

2011 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame Larry Huebner



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Through his passion for tennis Larry Huebner has had a profound affect on people's lives all around the world.

Known as "Mr. Tennis" in his hometown of Fresno, Larry was born into a family that had tennis in their blood; Larry's son John explains, "My grandfather was a self-taught player and got into the tennis business in 1931 during the Depression while playing at Roeding Park in Fresno. If someone broke a string they had to send it to San Francisco to get restrung; so my grandfather started stringing racquets out of the back of his car. The next year he opened a tennis and ski shop across the street from the park, Huebner Sports."

It was the start of tennis in Fresno and a legacy that Larry inherited and continued from his father; he is credited with cultivating the Central Valley into the tennis hub that it is today. "In the late 1930's before the war there were maybe 100 people in the area that played tennis, now the Central Valley has the largest contingency of players in Northern California," says John.

Larry graduated from Fresno High in 1949, lettering in tennis, basketball and baseball, and he was one of the first Central Valley residents to have national success as a junior tennis player. Though John Wooden, who would remain a lifelong friend, recruited him to play basketball at UCLA, tennis prevailed, thanks to a little encouragement from the UCLA tennis coach. As captain, Larry took the team to two national championships and won an individual title in doubles.

One of his greatest legacies was his instrumental role in founding the Fig Garden Swim and Racket Club. John explains, "My dad returned to Fresno after serving two years in the Navy and there were no tennis clubs, so he found the site, gathered the investors and was the first manager and tennis pro."

Countless people have come to enjoy the sport because of his guidance and mentorship. Gordon Collins, Tennis Director at the Courtside Club/WAC, says "Larry has been a leader in our industry for decades. Whether as a player, coach, club owner, club designer - he has led the way! He was a tireless volunteer and supporter of the game, while always showing the highest level of integrity - we are all indebted to him! Tennis in NorCal would not be where it is without his guidance along the way."

And Peter Burwash, founder and owner of Peter Burwash International (PBI), expressed that millions around the world have been positively impacted by the lessons and skills he personally learned on the court from working with Larry Huebner.

Larry also devoted his time to his wife of 56 years, Gretchen, and their three children Jim, John and Karin. Huebner Sports remained in business for 63 years and eventually grew to two locations. He volunteered and was active with school programs, teen programs, the Trinity Lutheran Church and the Salvation Army for over 35 years. At 45 Larry was ranked No. 1 in 35's in NorCal. He earned a national No. 1 ranking, has won 27 gold balls, participated in numerous father-son and father-daughter tournaments, was inducted into the Fresno Athletic Hall of Fame and the Fresno High School Wall of Fame, and he has been honored at the US Open.