

Hall of Fame Class of 2009 Gary Lee



Gary Lee

Selfless service leads to phenomenal change, as was experienced by Gary Lee of Lincoln CA, a USTA volunteer for over 25 years. "There was very little diversity in tennis when I started; it was primarily a white person's game but now people of all colors are playing. I was the only person of color involved in the USTA when I first started going to national conventions, and I was the first person of color on the USTA national board – I'm very proud of that."

The hard work and determination of Lee and the others that worked along with him, led to the formation of the Multicultural Participation Committee (MPC). Having started in NorCal and eventually spread to National, the MPC's revolutionary activities have reached thousands of underserved populations and youth by helping to create tennis programs at community centers, providing college scholarships for young adults and making it possible for all to enjoy participating in leagues and tournaments. "That's why I have been a volunteer for so long," says Lee, "seeing the improvement and diversity throughout the years."

Now a retired dentist, Lee has been playing tennis since he was a teenager, "The neighborhood kids would go play tennis; it's just what we did." Lee played on his high school team and as a freshman at UC Berkeley, before academics got in the way. He was brought back into the game when his three daughters, Trina, Tisha and Tiffany started playing. "You get involved with what your children are involved with – that's how I got started with NorCal." Another significant improvement that Lee was involved with on the local level was the cultivation of NorCal's adult leagues. "That project started as almost nothing, now our participation is one of the top in the country."

Lee's volunteer accolades run vast and long. At the USTA National level he was the Men's Senior International Team Coordinator, Britannia Cup Team Captain, Men's 65-captain (as a non playing captain), the vice chair of the Senior International Team Committee, the Federation Cup Committee Chair and the USTA Nominating Committee in 1999 and 2000. And Lee has held a past USTA Board position – the Pacific Region Vice President from 1991-1992. Serving under the late Bob Cookson, Lee was also part of the initiative to build the new Arthur Ashe Tennis Stadium in Flushing Meadows.

Lee has also been a member of "many, many USTA committees; too many to remember," he proudly jokes. Some of the committee's Lee served on are the Budget and Finance, Minority Participation, Sanctions and Scheduling, Sport Science, Olympic, Leagues, Player Development, and Governance/Planning. And he has served as the Tournament Chair for the USTA Boys and Girls 18s Hardcourt Championships. He currently serves on the Olympic committee.

At the local NorCal level, Lee was the Section President, Section Delegate, Section Vice-President, Parliamentarian and has been a Board Member since 1983. He has served on several NorCal committees, including Budget and Finance (chair), Leagues (chair), Long Range Planning (chair), Jr. Tennis Council, Senior Council, Sportsmanship, Grievance, Sports Science and the Executive Committee. He has also been the Tournament Chair for Junior Team Exchange.

Lee was also the Director of Chinese-American Team for competitive tour of PRC. A unique opportunity, in 1986 he brought a team of 20 Chinese-American players, ranging in age from 12-college, to participate in tournaments held in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu.

Not surprisingly, Lee has been the recipient of many awards for his hard work and service. A few include the Multicultural Participation Committee Icon Award in 2002, the NorCal Family of the Year Award in 1995 and the NorCal Service to Tennis Award. He has also served on the Board of Directors at the Peninsula Tennis Club, since 1982.

Lee and his wife Pauline are very proud of their three daughters, who were all highly ranked NorCal Juniors players and who all received tennis scholarships to the University of the Pacific. "Tennis has been great to us, and as a family; I've gotten so much more than I put in."