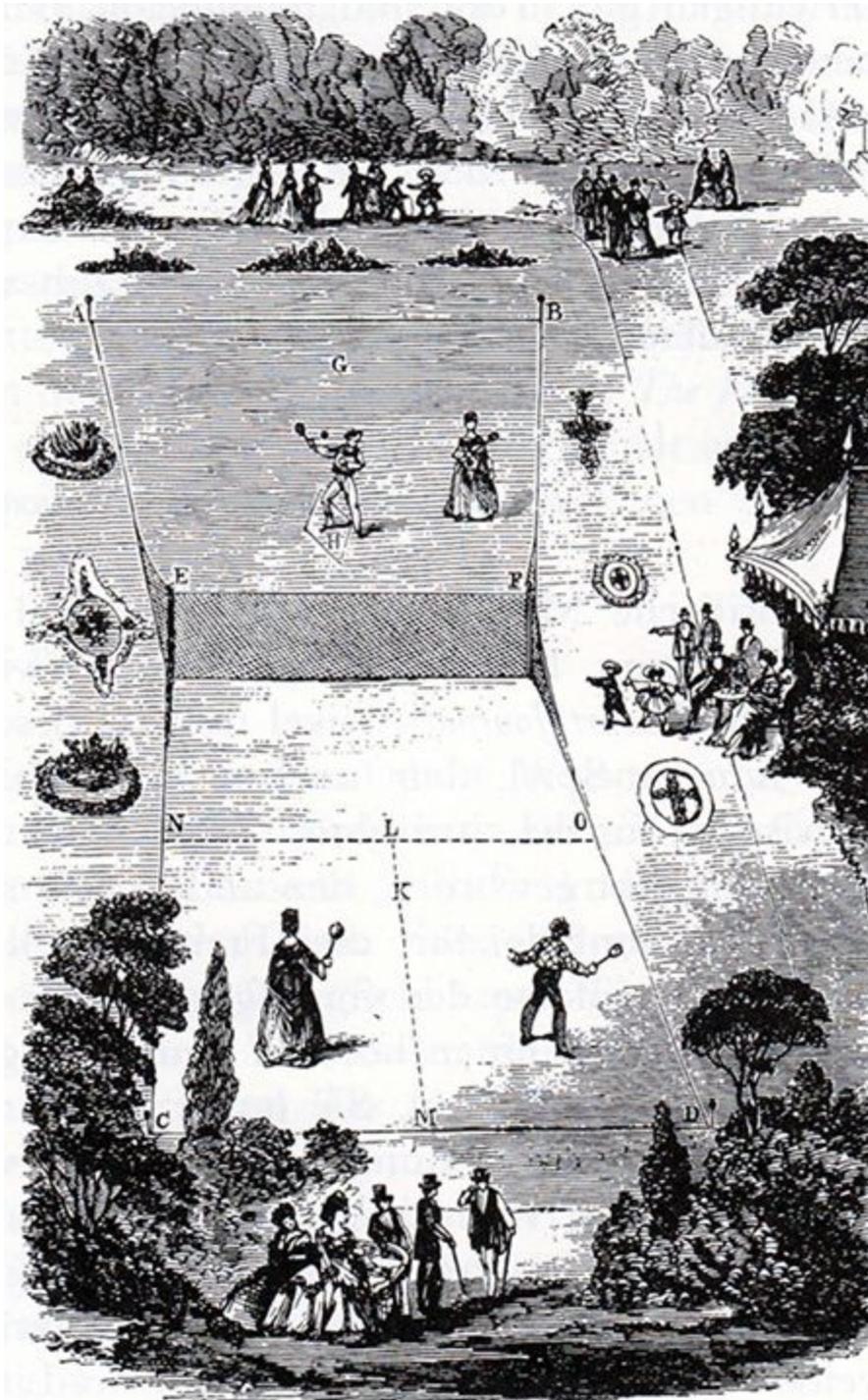
# Washington Park Tennis Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Recognition

## CHAPTER ONE TENNIS IN COLORADO

10 years after the revival of what we now call tennis, the game arrived in Denver, Colorado. Pictured here is a group posed in 1884 at courts located at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Court Place. Denver lore is that Court Place got its name from being the site of Denver's first courthouse; however, this early image suggests instead, the name may be a result of tennis' popularity at the time.



City records indicate that public tennis courts were in place in at least three city parks before 1910. These were City Park, Berkeley Park, and Washington Park; part of the implementation of Denver's iconic City Beautiful movement that included the construction of playgrounds and other recreational activities such as bocce, croquet, and swimming. It is surmised that the first lawn tennis courts built in Washington Park were located near South Downing Street at East Kentucky Avenue where courts exist today. Additional courts were built later near East Louisiana Avenue, after the southern portion of the Park was purchased.



In 1873, Major Wingfield packaged and marketed a game he called “sphairistike” played on courts shaped like an hourglass with nets 5 feet high at the posts and 4 feet in the middle. Within two years, other English lawn tennis players standardized rules for the game including size and shape of the court, scoring and the height of the net.

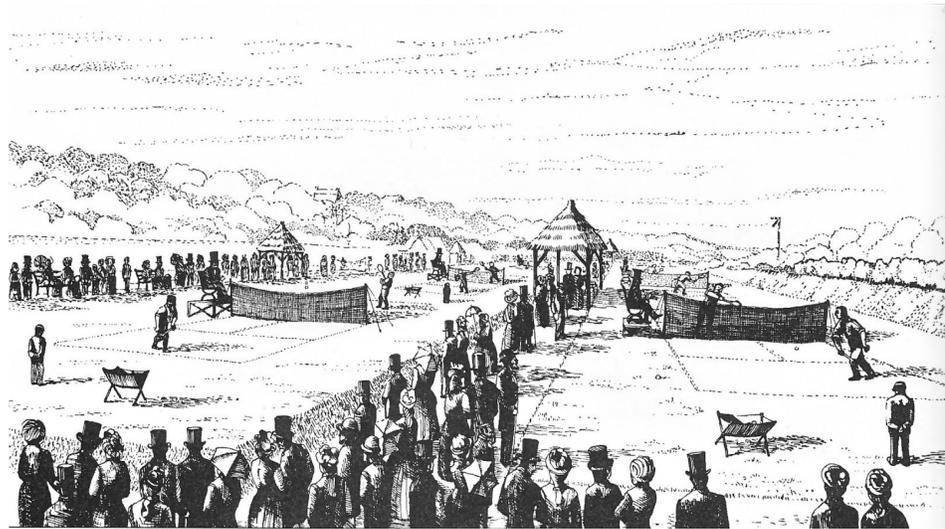


Mary Outerbridge is considered the “Mother” of American tennis. Early in 1874, she imported Wingfield’s package of rackets and net setting up the first tennis court at the Staten Island (New York) Cricket and Baseball Club where she played the first game on U.S. soil against her sister.

A few months later in 1874, James Dwight set up a court in Nahant, Massachusetts. Dwight taught the game to others and two years later won the first recorded lawn tennis competition but, because it was an informal private event, it is not recognized as an official tournament. He was one of the founders of the U.S. National Lawn Tennis Association in 1881 and is known as the “Father” of American Tennis.

