



Junior Tennis Foundation, Inc.

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*21st Annual
Eastern Tennis
Hall of Fame Dinner*

KAY AND JOHN McENROE

By Nancy Gill McShea

A Google search will not reveal the little intangibles that prove why the McEnroes deserve the vote for the "first family of professional tennis." The Williamses qualify as candidates, as do the Everts. Eastern families have also left indelible impressions on the game, among them the Mayers from Woodmere and the Gerulaitises from Howard Beach. But if you look at the whole picture, you would vote for the McEnroes, whose roots are in Douglaston, and whose individual and collective impact on the game spans more than three decades in almost every venue.

Google also will not reveal that the McEnroes have twice been voted Eastern's Family of the Year, or that John P. (call him J.P.) and Kay are walking endorsements for how best to survive the demanding role of tennis parents. Some of their public stats are included here, but the intangibles, which center on the family dynamic, are mostly private unless you read their son John's memoir, *You Cannot Be Serious*.

John, Mark and Patrick agree that Mom was the glue, the core of the family and that Dad was the cheerleader and the ever present coach.

In private life, J.P., a graduate of the Fordham University School of Law and a retired partner and currently Of Counsel of the international New York-based law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, is an authority in corporate and sports law. Kay, a surgical nurse who graduated from the Lenox Hill Hospital School of Nursing, includes among her many charitable affiliations outside tennis the role of Trustee on the Lenox Hill board and a board member of the New York chapter of the Alzheimer's Foundation.

Inside tennis, J.P. and Kay were recently the guest speakers at an Eastern junior seminar, which focused on raising a tennis player. They admitted that they were strict with John, the first child, and that by the time Patrick was born they had relaxed and decided he was perfect. In other volunteer efforts, they served together as the honorary co-chairmen of the 1989 Eastern Tennis Hall of Fame. J.P. chaired the 2007 Hall of Fame Selection Committee and was a member of the USTA Davis Cup Committee. Kay is a former vice president and long-time member of Eastern's Junior Tennis Foundation and was a board member of the N.Y. Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis when it was the official charity of the ATP Tour.

John, one of the greatest players of all time, confirmed two family values in his memoir: "Mom and Dad

always said, 'Get a college scholarship.' Once they met [the great Australian coach] Harry Hopman, who told them war stories about Davis Cup and playing for your country, it was 'Get a college scholarship and play Davis Cup.'"

J.P. and Kay rallied to the cause themselves and last summer received the 2007 USTA President's Award for giving unusual and extraordinary individual service to Davis Cup tennis. They have supported the U.S. Davis Cup teams, live, for 30 years, since John won his first Davis Cup matches at age 19 (twice in singles during the victorious 1978 final round versus Great Britain and once in doubles versus Chile). Both John and Patrick have competed and served as team captains — Patrick recorded a 3-1 record as a player in the '90s and as captain led the 2007 team to victory last December, while John has recorded the most victories, 59, in U.S. Davis Cup history.

The brothers McEnroe respected their parents' emphasis on education and all three attended Stanford University, but John opted for the professional tennis circuit after he won the 1978 NCAA singles title. He ranked No. 1 in the world for the year in 1981, '82, '83 and '84, and held the world's No. 1 spot 14 times during his 15-year pro career. He won 17 Grand slam titles (7 in singles, 10 in doubles) and a combined 154 titles — 77 in singles and 77 in doubles.

Mark followed his father to Fordham Law School, is currently working as a venture capitalist and still plays tennis with his Eastern junior pals. He and Scott Moody were doubles finalists at the 2006 USTA 40 Grass Courts and Mark was ranked a few times among Eastern's top ten in men's 35 doubles.

Patrick took the law boards after graduating from Stanford in 1988 but decided to try the pro tour. He won the men's doubles title at the 1989 French Open, was a singles semifinalist at the 1991 Australian Open and a quarterfinalist at the 1995 US Open. He earned career best rankings of No. 3 in doubles and No. 28 in singles and appeared in 42 ATP Tour singles and doubles finals. Two weeks ago, he was appointed General Manager, USTA Elite Player Development, and will lead a renewed effort to develop future American champions.

