

Tennis community honors late Sam Lee

Modest Portlander earned respect for more than his game

By KERRY EGGERS
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Though I have covered a lot of tennis through my career, I don't believe I ever met Sam Lee.

I regret that even more after attending Tuesday's celebration of life at Multnomah Athletic Club for Portland's tennis immortal, who died on April 9 at age 97.

I knew of Lee, of course, as a legendary figure in the Northwest tennis community. His name was synonymous with the sport in this area. By the time I came onto the

scene in the late 1970s, though, Lee was in his 60s and no longer playing tournament tennis.

He was doing just about everything else, though, having served as president of the MAC and Irvington Tennis Club, vice president of the Pacific Northwest Tennis Association, chairman of the PNW Tennis Historical Committee and a member of the PNW Tennis Hall of Fame Committee through a lifetime of volunteering.

By all accounts, Lee was an accomplished but modest man.

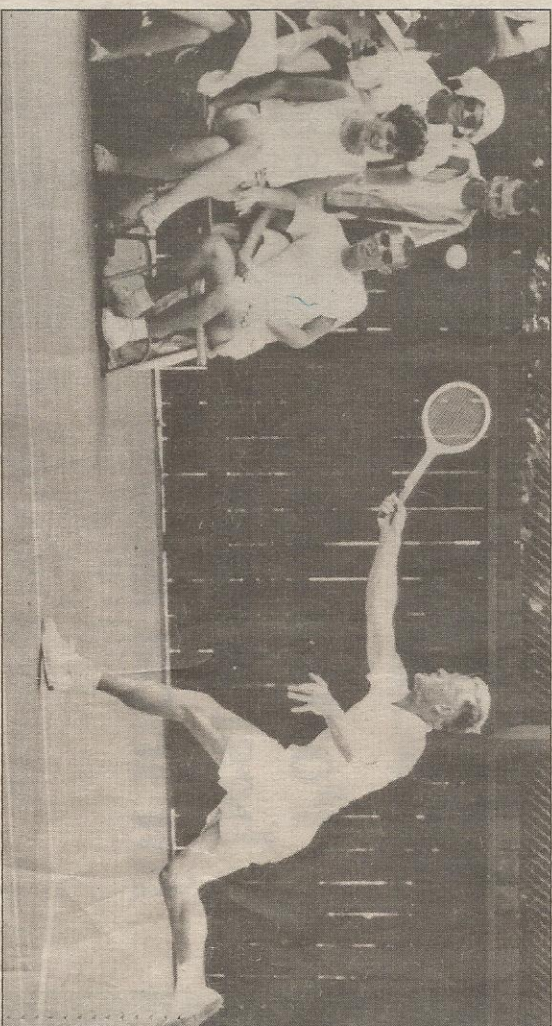
"Dad would have wondered what all the fuss was about today," Sam's son, Hal Lee, told the crowd of about 200 Tuesday. "He didn't like to attract too much attention. He did like to meet new friends, reacquaint with old friends and share stories."

Steve Hall, chairman of the PNW Tennis Historical Committee, recently wrote a story about Lee for The Irvington Club newsletter. Hall sent it to Sam's wife of 62 years, June, for approval before it was published about a week before he died.

"June was afraid to give it to him, because he might reject it," Hall said. "But he told her, 'This is really good.' That was the ultimate compliment, to get that from Sam."

Lee's credentials as a player were considerable, having won an NCAA doubles championship at Stanford in 1933 and the National Senior Indoor Doubles title in 1947 and '48 and reached the quarterfinals of the Masters Doubles at Wimbledon in '48. He is a charter member of the PNW

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Sam Lee stretches for a return in his heyday as one of the top tennis players in Portland. Lee, who died last month at age 97, did just about everything in the Pacific Northwest tennis community, after winning the NCAA doubles title with Stanford in 1933.

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