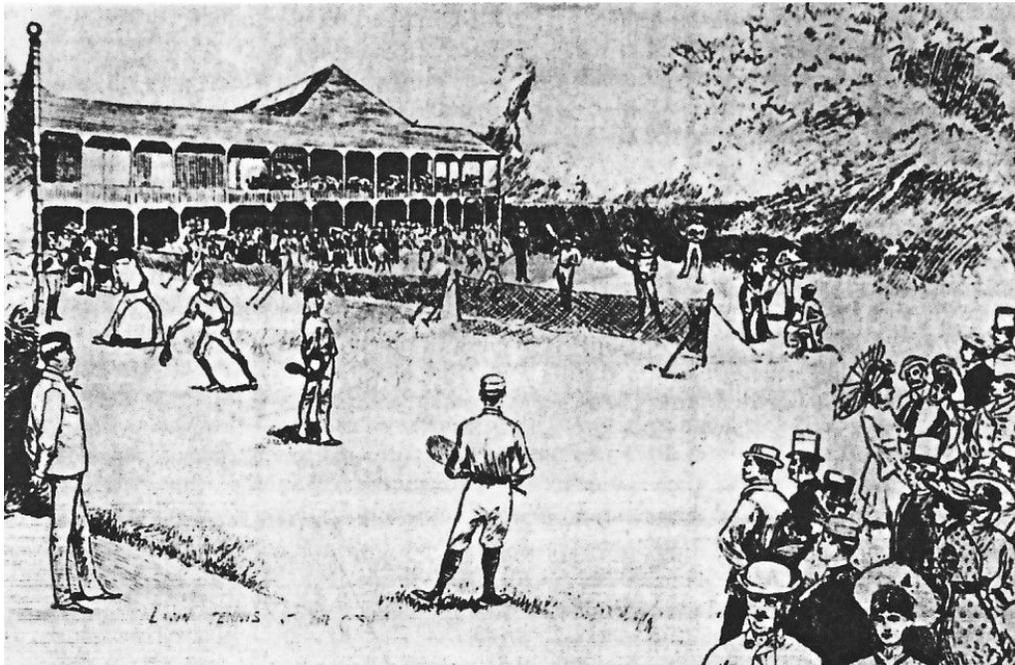


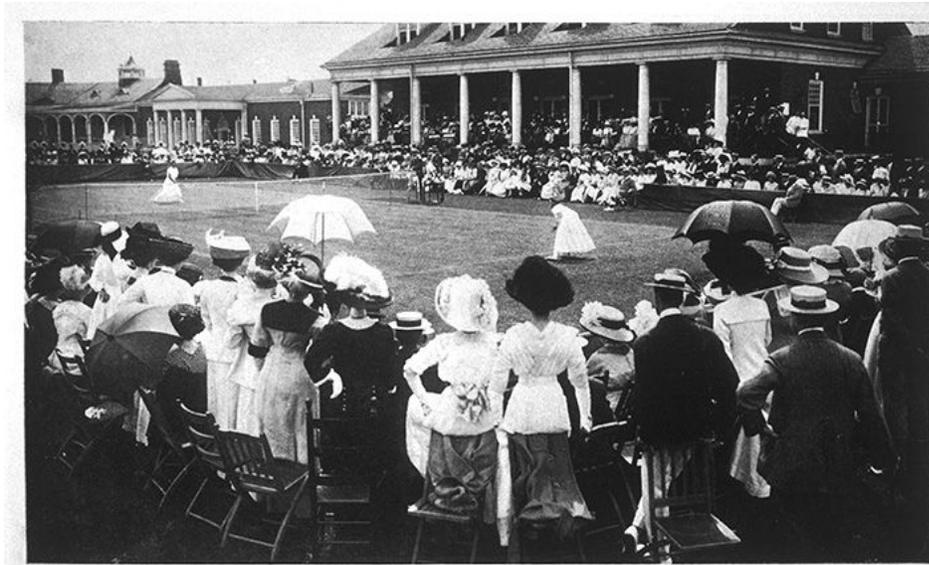
To raise funds to repair their lawn equipment, the All England Croquet Club added Lawn Tennis to its name and decided to organize a championship for amateurs, a Gentlemen's Singles



event to be held in July 1877 seen here. Not unexpectedly, the finals were delayed 3 days by rain. In 1884, a Women's Singles event was added.

What is now the US Open was first held in 1881 here at the Newport Casino in Rhode Island on grass courts. After ending his competitive play, James Dwight was a referee at the U.S. Nationals for more than 30 years.



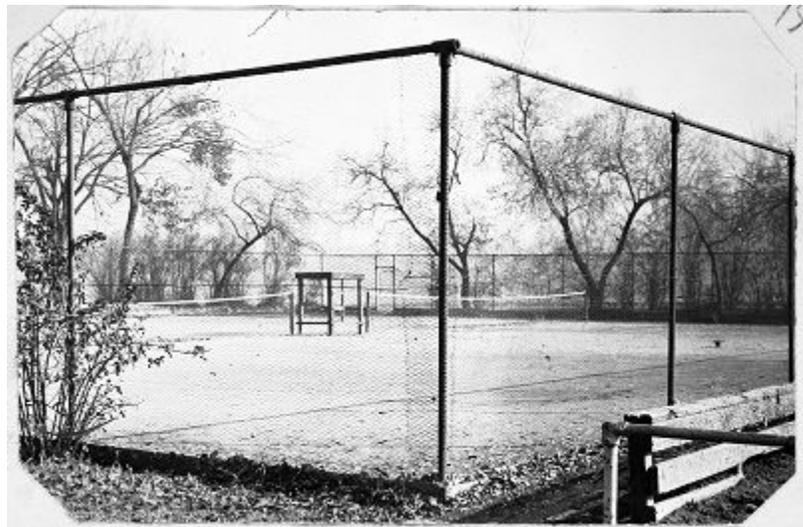


Miss Hotchkiss beats Miss Florence Sutton  
PHILADELPHIA CRICKET CLUB, 1911

The Irish were the first to organize a women's tennis tournament in 1879, although held on secluded courts. Seen here is the site of the first U.S. Women's Tennis Tournament held in 1887 at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. Playing are Hazel Hotchkiss winning over May Sutton in the 1911

