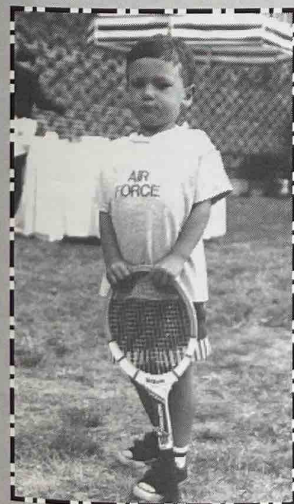
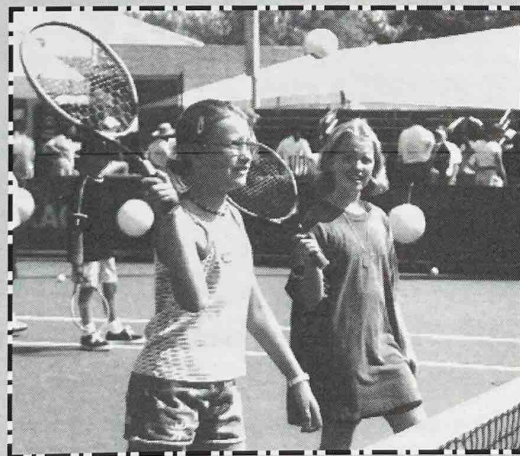
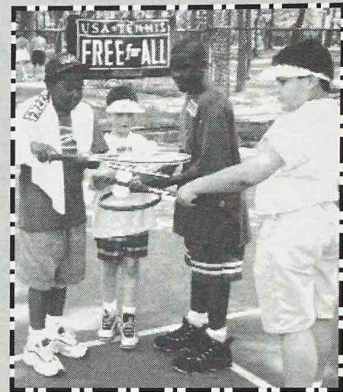
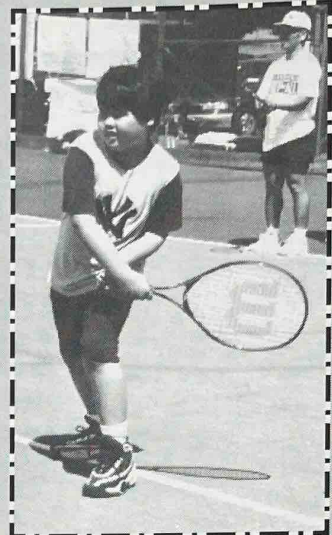
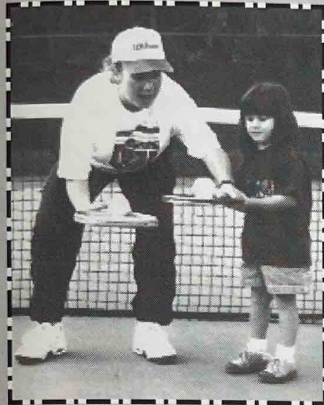




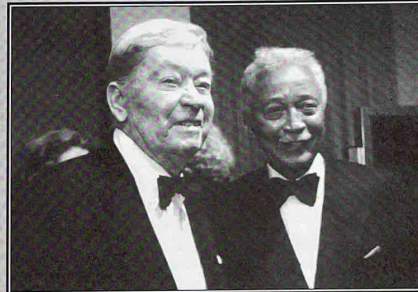
1999

Twelfth Annual
Eastern Tennis
Hall of Fame Dinner

Program Highlights



Hall of Fame Highlights



Herbert S. Fitz Gibbon, II

With a little imagination, you can hear the restless energy of life's rite of passage exploding off young Herb Fitz Gibbon's racquet as he traversed the world's tennis courts and transformed himself from a scholar-athlete into a prominent businessman and philanthropist.

Fitz Gibbon played the U.S. National Championships and the U.S. Open at Forest Hills ten times, from 1961 to 1973, and was ranked among the world's top 20 during the crossover years between amateur and professional tennis. The U.S. singles draws from that period show that Fitz Gibbon changed his place of residence three times, during those transition years in his life.