But the search to discern motivating factors within the McEnroe family does not show up on Google and would even be an overwhelming challenge for the TV sleuth, Detective Columbo.

You would start with the premise that J.P. and Kay gave their sons every opportunity to succeed while growing up in a typical American household. John confirmed in his memoir that his family was indeed typical: "The McEnroe males were a sports-obsessed group, and we were vocal about it, whether we were rooting or playing... We all loved each other, but we were definitely a family of yellors...blowing off steam or just making friendly noise. We didn't hold back in our household.

"My parents started playing tennis with us when I was about 8," he wrote, "...and took great pride in taking us to Port Washington and to tournaments. Some parents feel they need to do things for themselves. My Dad and Mom were supportive of us... They were encouraging... It was good to have mommy and daddy there if you broke down after a loss. Only problem was, Mom only came to matches when she thought I was going to lose, so I knew there was a potential problem..."

Mom can be forgiven for that. She was the designated driver who ferried her sons to and from daily practice sessions and welcomed a reprieve when they were old enough to drive. Mark said that Mom rarely watched his matches either, but he figured it was a defense mechanism to protect herself from feeling disappointed for her children when they lost. Patrick said that Mom was easier on him and would say: "It's

not a bad thing being the best you can be rather than always trying to be the best."

On the surface, the very private McEnroes are a very public family on the move. Kay said that the entire clan spent last Thanksgiving together for the first time in a long time, at Mark's home in Connecticut. She and J.P. then flew to Portland, Oregon, to cheer Patrick as he coached the U.S. Davis Cup team to a 4-1 victory over defending Davis Cup champion Russia, the first victory for the U.S. in 12 years. They returned to New York on Dec. 4 and flew to Paris on Dec. 5 to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary there on Dec. 7. Last weekend they visited Winston Salem, North Carolina, to cheer again for Patrick and the Davis Cup team. Over the past few months, family members were reportedly vacationing in Puerto Rico, Mexico, or in John's case, competing on the senior tennis tour — in Naples, Florida; Madrid and Granada in Spain; Manheim in Germany; Belfast in Northern Ireland; Rhode Island; and the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean, where he is tonight.

The telephone is the best way to track down the McEnroes. Reached on his cell phone on his way home from work, Mark pulls over and tells you that his three

children play tennis and other sports: Liam, 12 (hockey); Maria, 10 (basketball); and Ciaran, 8 (baseball). Mark also claims that he was the first McEnroe to be defaulted from a match when he attended the Kent School in Connecticut. He was winning but mouthing off at himself and his coach defaulted him. He feels pressure showing up as a McEnroe at senior events because "people who don't know me think I must be pretty good, so when they beat me they think they're pretty good." A trace of childhood sibling rivalry surfaces when Mark mentions jokingly that he used to be the tallest McEnroe, at 6-foot-3,

until John's son Kevin surpassed him, at 6-foot-4.

Patrick returned a call a few weeks ago while he was navigating the perils of a busy street in New York City with his two-year-old daughter Victoria in tow, and she was wondering when dinner would be ready. Patrick confessed —

tongue in cheek, as is his wont — that "Mom was a toughie, but tougher on John. She would say [to him], if you can be No. 1 why would you want to be No. 2? She said the same thing to John when he was second in his class [at the Buckley Country Day School]. The next year he finished first. When Dad was in law school, he worked all day, attended classes at night and then studied... When he finished second in his class Mom said to him, 'If you had tried harder you could have been first.' The next year Dad finished first.

"Parents are allowed to coach [in juniors] when you split sets. My Dad was great; he gave himself credit for coaching me. I always did well in three sets and at the split he would say, 'Do whatever you did in that set you won when you hit great angles with the backhand.' I guess that coaching from Dad at an early age made me a successful Davis Cup coach!"

Google will not reveal the intangibles that define the first family of tennis! Neither will most of the McEnroes. And that's as it should be!



From left, Mark, Patrick, Kay, John and J.P. McEnroe are the first family of professional tennis.