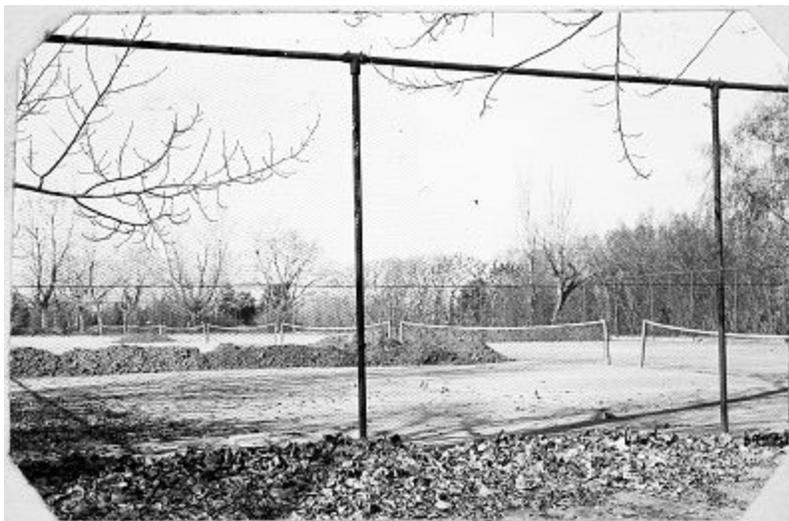
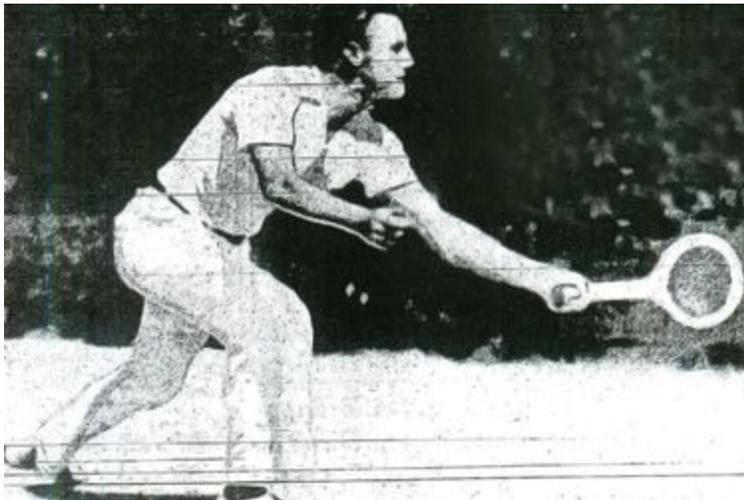
singles finals. Sutton was the first foreigner and American to win at Wimbledon in 1905. Hazel (Hotchkiss) Wightman won her last title at age 68 years of age. (Courtesy of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society and the Philadelphia Cricket Club).

In 1920, the *American Lawn Tennis Association* magazine reported the outcome of Denver's lawn tennis season played among five organizations. City Park led the field against YMCA, Capitol Club, Myrtle Hill, which had two courts, and the Telephone Club. [The residential area east of Washington Park was known then as Myrtle Hill.] A Denver



Tennis Club clipping from a 1923 *Denver Post* reported that Gordon Ingram, an early Denver Tennis Club member, captained a team for the "Washington Park Club". (Courtesy of American Lawn Tennis Association Magazine, Vol. and Denver Tennis Club)

Until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century perhaps the best tennis player Denver produced was the crafty left-hander from South High, **Vernon John**. As a high school junior, he rose to No. 7 in the nation (No. 5 in doubles). A likely Wash Park tennis player, John captured the 1933 Cheyenne Mountain Invitational singles title, a top tournament in the country at the time, defeating the National Intercollegiate singles champion. He went on to play at the University of Southern California where he was a NCAA singles finalist and USTA National Clay Court Men's finalist in 1936. The Colorado Tennis Association established an annual award in Vernon John's honor given to the Collegiate Player – Man of the year. (Courtesy of Colorado Tennis Association)



The condition of the Wash Park courts shown here, circa 1930s, would be what Vernon John would have played on. Sometime after 1930 City records indicate that city recreational courts were converted to concrete to reduce maintenance costs. During this time and until World War II, men wore long pants and women, skirts. (Courtesy of Denver Public Library)



When the current Washington Park Tennis Club was formed in 1965, players still wore white. [Remember the little balls on the back of the tennis socks?] People still played with wooden racquets and white tennis balls, and Grand Slam tournament players were amateurs (the French word for “love”) selected by the national federations, not based on rankings. Manuel Santana and Margaret Court Smith, shown here, were the 1965 U.S. National Singles winners.



## CHAPTER TWO

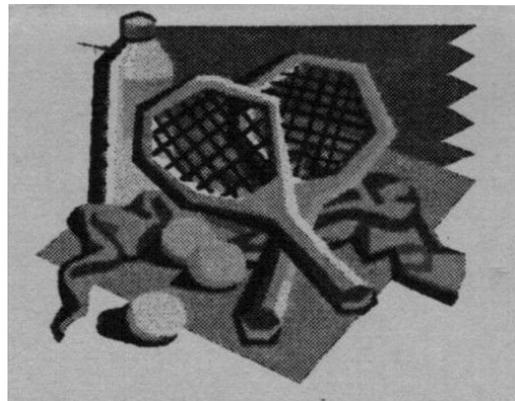
### Social Tennis

Washington Park Tennis Club is a public club organized to support their members in playing competitive and recreational tennis. Monthly events, “socials” are organized to bring players together for recreational tennis playing in a mixed doubles format. The Spring Social event is held near Colorado Springs. The summer socials usually involve a theme such as a beach party. For more than 20 years, members participate in a day-long doubles challenge with the Lakewood Club in August. In the fall, a weekend round robin is held at a mountain resort, currently in Vail. November through March are the monthly “winter” potluck socials held at a club with indoor courts.



Club logo 2004

Interviews with current members tell a consistent story that people belong and continue to play because other members are so friendly and it’s fun. (Newsletter image)





**Pam Greenwell** (on left), a former Summer Socials Director, is playing in a spring social previously held annually in the Colorado Springs area. All socials schedule mixed-doubles play only, in a round-robin format.

Current Club **President Gordon Rulon** is surrounded by appreciative members at one of the more recent summer socials.

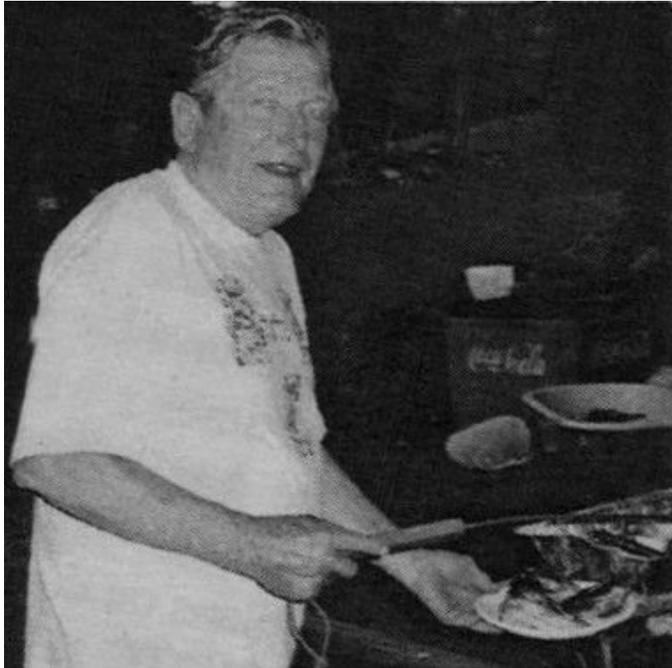




Notice the leis adorning the attendees of one of the 2009 Summer “Socials” organized for members. Members, from left to right are **Gene Dilger, Carrie Hierath, Jim Scott (long-time Board Member) and Elizabeth Morrison.**

The Summer Socials often have a theme. One recent year players dressed as if it was still the 1980s. In other years there has been “Breakfast at Wimbledon”. Former Club President **Dave Tupper** (front row right) is relaxing as if on the beach, at the southern edge of Grasmere Lake. Best costume winner is a coveted prize. (Front row left to right, **Jim Scott, Pat Malone, Dave Tupper, Len Hierath, David Robinson**).





To celebrate successful completion of the sanctioned tournaments at Washington Park, **Paul Thompson**, seen here in 1996, served as chief chef for the annual June and September backyard bar-b-ques hosted by him and his wife **Jean**, a well-known local artist. These charter Wash Park Tennis Club members were long-time fixtures of the community on and off the courts.