In the early 1960s, when he captained and played first singles for the Princeton Tennis team, he was listed in the (amateur) U.S. Championships draws as Herbert S. Fitz Gibbon II of Garden City, N.Y. (his childhood hometown). He beat Stan Smith in 1964 and was ranked 14th in the country. In 1965, he lost 12-10 (in the fourth set) to semifinalist Rafael Osuna of Mexico. By December of that year, he was a member of the U.S. Davis Cup team and upset Arthur Ashe, 6-2, 14-12, 9-7, at the Victorian Championships in Melbourne, Australia.

While serving in the U.S. Army in 1967, he appeared in the U.S. Championships draw as Pfc. Herbert S. Fitz Gibbon of West Point, N.Y. He beat Erik Van Dillen and lost to his friend Clark Graebner. Earlier in the summer, he had won the silver medal at the Pan-American Games in Canada.

The game turned professional in 1968 and the U.S. Championships was renamed the U.S. Open. Fitz Gibbon became the first amateur to beat a professional at Wimbledon when he upset No. 16 seed Nikki Pilic of Yugoslavia in four sets. But he skipped the Open that summer and played the European clay circuit.

When he returned to the Open in 1969, he had started working as a stockbroker and was listed in the draw as Herbert Fitz Gibbon

of New York City. By

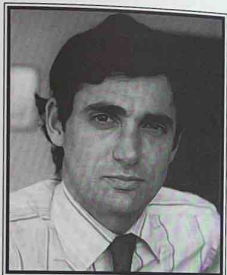
1979, six years after he lost to No. 9 seed Jimmy Connors in his final appearance at the Open, he had co-written a book, *The Complete Racquet Sports Player* (with Jeff Barstow), and joined Oppenheimer Capital, Inc. Today, he is a managing director.

"Bill Talbert was the model, he did it better than anyone. He went to college and used tennis as an entrée into business," Fitz Gibbon said. "I wasn't (initially) considered a brilliant analyst but it has been my greatest achievement. I was supposed to do well in sports."

He grew up playing tennis for its own merit and competed at the highest level when there was no financial incentive. The professional game was tempting, but his educational background and the necessity for stability in the real world won out.

"There's something very special about doing one thing very well," Fitz Gibbon says now. "It gives you tremendous satisfaction that you will savor all your life, and allows you to appreciate the accomplishments of other people."

He started playing at age 7 at the Cherry Valley Country Club in Garden City and went on to win some 50 tournaments, among them four New York State High School singles titles. In his senior year at Princeton, he went undefeated when the team beat Miami, who had tallied 137 straight victories. He graduated from Princeton in 1964, taught ancient, medieval and modern European history for a year at St. Paul's School in his hometown and then headed back to the tennis courts. During his years on the amateur circuit, Fitz Gibbon



Herbert S. Fitz Gibbon, II

Courtesy of Sally & Les Fitz Gibbon

and his buddies Gene Scott and Graebner sometimes played four or five exhibitions in a week-end at the Concord, the Atlantic Beach Club and other Eastern clubs to help fund their trips to Australia and Wimbledon.

Fitz Gibbon had met Scott across the net in a member-guest tournament at Cherry Valley. Fitz Gibbon (then 15) and his partner, Harvard captain Dale Junta, beat the Yale teammates, Scott (then 20) and John Clark, in three tough sets. "I was fit to be tied," Scott said. "I had never lost to a 15-year-old in singles, doubles, girls or anything else."

In the summer of 1965 at the USTA National Father-Son Championships at Longwood, Fitz Gibbon and his dad, Les, recorded the most games (76) ever played in that event when they beat Charlie and Manuel Pasarell in the semis, 7-9, 13-11, 19-17. (They lost to the Froehlings in the final but beat the McNairs for the title in 1967.)

Les Fitz Gibbon remembers the Pasarell match well. "Herb's instructions to me were, 'Just concentrate on return of serve,'" he said. "I did that for three sets. But he let me hit one at 15-all in the last game. I knew Charlie would poach when he saw me hit it, so I hit it down the line. He got the ball back, but it flew off his racquet. Herb put it away at ad and then served it out."

After he played the Australian circuit in the fall of '65, Fitz Gibbon did a tour for the State Department through Southeast Asia in February of 1966 and went to Burma. He was drafted in March, was stationed at West Point and served as coach of the Plebe tennis and squash teams. He finished his stint in the army in February of '68 and was asked by the State Department to return to Burma to coach their national tennis team in preparation for the Southeast Asia Peninsula Games.

