

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ROLLING HILLS TENNIS CLUB 1961-1990

According to the archives, correspondence, interviews, notations, and documents of the RHTC, on April 12, 1961, the City Manager, and Gilbert Myers wrote to Marcus Peppard of Middleridge Lane about a request for a backboard for the only tennis court in the city. The board took no action. Manager Myers wrote, "I do think that there is considerable more tennis interest and the time may be nearly ripe for the formation of a 'Tennis Club,' which will actively takeover the court operation including playing time reservation."

According to correspondence, not a club, but a "tennis committee" was organized. The tennis committee consisted of Mr. Walter Ralphs, Chairman, Mr. Bryant and Mr. Peppard. This was the first tennis organization within the City of Rolling Hills: May 1961. The Club's major social activities were a Christmas Party for children and the Scouts.

The earliest activities consisted of letter writing to local professionals restricting tennis lessons on the Rolling Hills Court to Association Members. Then in July 1961 reservations came flooding in for lessons for children and adult association members. Janet Young was giving lessons. Janet did not allow sunglasses on the courts.

In August 1961 the Board of Directors of the City appointed, E.J. Horkey to the Committee. Mr. Peppard resigned. Helen Horkey took responsibility for making court reservations.

Between 1961 and 1973 the committee functioned as a community watchdog, protecting the court for exclusive use by its Association members. Through efforts of the tennis committee, eventually two other courts were added, as demand for tennis increased. This took a great deal of political activity on the part of tennis lovers. Councilman Tom Heinsheimer took a significant role in helping the Club.

On March 28, 1973, a meeting was held of the tennis committee consisting of Dick and Carole Hoffman, Frances and Joe Nebelon, Herb Agid, Jay Kuhne, Joyce Robertson, and Cliff Bundy. Others actively involved were Phil Battaglia, Phil Partridge, and Katherine Partridge. This committee determined how the three courts would be reserved and used. A decision was made to get two of the courts lighted, and the hours of use.

During the summer of 1973, the Rolling Hills Tennis Club was officially formed. The first officers were Cliff Bundy, President, Dr. Richard Hoffman, Vice President, and Mrs. Barbara Esensten, Secretary Treasurer. In November 1973, the club voted to abandon court lighting because of the energy crisis. The Club was patriotic from its inception.

In June of 1974, the Rolling Hills Tennis Club reached 100 family memberships with annual dues of \$25.00. It was noted in correspondence that many association members used the courts, but were not RHTC members. A request was made of the City for \$ 1,000 for windscreens, tables and chairs, light shields nets and a glass enclosed bulletin board.

In July of 1974, President Bundy was invited to make a presentation to the Board of Directors. But in November of 1974, the next President of the Tennis Club, Joyce

Robertson, represented the RHTC to the Landscape committee regarding the installation of cement benches.

The budget for the year 1974-5 was \$750.00. After payment for light shields and nets, \$25.00 was left unspent.

In 1975 Carole Hanscomb, RHTC treasurer, transferred funds for improvements to the City of Rolling Hills. In June 1975 President Joyce Robertson wrote to the City Council that the Rolling Hills Tennis Club had achieved financial independence.

In 1976, RHTC President Warren Kane, wrote to the City that since many non club members were using the courts and were association members, the Club should not have to support court use by non Club Association Members.

1977 started out with a proposal by the Tennis Club to the council to make additions to the three courts because of increasing usage. The proposal document noted, "Over the past several years, the Tennis Club has expanded from a small group, to over 170 members Accepting 25 families per court as satisfactory usage we now actually need not three but seven courts."

As late as 1974, there were no organized tournaments or social events. In 1975, 25 ladies participated in tournaments monthly and in 1976, 50 ladies participated monthly in tournaments. In 1975, the first men's single and doubles tournaments were inaugurated. In 1975 there was a Men's Club champion. Tournaments became limited because of insufficient access to private courts. Junior and senior High tennis programs were organized, and our RH juniors were being invited to play at other Peninsula clubs. An attempt was made to figure out how to purchase adjacent property for additional courts.

At about that time, it was decided that Tennis Ability Rankings were needed. A committee of the club was formed to rank all club members. The first rankers were Don Robertson Shirley Gregory and Roland Hansen. 71 Men and 158 women were ranked according to their ability. Among the "A" rated Men were Bill Corette, Bill Crowley, and Norm Haberman. Among the "B" rated Men players were Dr. Dick Hoffman, Howard Slusher, and Phil Ver Plank. There were many "C" players and also a Beginner's classification.

Among the "A" ranked ladies were Carole Hoffman, Victoria Link, and Joyce Robertson. The "B" ranked Ladies included Jeanne Keegan, Shirley Weller, and Joan Wickham.

In 1977, By Laws and an annual report were prepared. The Annual report cited "Membership in the Rolling Hills Tennis Club has held steady from last year at approximately 175 members. The Junior Program was quite active and our juniors worked out with the Los Angeles Strings Professional Team. Because of extreme court usage, tournaments were limited to once a year. Mixed doubles was becoming popular as were the accompanying social events and activities." President Michael Weller pointed out in his report that new and modern lighting was required as the current lighting and glare was not adequate.

The social aspects of the Club continue to grow and tournaments and luncheons started to appear on newsletters. A sophisticated ranking system for singles and doubles appeared in 1981 as well as the RHTC logo, still used, crossed racquets in a horseshoe design.

In 1987, President Lawrence Amberg noted that when he moved to Rolling Hills, the Rolling Hills Tennis Club became a social opportunity for him to meet and become friends with many resident Association members. This was the first year of the Winter Away party weekend in the Palm Springs area. The gazebo and barbeque area were also improved to accommodate the growing socialization of members after tournaments. He commented that the Tennis club was the best was to make lifelong friendships within the community.

In 1988, President Bill Crowley worked with the Association manager Peggy Minor to keep the courts active.

In 1990, Joyce Robertson one again was elected Club President. She noted in her annual report that she was the first social chairperson of the Club in 1973. Some of the annual activities of the 1970's became weekly or monthly activities of the current Club. Kay Lupo was active in establishing an Annual Holiday party and dinner dance.

Tony Vinter and Allan Roberts planned tournaments and dinners to follow, and Bob Kerr was in charge of Men's workouts, and the Saturday morning men's tennis tournaments. Marianna Mitchell was in charge of the Juniors Program. Robertson added "all this for only \$ 35.00 a year!" The Tennis Club is a place where new residents can become familiar with the friendliness of our community and where they can make lasting friendships."

And so it goes.

Larry Brody prepared this History in 2004.

DICK HOFFMAN ADDED THE FOLLOWING:

The birth of the Tennis Club was quite difficult and even involved a city election for city councilman which finally proved to be pivotal in going forward in expanding the city's tennis facility from one sole non-regulation court to three courts, the two new regulation courts. During the process of soliciting support from the citizenry, we sent out a survey for support and one response called us "socialists" for trying to have the city build the courts and only those who played tennis benefit. There was also a proposal by a city leader to buy the house next to the tennis court for a "city clubhouse" but that was nixed because it was too expensive -- \$130,000.