A review of of newsletters over many years revealed how much people enjoyed the traditional Thompson summer parties with bar-b-que, volleyball and relaxation. This much-anticipated summer social was hosted for many years by Jean and Paul Thompson.

One popular summer social is the Lakewood-Washington Park Challenge. For more than 20 years, Wash Park and Lakewood Clubs have exchanged hosting duties for this annual “Challenge”. It has been reported that in some years ringers have been brought in to secure the trophy!





The annual “Lakewood Challenge” comes with a big breakfast and a barbecue lunch. Even if Wash Park doesn’t win, everyone knows there will be good food.

Chef **Duane Lopez** has gotten up early to heat the grill for the dozens of hungry players at the annual “Lakewood Challenge”.





Long-time residents and Wash Park Tennis Club members **MaryAnn and Tom VanBuskirk** are relaxing at one of the many socials they have attended over the years. Although the tennis courts did not bring them together, MaryAnn remembers fun early dates on the Wash Park courts. In the past at least four other married couples credit Wash Park as their “courting” home.

Colorado natives, **Tara Miller and Todd Pepper** were cooling off after a hot day of doubles at the July 2012 Summer Social when Todd called out to Tara, “Hey CSU!” Both are graduates of Colorado State University (CSU). That day Tara suggested they sign-up for the upcoming “Chet” tournament over Labor Day weekend and get in some early practice. Later, where they met on the courts proved to be the winning spot for Todd when he proposed. Married since June 2014, Todd says he’s “always ready to play mixed doubles with Tara.”





In June 2011, former Membership Director **Ann Omar** had plans to move back to Texas. The summer social that month changed her life; **Rich Barrett** was there. The following evening they sat together at a concert in the Park. One year later they were married and are now parents. Regulars at the socials, lots of their friends are through Wash Park Tennis Club. Ann imagines they will “stay involved for the rest of their lives.”

Past Board President, **Dave Cole** (1983) is credited with instigating the annual fall tennis weekend after a members’ trip to Hawai’i. The fall weekend social is traditionally held in September at a mountain resort.

WPTC reserves condos and tennis courts for the expected 60-70 attendees. One condo serves as homebase. Members have yummy memories of the year **Tom Canino** caught fresh trout from the stream off the condo’s balcony and cooked them for the potluck dinner. Another year Tom roasted a whole turkey.





Besides heading for Vail, some years members have traveled together to Mexico, China and France among other foreign destinations. A 2002 trip to China resulted in members being “thrashed by 12-14 year-olds.” Pictured here are four from the 2012 Fall Tennis Weekend in Vail.

Through the winter, WPTC organizes a monthly mixed doubles round robin held on indoor courts with a potluck.





League Coordinator **Patricia Robertson** and her husband David are seen relaxing between rounds at a recent winter social, currently held at the Colorado Athletic Club at Monaco. Patricia is known by most of the club members today as the Board member responsible for establishing all the teams for the summertime competitive leagues through USTA.



It's not all hard work for the Board of Directors. At least once a year they allow themselves a relaxing evening. This image was taken at their 2012 Holiday Dinner.

## CHAPTER THREE

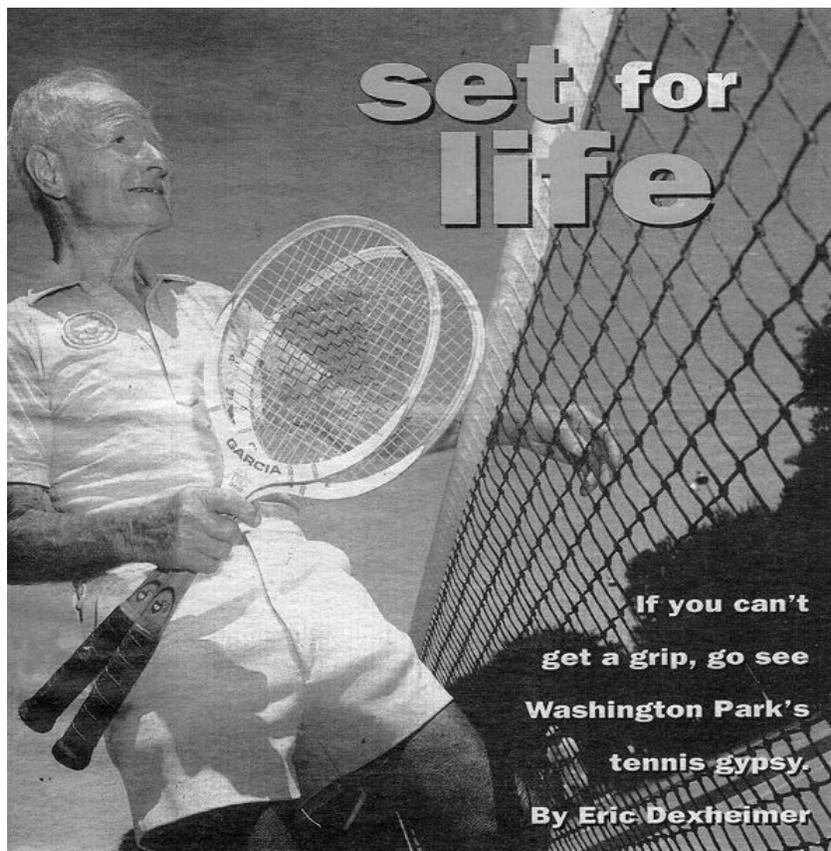
### Tournaments and League Play



In 1886, the first known tennis tournament in Colorado was the Denver Lawn Club Tournament played on Venice Street (now Emerson Street). In 1890, the tournament moved to the clay courts at the Denver Athletic Club and renamed the Rocky Mountain Championships. The Intermountain region of what is now U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) was formed in 1905 to include Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. Until 1906, only men competed in an all-comers tournament for the right to challenge the defending champion in the Rocky Mountain Championship finals. (Denver Tennis Club archives).

The first citywide tournament was held in 1914 at City Park during the first week of July. 54 men, 12 women, and 11 boys competed for the championship. For more than 45 years, the courts at Washington Park have been home to sanctioned USTA tournaments. Over the Memorial Day holiday weekend, the Clyde Rogers Tournament is held for men and women's players ranked 4.0 to 5.0. In 1995, a second USTA-sanctioned tournament was added to the schedule. The Chet Niemeyer Memorial Tournament is held over Labor Day weekend for men and women players ranked 2.5 to 3.5. Both of these tournaments are run by volunteers of the Washington Park Tennis Club (WPTC).

Joining the tennis club provides an avenue for playing weekly matches in a summertime league of competitive tennis against others throughout the Denver metro area. Winning teams advance to district-wide competitions, state championship, and on to regionals competitions the Intermountain region before qualifying for competitions at the national level. Over the years a number of WPTC teams have competed at the national level.