He spent the rest of 1968 touring on the international tennis circuit with Allen Fox and won gold and bronze medals (in mixed doubles and singles) at the Olympics in Mexico.

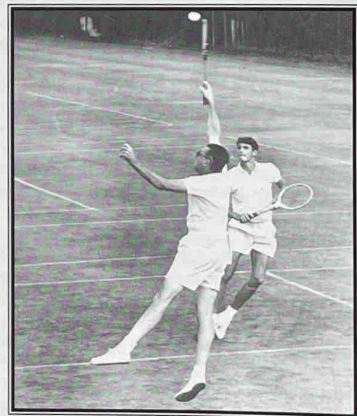
"Herb was the best American on clay that year," said Fox, the former Pepperdine coach and a Ph.D. in psychology. "He beat (Manuel) Santana in his hometown in Spain.

Santana was the world's best amateur on clay that year...I never took one set off Herb on clay the whole year, not even in practice...His serve and forehand were enormous weapons on any surface, he was a very good volleyer and cunning on drop shots. On clay especially, he'd work you over with his forehand, so you couldn't attack his backhand...

"He is the classiest guy I know," Fox added. "He's honest, thoughtful and understanding. The whole time I traveled with him I never got anything negative. When you live with somebody for a year you know the person very well. You're often driving all night and things come out. Not with Herb."

It's fair to say that Herb Fitz Gibbon's mother Sally knows her son best. "He's very caring," she said. "He spent much time in third world countries and became aware of people's problems. So he began raising funds for a charity called Interplast, an organization of plastic surgeons who operate on deformed children. Herb and his friends are sponsoring an Interplast trip to Bolivia this summer; the lives of 100 children will be changed forever."

- Nancy Gill McShea



Herb Fitz Gibbon (r) and his dad, Les, won many doubles titles including the USTA Father/Son National Grass Courts in 1967.

Courtesy of Sally & Les Fitz Gibbon

Richard Savitt

Dick Savitt is a tennis champion and a modest man who covers up a warm, generous nature with a quick, dry sense of humor, his friends say. If you ask him too many questions about himself or his tennis career, he'll get edgy and deadpan like Jack Webb of the old Dragnet television show: "Just the facts, Maam, just stick to the facts."

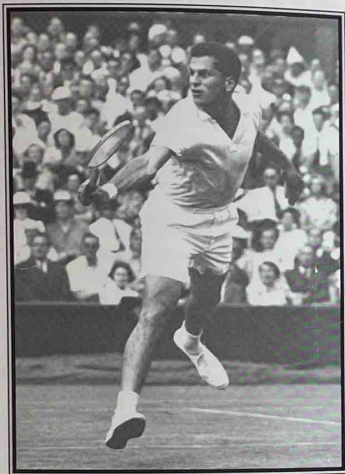
So we'll stick with the facts here. And the facts are considerable!

In 1951, Savitt was a 24-year-old veteran of the U.S. Navy, a Cornell graduate and a self-taught tennis player from South Orange, N.J., who stunned the tennis world when he swept the Australian and Wimbledon titles. By winning two of the sport's four Grand Slam Championships, he established himself as the world's No. 1 amateur tennis player (before the start of the professional Open Era in 1968), and became the first player to win both championships in one season since Don Budge in 1938.

Budge and Ham Richardson said their friend Savitt came very close to winning three of the four majors that year when he played "one of the great classic matches" in the semifinals of the French. Savitt lost in five sets to the champion, Jaroslav Drobný, after leading two sets to love with leads in the next three sets.

For the record, Savitt was the first of only two former Eastern juniors who have ever won the Australian singles title (Vitas Gerulaitis won it in 1977), and the second of only four Eastern players who have ever won in singles at Wimbledon (Sidney Wood, 1931; Althea Gibson, 1957 and '58; and John McEnroe, 1981, '83 and '84).

To win the Australian, Savitt dismissed three native Aussie champions, defeating John Bromwich ('39 and '46) in the quarterfinals, Frank Sedgman ('49 and '50) in the semifinals and Ken McGregor ('52) in the finals. "The Australian was a big shock to the tennis world," Savitt said. "It put me on the map." (Incredibly, in December of 1951, he was excluded from the U.S. Davis Cup team that lost 3-2 to Australia in the final Challenge Round in which Sedgman



Courtesy of Richard Savitt

Using a booming service and reflex backhand volleys, like the one above, Dick Savitt captured the 1951 Wimbledon crown.

and McGregor combined for Australia's three victories. Earlier that year, Savitt had won three Davis Cup singles matches, against Japan and Canada. When asked for an explanation, he would say only that it's a long story.)