DICK SCHEER

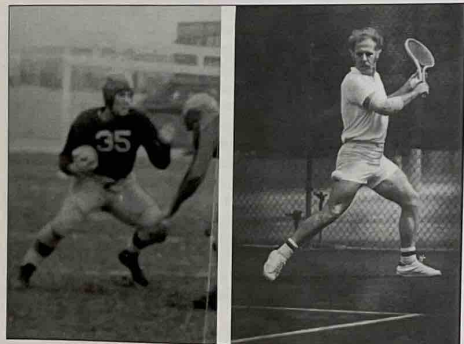
By Nancy Gill McShea

Only a gifted athlete would fit the profile of a well known tennis volunteer who for over 40 years has established a reputation as a diehard on the court, and only after he headlined as a major star in both football and baseball in an earlier life.

Dick Scheer certainly fits that profile. He served as Eastern's president in 1984-85 and was honored as the section's Man of the Year in 1993. He started playing tennis at age 33, when his career as a Manhattan attorney took precedence. He has since earned top-ten Eastern rankings in three age divisions and played for several men's teams. In the 1940s, however, Dick was heralded as a running back at Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn, and in the early 1950s he was a star center fielder and captain of the baseball team at Harvard University.

"Dick is a great competitor," his friend and longtime doubles partner Harry Keely said recently. "He is a winner. He is what we call a 'tough out.' He will fight to the end."

Accolades for Dick extend beyond the athletic fields. He has been highly regarded as a volunteer administrator during and after the years he was president and was appointed to serve as a member of and/or chair more than ten USTA and Eastern committees and boards. He was also selected to captain two USTA teams that competed on the international ITF circuit—the men's 60 Von Cramm team and the men's 50 Fred Perry Cup team, which won the 2001 world



Dick Scheer has starred in three sports, including football (left) and tennis.

championship in Austria.

He became actively involved in Eastern affairs, he said, "to give back to tennis what the game has given to me... It's been great fun." During his Eastern presidency, he predicted a strong future for key programs and initiatives that were rapidly gaining steam — USTA/Volvo League team tennis for adults, now the highly successful USTA League Tennis program; sectional sponsorship (he was involved in the Head-sponsored Eastern men's grand prix); the early dawn of computer rankings; and the schools program. He believed that promoting tennis in the schools was a natural venue since its pilot program in New York City, under the direction of Skip Hartman, had introduced thousands of children to the game in the East.

Dick still serves on both the Eastern and Junior Tennis Foundation Boards of Directors. He has also chaired the Hall of Fame Selection Committee (1991) and the Charter and By-Laws Committee (1990-2003) and has served on six USTA committees — Grievance, chairman (6 years); Governance (long-range planning, 6 years), Executive, Nominating, Budget and Finance and Constitution and Rules.

But his athletic life before tennis still looms clearly in his personal history. When he was a star running back at Erasmus Hall, his outstanding play earned him lots of press in Brooklyn newspapers and he was recruited by the University of Tennessee, the country's No. 1 gridiron team in 1949. He also received offers from Cornell, Penn, Lehigh and City College, and then, like magic, transformed himself into the featured center fielder and captain of the baseball team at Harvard University.

Why Harvard? Dick's dad, Max, had said to his son, "Get into Harvard and I'll pay!" And why center field? He grew up in the 1940s and early '50s when the rivalries of the Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Giants and New York Yankees captured the imagination of sports fans. Friends and strangers waged raging debates — on street corners, in school classrooms, in offices and saloons or at the ball park — to determine which center fielder was the best: Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle or Duke Snider, who was Dick's hero. Not only that, his high school football team won three or four games in Ebbets Field, home of

the Dodgers before they fled to Los Angeles. "There would be 15,000 kids cheering in the stands," Dick recalls now. "It was a nice, colorful, screaming event."

After his freshman year at Harvard, the Dodgers and the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper sponsored a team they called "Brooklyn against the world!" Dick said that any kid under 19 who could stand was eligible to try out for a position. Thousands showed up for the audition and he was one of five outfielders who made it.