For more than 25 years, **Clyde Rogers** ran the Memorial Day weekend tournament for players ranked 4.0 to 5.0 held at Washington Park. A fastidious man and a doubles player, Clyde was the umpire of choice for many tournaments. The Colorado Tennis Association (CTA) was formed in 1955 and Clyde was one of its earliest participants. In recognition of his personal promotion of the Memorial Day tournament and all-around

assistance to CTA, he was named 1963's "Mr. Colorado Tennis". In 1974, CTA recognized Clyde for his "outstanding contributions to our tennis community" with their Bud Robineau Award, named for CTA's founding President. In 1983, CTA established the Clyde Rogers Award presented annually to an individual for outstanding contributions to recreational tennis players in Colorado. (Colorado Tennis Association)

The Memorial Day Tournament eventually was named in Clyde's honor. He was a stickler for deadlines. Carrie Hierath recalls Clyde admonishing, "Young lady, you should be here 15 minutes ahead." Clyde Rogers wasn't the only stickler for tournament rules. In 1991, the New York Times reported that "someone officially protested" (Carrie Hierath) that a player, Neil Bush (son of then-U.S. President George H.W. Bush), had played the tournament below his ranking. After a review, he was disqualified. Some years later, on the weekend of Clyde's funeral, 160 players were competing in the tournament; an apt tribute.



Three Wash Park Tennis Club board members have been recognized by CTA with the Clyde Rogers Award for their contributions to recreational players in Colorado. In 1997, **Len and Carrie Hierath** were given the Award for their years of efficiently running the Memorial Day Tournament after Clyde retired. **June Wooldridge** (shown here) received this prestigious award in 2006.

Almost immediately after joining WPTC, June became a board member. In 2001, June was elected President of the Board and willingly served for five years. Later she was WPTC's League Coordinator when the number of teams grew from 12 to 49 in two years. June's motto is "**Tennis for everyone!**"



What does it take to be inducted in the Colorado Tennis Hall of Fame? For **Rita Price**, it was winning her first national title at age 79 years. Rita, who has played for both Wash Park and Lakewood clubs, was honored in 2013 (see youtube “Rita Price Tennis”). Her tap dancing feet led the way to her 2008 ranking as #1 in the World in Women’s 80s Singles. In 2011 and 2012 she was ranked #1 for Women’s

85s Singles Division. Also in 2012, Rita achieved the “Golden Slam” by winning the National title in Women’s 85s Doubles division on all four court types: grass, clay, hard court and indoors. For Rita, tennis is a marvelous builder of character and a way to keep up her tap dancing. (Colorado Tennis Association)

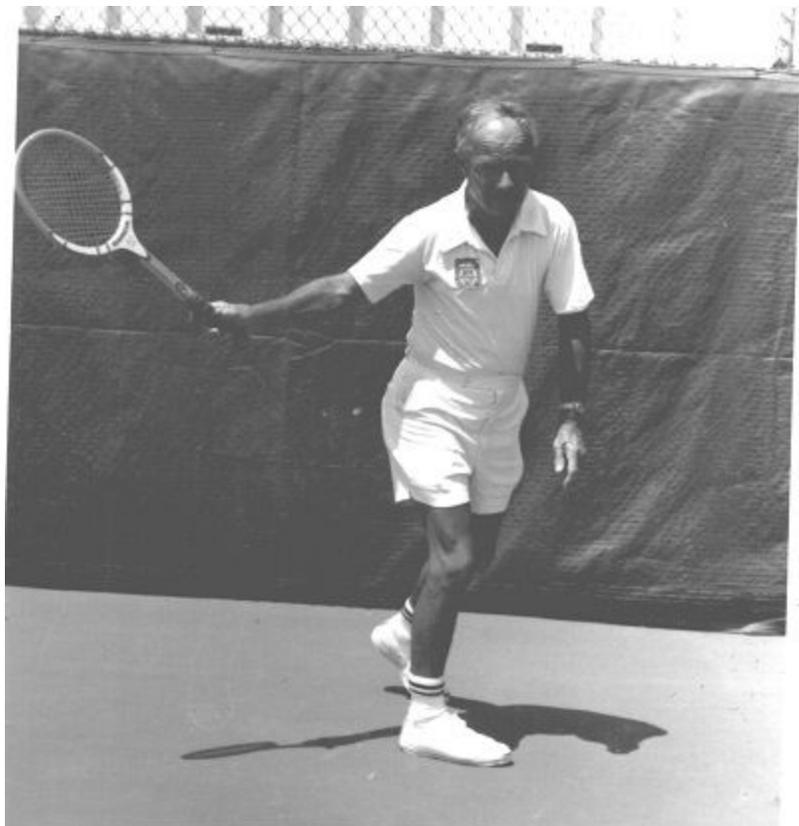
In 1995, the Washington Park Tennis Club inaugurated its Labor Day weekend USTA-sanctioned tournament named for **Chet Niemeyer**. Chet came to Denver in 1958 with his passion and skill for teaching the Continental grip to any willing listener. He soon became an afternoon fixture at the Washington Park courts. He always wore white and carried his modified racket with him. This now-popular tournament attracts as many as 150 players ranked 2.5 to 3.5 played at Washington Park.





Before leaving Texas permanently, Chet's high school team made it to the State "play-offs". Chet and his partner lost to the team that eventually were nationally ranked #2 in the 18 & under Juniors Division of 1932. Later he joined the Merchant Marines. He is seen here in uniform on left with his Dad (center) and brother. Chet was a traveler. After retiring he traveled the world playing tennis, even in La Paz at 12,000 feet.

"I was a student of the game from the beginning" Chet said of himself in 1994. He loved to teach others the Continental grip: the stiff arm, inside and close to the body with a cocked wrist holding the racket face perpendicular to the ground. Chet screwed a thread spool/spindle onto his racket so he could demonstrate how to place the spindle between the forefinger and middle finger to achieve the correct grip.

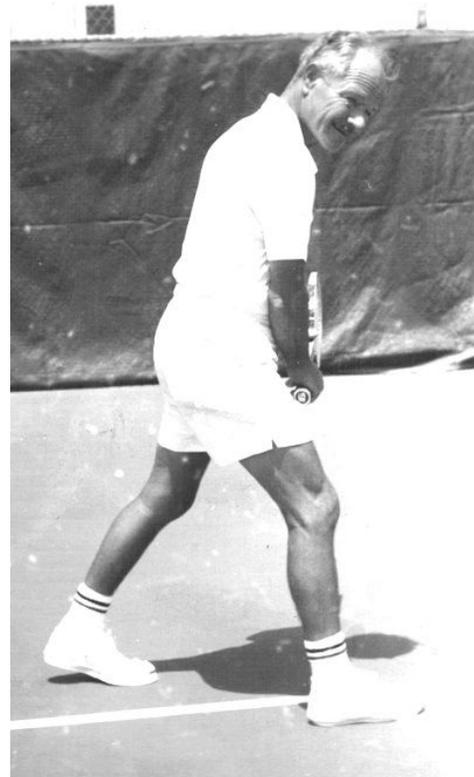




At age ten, Chet taught himself the “Vinnie Richards American Slice Serve” from a pamphlet included with gut he had ordered from Dunlop Tire and Rubber Company. Later Chet “created a new “toss up” superior to Vinnie’s version giving my pupils a more consistent toss eliminating many of the hazards of the past.” Chet’s version kept the ring finger from mis-directing the ball. Vinnie Richards, the youngest male to win a major

championship, won the National Doubles title with Bill Tilden in 1918 and later became the first major American player to turn professional.