At Wimbledon, Savitt again beat McGregor for the title in one of the shortest finals ever played on the center court of the All-England Lawn and Tennis Club. Excerpts from the July 7, 1951 issue of *The New York Times* captured the drama for fans back home: "Savitt beat the Australian Davis Cup player, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4, in 63 minutes before a standing-room crowd of 15,000. The ...American culminated his first foreign tour and his initial Wimbledon appearance with the finest array of passing shots seen in this 65th staging of the game's best-known tournament...Savitt showed tension in the first few games, but after that his booming service and forehand and the most devastating backhand he ever has shown proved too much for McGregor..."

"The 6-foot-3 Savitt broke McGregor's service—his best weapon—five times...He finished with sharp backhand cross-court shots which upset the Australian's net game. The end came with McGregor lying flat, his drawn face buried in the ...grass. He had dived desperately but missed the title-winner, a sizzling forehand drive, by inches...The happy American tossed his racquet high in the air and let go a shout of triumph that echoed above the applause."

Savitt says now that he remembers feeling more relieved than elated when he accepted the Wimbledon trophy from the Duchess of Kent. En route to the final, he had also eliminated Americans Art Larsen and Herb Flam, the singles winner and runner-up at the 1950 U.S. National Championships (now U.S. Open). Ham Richardson remembers that "Flam had him a set and 5-1 (in the second), but Dick came storming back to win that set 15-13 and won the match in four."

In the late summer of '51, at the U.S. Championships at Forest Hills, Savitt fell in the semis for the second straight year (he had lost to champ Larsen in '50), losing 6-4 in the fifth to Vic Seixas. "Dick had a boil on the back of his knee which didn't help," Budge recalled.

Savitt played the U.S. Championships 11 times, the first time in 1946 when he lost, 6-2, 6-2, 6-0, to Bill Talbert in the third round. His friend Dan Rivkind reminded him recently, "You know, I remember when you played Talbert at Forest Hills on Center Court," to which Savitt replied, "There aren't too many of you left (who stayed that day). I looked around after the first set and the whole stadium was emptying out. My family and friends left, too."

He quit playing the circuit full-time in the fall of 1952 to work in the oil business in Texas and didn't play at all in '53, '54 and '55. Thereafter, he played only during summer vacations, and the Australians continued to loom in his draw. When he returned to Forest Hills in '56, he lost to the champion Ken Rosewall in five sets, and in '58, he beat a young Rod Laver.

Savitt had taught himself to play tennis at age 13 by imitating Eastern's better players (Larry Krieger and Jeff Podesta among them) at

the Berkeley Tennis Club in Orange. Russell Kingman was then the president of both the USLTA and Berkeley, and he brought in Jack Kramer, Frank Kovacs, Bobby Riggs and Pancho Segura to play the New Jersey State tournament there. Savitt was a ball boy. "I had never seen tennis like that before," he said. "I immediately got Don Budge's book on tennis to learn how to hit strokes correctly".

Savitt entered Cornell in the fall of '46 (right after he lost to Talbert at Forest Hills). He was a four-year starter at No. 1 singles and doubles there, posted a career singles record of 57-2, won the Eastern Intercollegiate singles title in 1949 and '50, and paired with Leonard Steiner to win the doubles title in 1948, '49 and '50. He has combined tennis and business ever since. In 1961, he won the Maccabiah Games in Israel and went into the securities business with Lehman Brothers. In 1973, he got involved with an organization called the Israel Tennis Centers, which now has thirteen centers spread all over Israel. "The concept was to use tennis as a vehicle to improve the quality of life for children," he said. Savitt's interest was to develop world-class players. In 1985, he joined Schroder's, a large London and U.S. securities firm.

