

IRVINGTON CLUB NEWSLETTER

Sam Lee

Long time Irvington Club member Sam Lee turns 98 next month. Over the years much has been written about his outstanding playing accomplishments, however, little has been documented about his many other contributions to tennis. Few individuals have been more benevolent or a better advocate for tennis in the Northwest and for the Irvington Club than Sam.

Sam grew up in the Bay Area in California and was a nationally ranked junior player. He attended Stanford University and while there won the NCAA doubles championship in 1933. After college he moved to Portland where he continued his outstanding playing career at both the local and national level. He also became heavily involved in tennis administration which included 12 years on the USTA/PNW board, president of the Irvington Club, and president of the Multnomah Athletic Club. He also chaired the Portland Tennis Center Association (PTCA) board. He along with a group of local players including club member Jim Flynn lead a project to bring the first indoor tennis courts for a public facility on the West coast to Portland (PTCA) in 1973. The Portland Tennis Center is located on NE 12th Avenue.

Sam has always had a deep interest in tennis history. He knows more about the history of tennis locally and in the Pacific Northwest than any living individual. Over the years, in cooperation with local sports writers he has publicized tennis events and tennis history.

In 1990, he was instrumental in creating the Oregon Tennis Historical Committee (OTHC) which continues to be sponsored by the Irvington Club. As a part of this effort, Sam very generously donated his tennis collection to the OTHC archive which provides security and safe keeping of the material. The archive is located in a closet on the 2nd floor of the club. Some of the material goes back to the turn of the century and includes many official documents (including USTA/PNW Official Guides) that are irreplaceable. In addition, he devoted countless hours documenting profiles of historic tennis organizations, historic tournaments, and prominent players. He ensured the winners of the historic tournaments were documented and preserved.

In 2000, Sam was selected to be a charter member of the USTA/PNW Hall of Fame. He later became a member of the Hall of Fame Committee and his knowledge of tennis people and his research have been invaluable in ensuring the appropriate individuals are selected for Hall of Fame recognition. He has always been a very humble individual and when inducted into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame, his speech was devoted to how tennis has grown and prospered over the years rather than about his personal accomplishments. Years ago when told that he had been selected to be an honorary member of the Irvington Club, he declined the honor because he wanted to continue to pay dues to help support the club. Later he was

told that it wasn't appropriate for him to decline and he was added to the list of honorary members.

Although Sam is no longer a fixture at the Irvington Club as he was for nearly 60 years, he still stays in contact with some of his close tennis friends and always asks - - how is the Irvington Club doing? He still has a keen mind and can be counted on to verify tennis historical information. His latest expression of benevolence is a recent generous donation to the Irvington Club renovation project

Recently as a tribute to Sam, the OTHC created a History of Tennis in Oregon website which makes visible the wonderful tennis legacy that Sam has left for us. The OTHC encourages you to view it at: <http://www.irvingtonclub.com/live/oregon-tennis-history>. Also, most of the pictures on the walls at the Irvington Club were donated by Sam. We plan in the near future to display more of the historical material on the 2nd floor of the club.

Sam, your extraordinary contributions to tennis are greatly appreciated.

Steve Hall
Chairman of the OTHC
Chairman of the USTA/PNW Historic Committee

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