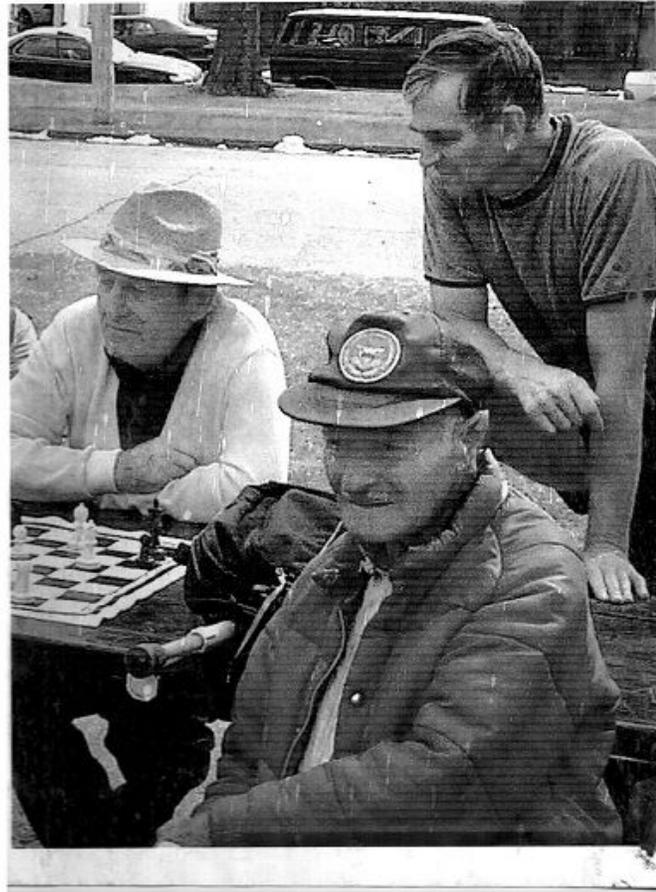
Chet also taught the classic footwork: opposite foot forward on the forehand always and the racket foot ahead on the backhand as seen here.





After playing in high school he perfected his game in 1936 when he traveled to Honduras and played on courts dug from the natural Honduran clay. Chet traveled the world to play tennis but spent his last years at Washington Park. He is surrounded here by fellow players in the early 1990s.

Late in the 1990s, Chet concluded his tennis playing but remained a fixture at the tennis courts. Here Chet is with another Washington Park Tennis Club charter member. **Paul Thompson** (seated in fedora) taught English & ESL at Denver's Lincoln High School. When he wasn't playing tennis, Paul was playing chess. He is well remembered for hosting numerous parties in June and September at his home with his artist wife, Jean. Paul died in 2004.





In an August 1994 interview by Eric Dexheimer for *Westword*, Chet is quoted, “I’ve taught at clubs all over the world..... I teach for free – I don’t take any money or any gifts. That’s because I do it for me. I do it for my amusement, not for yours. It breaks my soul to see someone who doesn’t want to learn.” That love of tennis lives on every Labor Day weekend at the tennis court in Washington Park. (Quote courtesy of *Westword*; Vol. 17, No. 50, August 10-16, 1994)



In 1970, two years after the dawn of the “Open Era” the only significant scoring change to the modern tennis game was adopted – sudden death(or tie breaker). First hatched in 1954 after a 63-game singles final, this scoring method allows tennis matches to be scheduled at specific time like other sports, and was instrumental in encouraging television coverage of tennis matches. Seen here are players in Washington Park from the late 1970s. (Denver Public Library)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, tennis was hard core at Washington Park. Players had to wait 2-3 hours to get a court according to Wilson Snow, a 1966 South High graduate who still plays regularly at Washington Park. Besides metal nets, the courts were white concrete with yellow painted lines. (Courtesy Denver Public Library)





Over the years, Washington Park Tennis Club has seen a good number of players succeed at competitive tennis. In 1998, **Ted Hodges and Tom Canino** captained Men's Senior teams that went to National. In 1999, **Len Hierath and Jan Ford** won the Gold Medal for age 65-69 at the National Senior Olympic Games. Seen here are a

group of players from June 1998. (Courtesy of Joe McGowan)

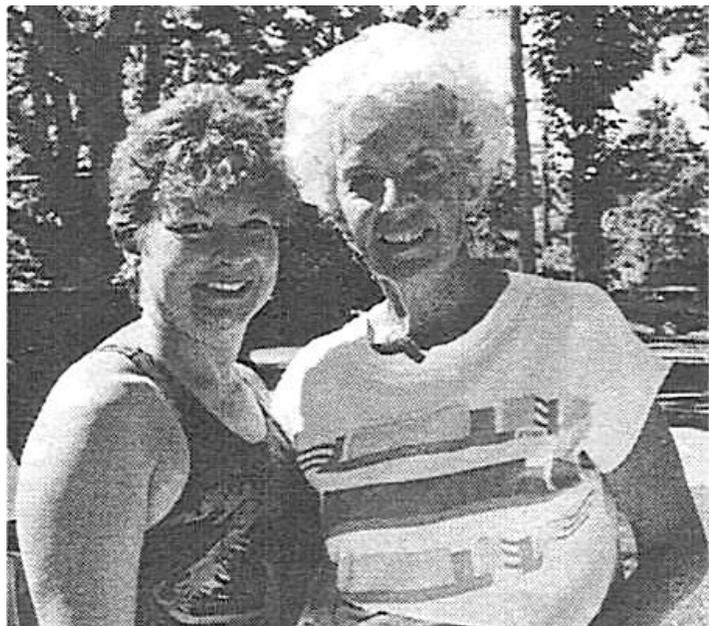
**Tom Canino**, a member since 1988, is seen here with some of his tennis trophies. Tom's team took 1<sup>st</sup> Place in the 1999 and 2000 in Men's 3.0 Aurora Firecracker Doubles. In 2000, his team was Senior Sectional Finalists for USTA-League play. A Denver native, Tom still plays regularly and finds great pleasure beating 40 year olds! Look for him in one of his vintage sports cars: 1967 Austin Healey 3000; 1969 Jaguar E-type; or his newest, a 1982 white Porsche Boxster convertible.





Billie Jean King was instrumental for women's tennis in two significant ways. In 1970, she was one of nine women players who signed a \$1 contract to play in the inaugural *Virginia Slims* tournament, the first women's all-professional tournament. Three years later, she helped to found the Women's Tennis Association to bring pay equity to women players. Pictured here is one of the many Wash Park women's teams. This one was captained by **Kellie Papish** who, for many years, has also organized weekly round robin matches for women at Washington Park, weather permitting. The Papish team here, from left to right are: **Lee Borthwick, Nina Sokol, Karen Stewart and back row, Melissa Harris, Ann Louden, and Kellie Papish** (captain).