Savitt won many other tournaments during the years he was ranked among America's top ten, including doubles at the Italian, singles and doubles at the Canadian and three singles titles at the USLTA National Indoors. Today, he enjoys set weekly games with Bill Colson, editor of *Sports Illustrated*, John Hursh and his son, Bobby, with whom he won the 1981 USTA Father-Son Doubles Championship at Longwood. "He's the greatest father, he taught me everything," said Bobby Savitt, once a ranked Eastern junior himself. "He's one of the few guys who played at the highest level, studied the game, adapted to changing techniques and became a great teacher."

Does it take brains to become a champion? "No!" Savitt said. "It takes four things: athletic ability, desire, good technique and experience." Those are the facts; just stick with the facts when you talk to Dick Savitt.

Elaine F. Viebranz

The first thing you notice about Elaine F. Viebranz is that she is an elegant, friendly lady whose gleaming white hair frames a radiant smile. When you get to know her, you realize she is also a very determined, elegant lady with clout.

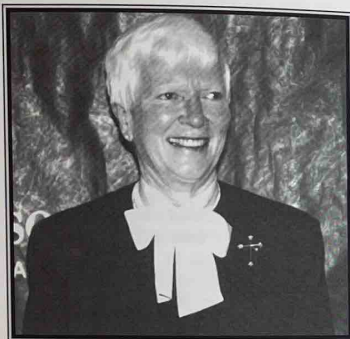
Elaine has quietly established her legacy in American tennis as a powerful, volunteer executive in the governing body of the game. She has served with distinction as president of the USTA/Eastern Section and the Junior Tennis Foundation, as a member of the USTA Executive Board, and as chairman and/or member of 20 USTA and sectional committees. She is also in charge of volunteer operations at the U.S. Open Championships at Flushing Meadows.

She came to Eastern tennis with a strong background in volunteer work, having served as president of the Larchmont Junior League, vice president of the Family Service of Westchester and as a member of the Vestry and Board of Directors of St. John's Episcopal Church in Larchmont.

Elaine joined Eastern's volunteer ranks in 1980, was appointed the first sectional league coordinator of the USTA Adult League Program when 13,000 players participated nationwide, and served as chairman of the league's national committee from 1993 to 1996. Today, Eastern's sectional league coordinator of USA League Tennis is a full-time, paid position and the program fields 340,000 players nationwide.

"It's the best program the USTA has," Elaine said. "That's why I stuck with it as long as I did."

"Elaine has the inclination to promote good causes; she's the ideal volunteer," said her friend Doris Herrick, Eastern's former executive director who has worked closely with Elaine for years. "She has an ability to fit into any group, to draw people out. She is an excellent conversationalist with a genuine interest in others and an uncanny ability to remember details about them."



Elaine F. Viebranz

Courtesy of USTA Eastern, Inc.

She also has an uncanny ability to quietly convince you to attend to business her way. For example, if you have occasion to mention her name in print, you know instinctively to refer to her initially as Elaine F. Viebranz--she's partial to that middle initial--and thereafter as Elaine rather than Viebranz, or as chairman rather than chairperson. She dismisses rigid journalism rules and trendy terminology as nit-picking nonsense.

On the other hand, Dan Dwyer, who followed Elaine as Eastern's president, will tell you that she can be very proper, specifically when she quietly reminded him about the right dress code for a USTA sectional president. Jacket and tie please!

Elaine feels passionately about tennis and family, say her four children, who have mostly fond memories of playing tennis together at the Orienta Beach Club in Mamaronck (Curt admits to boycotting the game for awhile). Mom loved to play, they agreed, but when she made an error she'd look at her racquet, get mad and mutter, "Oh, É-laine!" Her kids actually believed her racquet was named É-laine!

She quit playing when she blew her elbow out (before the medical profession knew how to treat it), but by then she had

taken on the role of tennis parent and was running the Metropolitan Inter-Club Tennis League's junior program. "Mom transferred her passion for playing into a passion for supporting the game," said Scott, who did the seedings for his mother's season-ending junior tournament.

Elaine's children added that their mother's accomplishments can be traced to her insistence on consistency, a strong sense of values and a subtle sense of humor, qualities that inspire confidence in others. "Mom creates high expectations for herself and has always expected the same from us. We always knew where we stood whether we liked it or not," said Gayle, once a ranked Eastern junior who earned 11 varsity letters in high school. "She carried me around to all those tournaments, never complained and kept it all in perspective. She allowed me to choose whether or not to play year-round.

