

2008 USTA Northern California Tennis Hall of Fame: Liz Blum



Lisbeth Blum

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A life as volunteer: "A little bit of corporate, a little bit of politics, and a lot of fun."

"I never imagined that as a volunteer I would be inducted into the USTA NorCal Hall of Fame. I've always thought of Hall members as players, so it's extremely gratifying to be recognized in this way."

Learning to play tennis when there aren't many opportunities to compete can be difficult, as Liz Blum will attest. Growing up in Salinas, Liz was encouraged to play by her father, who grew up in Kansas and played at Kansas State, but other than hanging around the public courts there wasn't much going on. That is until her high school P.E. teacher, Barbara Lum, organized the Wightman Cup, an early form of team tennis. "I loved playing on that team," said Liz. "We got to go everywhere to compete. We went to the Berkeley Tennis Club, Menlo Circus Club and Burlingame Country Club. I'll never forget it."

Once in college at Stanford University, Liz had to make do by taking a P.E. class called "Tournament Tennis." She took the class every quarter so she could play. "This was before Title IX and there was no women's tennis program," she said. "The Tournament Class was pictured in the yearbook every year with the title of Stanford's Tennis Club. Years later I received in the mail a Block 'S', the kind that varsity players get, for playing in that club."

Right after college Liz married Larry Blum and they moved to Florida, where he was stationed in the Air Force. She didn't play tennis again until they moved back to the Bay Area and settled on the Peninsula. They joined Foothills Tennis and Swim Club in Los Altos and Liz played on their ladder. Both their children played. Liz tutored at the East Palo Alto Tennis & Tutoring organization. The stage was set for Liz's career as a USTA volunteer.

First she joined the Section's junior council, then the board of directors. She served as president of USTA Northern California in 1989 and 1990. When Bob Cookson was president of the USTA he appointed Liz to the Junior Competition Committee. She has been on and off that committee ever since and currently serves as its national chairman. She has also served on the community development and collegiate committees. And, in another position, she was coordinator of all junior sanctioning and scheduling, a major task considering she handled all the sites and schedules for national junior tournaments.

With a degree in political science, Liz has been well suited to serve as a USTA volunteer. "I've always been interested in how politics, pressure groups and organizations affect legislation," she said. "It's extremely exciting to be close to a national governing body of sport, trying to get things done diplomatically and without discord. USTA has given me a way to apply whatever talents I have for organization management. My role in tennis administration has been a good replacement for any upper level business career I could have had."