Seen here are two from the 1996 Tournament Committee, **Mary Battaglia and Dorothy Scirocco**. It takes many volunteers to put on a sanctioned tournament. According to **Carrie Hierath** in the July 2001 newsletter, volunteers were called: to respond to mail-in entries and write checks for permits, trophies, tee shirts, balls, ice, food, umpire fees, and more; to work the tournament desk Friday evenings after fielding phone calls; to make daily trips to post office and work with City of Denver staff to secure the court permits months ahead of time; and to publicize the event. It takes volunteers, like **Gordon Rulon**, to clean the courts and set up each day starting at 7am or

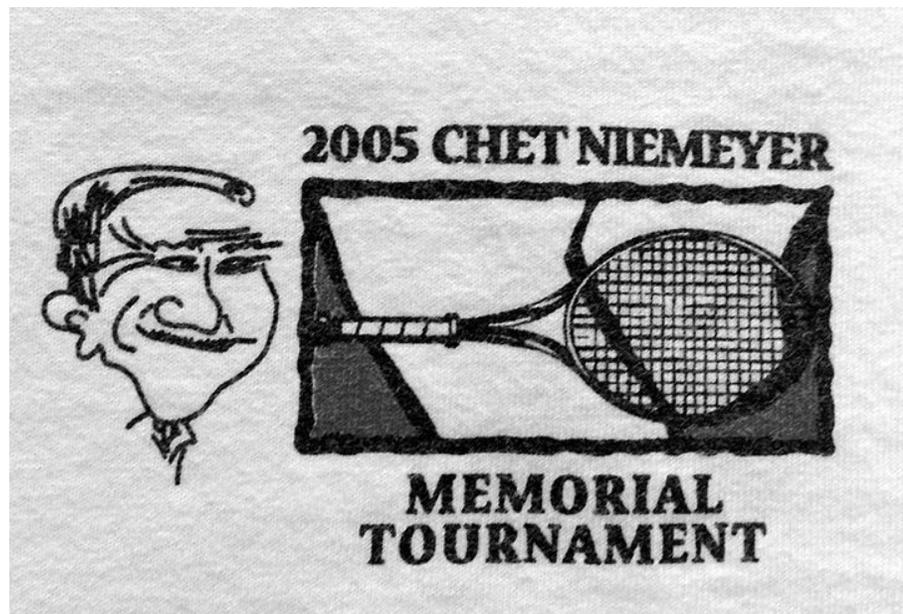


like **Leroy Kaufman**, to address last minute concerns with Denver Parks & Rec and ensure all the lights and nets were in working order, or like **Carrie Hierath** or **Ken van der Laan**, to serve as Tournament Director year after year.



**Phil Horton** is seen here removing water from the courts. Wash Park resident, **Bill Fenton** who won the “Clyde” in 1983 remembers it was a good idea to bring extra towels to wipe down the courts in case of rain during tournaments. (Courtesy Ginny Crocker)

Here is the 2005 Chet Niemeyer tournament official T-shirt courtesy of Leroy Kauffman.



## CHAPTER FOUR IT TAKES VOLUNTEERS



Seen above are some of the members of the 1996 Squeegee Committee.

Since 1965, the WPTC through its Board of Directors has worked diligently with City staff and officials to upgrade the quality of the Washington Park tennis courts, not just for members but, for any recreational tennis player. Many assume that most of the players seen on the courts throughout the day are among the 500 current members of WPTC. Those more familiar acknowledge that there are typically three shifts of players: the morning crowd, the afternoon clique of men (doesn't anyone have a job?) and the evening players. Evening players tend to be club members, especially during USTA summertime league season. **Wilson Snow**, a 1966 South High graduate and current recreational player at Washington Park, remembers hard core players waiting for 2-3 hours to grab a court in the late 1960s or early 1970s, when the WPTC was a young club; when the nets were metal, the court surface was white concrete painted with yellow lines and crammed together, and no backboard to encourage new players. That has changed.

Long since the metal nets are gone. Member dues go toward the \$15,000 to \$20,000 paid annually for permits for club members to use the courts during USTA league-play, sanctioned tournaments, and informal social events. In 2002, the City spent almost \$500,000 to bring the

courts into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century at the instigation of the Club members. More recently the Club made a special contribution of \$22,000 of the \$36,000 needed to construct the permanent gazebo. In 2012, the Club donated \$4500, half the costs needed, to place benches between courts. Some private tennis clubs would be envious of the initiative and amenities found at the Washington Park tennis courts – thanks to the Board of Directors and other diligent volunteers.

Some of the annual chores to maintain the tennis courts and the club include putting up and taking down screens and maintaining the nets purchased by the club. The courts are also cleaned on a regular basis – of rain, snow, leaves, geese and squirrels. These activities are in addition to the Board committee members running tournaments, coordinating monthly social events, organizing the competitive teams for the summertime league and maintaining a working relationship with staff at the City of Denver, Department of Parks and Recreation.



It is a sign that the outdoor tennis season has arrived when Club volunteers hang the wind screens. One of the many club amenities, screens cut glare on the courts as well as wind. **Steve Behn, Len Hierath and Phil Horton** are taking a brief break before completing this semi-annual task appreciated by all players.

No task is too menial for the President of the Board. Former Board President **Bill Richardson** (1994-1995) is seen here hanging the screens in the early 1990s.



Honorary Life Membership comes with free dues for **Len and Carrie Hierath**. Members since 1979, Len and Carrie are the epitome of the volunteers crucial to keep an organization vibrant. In 1997, Carrie and Len were awarded the Clyde Rogers Award by the Colorado Tennis Association for organizing the Memorial Day weekend tournament, now named for Clyde Rogers. This tournament continues, now a 50+ year tradition. Clyde wasn't the only stickler for rules at this tournament. In 1991, The New York Times reported the disqualification (by Carrie) of the son of then-President George H.W. Bush, Neil, for playing below his rank. Carrie has since retired from official duties at WPTC as well as from her 25-year teaching career at Denver Public Schools.



Len Hierath, an engineer, is another consummate volunteer for Washington Park Tennis Club who washed and cleaned the courts and bathrooms over many years. Len is also an inventor. One of his most successful is the above-pictured *Scor-Post* developed in 1992 in his rec room and now used on tennis courts worldwide to keep track of scores in games and sets. Past newsletters report

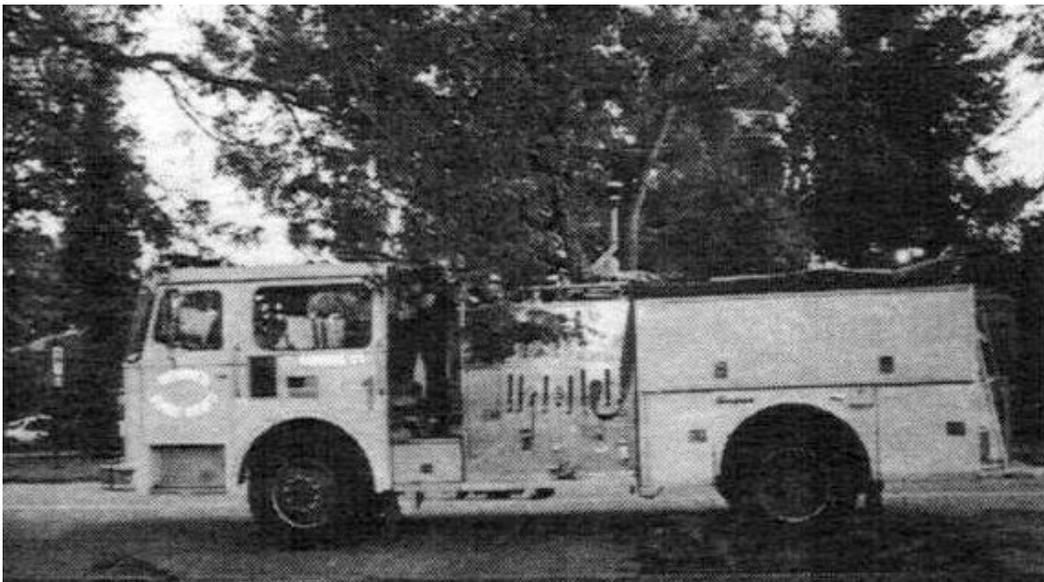
other inventions including “leaves in bags” and “master compost”. In 2014, Len created a soapdish prototype using a 3D printer that is now crafted of ceramic. It looks like this inventor will never retire.