"More recently, when I was having my youngest child five weeks early and nothing was ready, she came out (to Colorado) and pulled it all together. I just knew I could count on her. That kind of consistency is reassuring."

Joan and Curt chimed in: "And let's not forget her insistence on good manners!" The Viebranz kids were instructed to greet everybody they knew, even when they spotted acquaintances more than a block away.

Elaine grew up in New York City, worked as an editorial assistant for *Redbook*



Elaine with husband Al Viebranz

Courtesy of Elaine And Al Viebranz

magazine and then moved on to Sylvania Electric Products (later part of GTE).

The move was a turning point in her life. "I was hired on V-J Day in 1945, met Al (her husband, an electronics engineer) and was his executive secretary in 1946 and married him in 1947," she said.

She had instantly become a corporate wife. The Viebranzes settled in Larchmont in 1953, an ideal environment for Elaine to raise her family and start a career as a volunteer.

"Elaine has spent a substantial portion of her life serving other people," Al Viebranz said, adding that his wife of 51 years has always been very pretty, alert and lively with a good sense of humor. "I'm not at all impartial, but I think she's been one of the most effective executives the East or the USTA has ever had.

"Had she stayed in business rather than doing pro bono work, she would have been a top executive. The only person she's never been able to organize is me. That is an impossible task."

During her tenure as Eastern's president, Elaine stamped her signature on many innovative changes. She was involved in the inaugural Hall of Fame Dinner in 1988, a major fundraiser for the section's junior programs and those for special populations. She also worked to strengthen community tennis associations and special programs in the section's five regions, helped consolidate the two umpire groups (the Eastern and New Jersey Tennis Umpire Associations) and organized the first joint Annual Meeting among the Eastern Section, the USPTA and the USPTR. As president of the Junior Tennis Foundation, she awarded the first David N. Dinkins scholarship to deserving New York City youngsters.

"Tennis has been a wonderful experience," Elaine F. Viebranz said recently. "I've made great friends. I hope I have contributed to its growth."

- Nancy Hill McShea

Dr. Reginald S. Weir

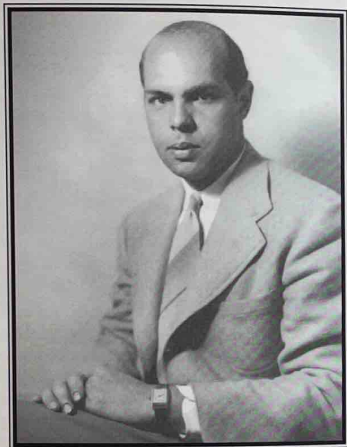
Within the span of one year during the late 1940s in two of New York City's five boroughs, two very different men forever changed the face of professional sports.

In April of 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers' bold rookie, Jackie Robinson, broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball before a raucous crowd of 26,623 at Ebbets Field, and went 0 for 3 in his first at-bats. In February of 1948, across the Brooklyn Bridge in Manhattan, Dr. Reginald Weir quietly hurdled the same barrier in the U.S. (Lawn) Tennis Association National Men's Indoor Championships before a more polite audience at the Seventh Regiment Armory, and won his first match.

Weir lost to Bill Talbert in the second round of the '48 indoors, but after the match, Talbert said to Dick Savitt, "What a class act he is; it's too bad he didn't get a chance to play more (national) tournaments in his prime. He's very quick and a very good volleyer." Weir later extended Pancho Gonzales to three sets in another national tournament and won five USTA indoor senior titles: three in singles (in 1956, 1957 and 1959) and two in doubles with George Ball (in 1961 and 1962).

Weir was 37 years old and a practicing New York physician and surgeon when he won that historic national match in '48. He had already played in one Eastern-sanctioned tournament, at the Hamilton Tennis Courts on Dykeman Street (now a New York City housing project). His friend Ernie Kuhn, whose family built and owned Hamilton's 32 red clay courts, ran tournaments there and told Reggie he'd put him in the draw and see what happens.

But Weir had been waiting patiently in the wings for a chance to play the USLTA nationals since 1929, when he was refused entrée into the national junior indoors, also held at the Seventh Regiment Armory. Arthur Ashe recalled in his book, *Hard Road to Glory*, that the NAACP had complained about Weir's exclusion at the time, but received the following



Dr. Reginald S. Weir

Courtesy of Carolyn Weir

reply: "...the policy of the USLTA has been to decline the entry of colored players in our championships...In pursuing this policy we make no reflection upon...race but we believe that as a practical matter, the present method of separate associations (USLTA and American Tennis Association)...should be continued."

By 1969, Weir was widely respected in the tennis community. That year, USTA President Alastair Martin appointed him to the USTA Administrative Committee. And in September of 1986, at Weir's 75th birthday reception at the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club in New Jersey--a little less than a year before he passed away--USTA President J. Randolph Gregson presented him with a plaque which read: "In appreciation to Dr. Reginald S. Weir for outstanding and inspirational contributions to the sport of tennis as a player, sportsman and national champion." Weir was also inducted into the City College Athletic Hall of Fame and a scholarship for youngsters and Eastern's N.J.

Men's 35 Sectional Championships were established in his name at the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club.

"My father was a healer by profession and temperament," said his daughter Carolyn Weir, a graduate of Yale who teaches French Honors and Spanish in New Jersey. "He was a very strong person, fiercely protective of his family yet gentle withal; an excellent, patient teacher. All his life, he had a Saint Francis-like quality with animals (especially dogs) and children. I once heard him say, at a tennis court, of course, 'I can't imagine not practicing medicine.' But he had to give up both tennis and medicine after a bad heart attack.

"I spent much of my life waiting for daddy at hospitals and tennis courts, especially at Hamilton where all the city high school teams played. Daddy grew up at those courts and formed many lasting friendships there. They were a magical place for me as a little girl...Daddy always played on Court 1 by the clubhouse and so did I when he hit with me."

Although Weir had been refused entrée into one USLTA national tournament, he had grown up accustomed to gaining it everywhere else. His father, Felix, the diamond medalist in his violin class at Chicago Musical College who also attended the Conservatory at Leipzig, Germany, had occasion in 1929 to work as an orchestra leader at Moulin Rouge in Paris. The elder Weir mentioned to a guest at a private party that his teenage son who played tennis was arriving, and the gentleman said, "Well then, he must become a member of our *Racing Club de France*."

When Reggie went to Paris in '29, he had already captained his high school tennis team at DeWitt Clinton and was captain of his team at City College. He also won ATA national titles in 1931, '32, '33 and '37. After graduating from New York University Medical School in 1935, he married Anna McCampbell, who had just received a masters in French from the University of Michigan. They met at an ATA national tournament in Tuskegee, Ala., when Anna's brother, the head ball boy, introduced her to the "fellow from New York (the champion)."

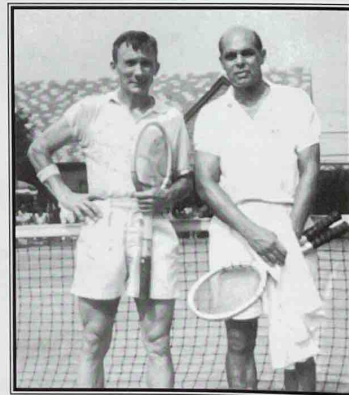
By 1939, Weir was an assistant in surgery at NYU. In 1941, he opened his own medical practice and was one of the earliest African-Americans to be appointed a New York City surgeon at Gouverneur Hospital on the lower East Side.

"Reggie was very patient, took everything in stride and waited his turn so to speak," said his friend Dan Rivkind, once a ranked Eastern junior/senior player, a dean/teacher in the N.Y.C. Public School System and director of the Columbia University Tennis Center. "I go back 50 years with him; he was like a big brother. It meant a lot to me as a kid who had nothing to be befriended by a guy of his stature. Dick Savitt used to practice with him indoors; that's how good he was.

"He would make home visits to elderly patients and wouldn't refuse a patient who didn't have any money. He never feared going into tough neighborhoods to help someone. He was so well known drug addicts considered him a friend and left him alone.

"Reggie Weir exemplified the finest values you would look for in a human being."

Nancy Gill McShea



Reggie Weir (r) won two USLTA Men's 45 National Indoor doubles titles with George Ball (l), in 1961 and 1962.

Courtesy of Carolyn Weir