It takes more than one or two regular volunteers to keep the tennis courts clean. Pictured here is a courts-cleaning group from the early 1990s. (Courtesy of Ginny Crocker)

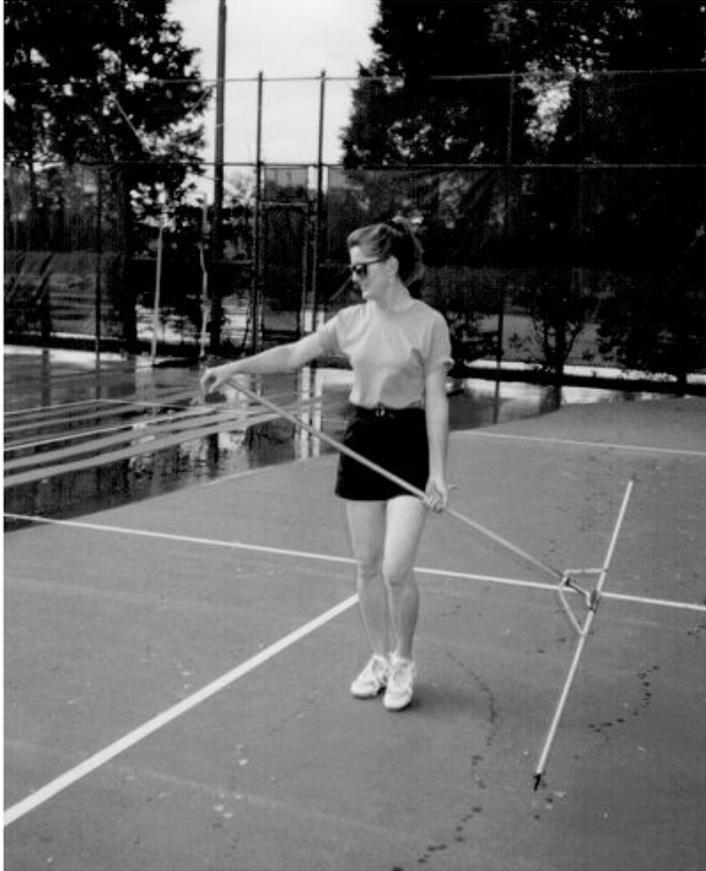




For a while, the Club received expert help at hosing down the courts each year from our local firefighters (seen here in 1996). \$500 was donated to the firefighters for their assistance. This system worked well until the City received complaints about the hoses crossing the Park's Loop Road, making it hard for those with strollers or on bikes.



Our team of firefighters and volunteers made quick work of hosing down the tennis courts when this circa 1996 truck was put into service. The crew at our local fire station is known in the community at-large for their efforts to help out wherever they can.



**Ginny Crocker** joined WPTC in the early 1990s. She participated in leagues and tournaments, and enjoyed the fall weekend socials in Vail. She was elected Board President for two years, responsible for setting the monthly agenda for the Board of Directors meetings among other presidential duties. Here she is performing manual court washing duties in the 1990s. (Courtesy of Ginny Crocker)

Tournaments are held at Washington Park from April through October. Two tournaments are USTA-sanctioned open events held over Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends respectively. Other tournaments are informal for WPTC members. To keep this effort active and efficient, it takes a tournament director and committee of volunteers. In 1996, **Ken van der Laan** (seen here) took on the role of Tournament Director.





A recent newsletter, now found on the website, thanked Ken (seen here in a recent photo) for his two decades of continuous work on tournaments for WPTC.

Most WPTC members know **Patricia Robertson**. She has served as the Club's League Coordinator since 2008. As a team captain for two Wash Park Tennis Club teams that played in state championship, Patricia knows what it takes to put together a team. Tennis is what introduced Patricia to the Denver community. Soon after joining WPTC, Patricia became the Treasurer in 2002; a job she did for 6 years. Patricia feels good about giving tennis enthusiasts the chance to play and socialize. WPTC draws members from throughout the metro area to play on the 70 teams organized each year, thanks to Patricia's hard work.





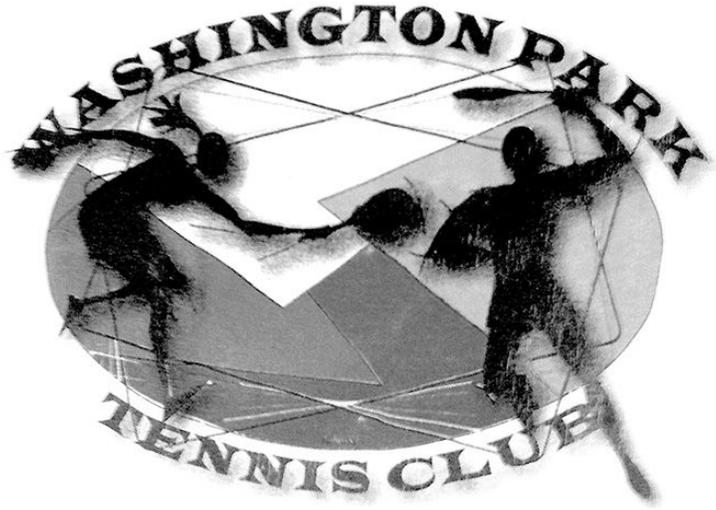
Do you want a thankless job? **Leroy Kaufmann** knows one. He has been responsible for court maintenance for WPTC since 2000. These duties also include serving as the Club's liaison with the City Of Denver, Department of Parks & Recreation. Like housework, the tasks are never ending.

This is the man who holds the key to the WPTC. **Gordon Rulon** is not just a great guy and a great player, Gordon "holds the club together," says one long-time Club member. Gordon joined WPTC in 1978 when he was living in the Bonnie Brae neighborhood. He started playing tennis at age 38. Now he likes to play 6 days a week and enjoys the 10-12 mile bike ride to the courts.



Twenty years ago Gordon joined the Board of Directors and assumed the President's role in 2005. Some of those duties include hanging and taking down the screens, an expected presidential role at WPTC. He clears leaves from the courts or shovels snow as needed. Even now with over 500 members, the City of Denver distributes only one key for court use. Gordon has the key and members are thankful for his many years of service.

Since the arrival of tennis in Denver more than 130 years ago, its popularity has waxed and waned, like the moon. It is evident that the placement of the tennis courts at Washington Park was given much forethought. It is a beautiful place to be; early in the morning, noon on a winter's day, or at sunset. The tennis courts are seldom empty; only when buried deep in snow or wet with rain. If it is sunny in Denver (often) regardless of the air temperature, someone is playing tennis on the courts.



Without the initiative and 50 years of effort by of the Washington Park Tennis Club members, the courts at Washington Park might look similar today to how the courts looked, seen here, 35 years ago in the late 1970s.

Congratulations on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. (Denver Public Library)

End.

The park's two sets of tennis courts are visible in this aerial view from the 1920s. The photographer is looking south with Virginia Avenue at the bottom of the image. At the very top of the image, just left of center, the white area visible are the tennis courts along East Louisiana Avenue, which runs along the top edge of the image. One-third the way down from the top of the image, and to the right of center, sit the courts at East Kentucky Avenue along South Downing Street. (Image courtesy of Denver Public Library)