Then he pulled off a story book ending at Harvard. On the day he graduated in 1954, just a day after he played in the annual commencement Harvard-Yale baseball game, a large photo of his college president appeared on the front page of *The Boston Globe* with the caption: "Harvard President Nathan Pusey and family watching Harvard captain Dick Scheer running out a triple in the first inning against Yale."

He continued to compete in softball leagues and sandlot football games — and even won a 100-yard dash in a college intramural race — during and after his days as a University of Michigan law student. He turned to tennis as a logical transition for recreational competition when he went to work as a Manhattan defense negligence attorney of record for an insurance company. (He now represents a few different companies — either by appearing in court to argue a motion, representing them in conference or doing depositions.)

He practiced to improve his game with ranked Eastern players at the Hiway Tennis Courts in Brooklyn and joined a team that featured Steve Ross and Kenny Lindner and they beat the New Rochelle team of Bob Barker and Peter Fischbach in the final of the Metropolitan Club Championships. Finally, in his sixth year of tournament competition, Dick was ranked No. 10 in ETA men's 35 singles. He also earned the No. 5 ranking in the 45s and most recently, right before back surgery, shared the No. 2 ranking in over-70 doubles.

Harry Keely said recently that "we all know about players like Dick. The ball keeps coming back. When will he finally make an error? How many overheads do I have to hit? Why am I working so hard covering cross-courts and shots down-the-line? This was my first contact with Dick Scheer 30 years ago as an opponent in a doubles tournament. We have been friends

and doubles partners ever since. It was easier that way.

"Dick has done a lot for us all. He takes his volunteer work seriously and you have all experienced his sense of commitment and his caring for the people who have worked with him.

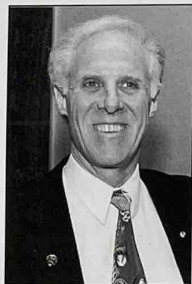
"Fortunately, though, you have been spared the disdain he reserved for my erratic ground strokes," Keely added. "Picture it: Dick on the baseline as I walked up and back to pick up the tennis balls on my side of the net. I am not complaining. But, for the first half of our weekly hour over the years, he has been running me through the same drill over and over again. It takes 27 minutes, exactly. How much is that over 30 years? And I still do not have his backhand overhead down-the-line. Who can I see for a refund?"

Scheer has also been a member of the Board of

Directors of the 1,000-plus member Riverside Clay Tennis Association (RCTA), the 2002 USTA Member Organization of the Year, which was formed to run the 10 public red clay tennis courts in Manhattan's Riverside Park. Dick's wife, Susan Scheer, a physical therapist who treats children with special needs, has for the last several years brought a group of kids to the courts on Friday afternoons. The first year Susan paid for the pro for all of the sessions and then Mark McIntyre, the park's executive director, obtained state/city funding for the program.

Dick's friends and associates talk about his integrity. McIntyre refers to his honesty and gentlemanly demeanor. Another tennis friend, Roger Brach, recalled that when he and Dick were members of the Seventh Regiment Tennis Club, he had a well deserved reputation for never giving a bad line call and always treating his opponent with respect.

Keely, though, offered an aside that indicates even Dick Scheer doesn't win them all. "Dick and I buy lottery tickets together each week," he said. "Now, as everybody knows, Dick is a winner. Every week we each buy a ticket. I give him mine to hold. He will check our numbers. How is it we have never won more than one free game over all of this time? Well, there is always next week."



Dick Scheer, USTA Eastern's 1993 Man of the Year

Steve Brachman

LARRY SCOTT

By Nancy Gill McShea

It's around the world in 80 days for Larry Scott, the traveling salesman of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), as he scoots around the globe — from Sydney and Melbourne in Australia; to Utah; Miami; New York; abroad again to Doha in Qatar; Dubai in the United Arab Emirates; Bangalore in India; back to the U.S. to California; and on to Miami and New York. No, make that 80 hours. Not an unusual itinerary for charter members of today's speedy tennis caravan.

Scott is the chairman and chief executive officer of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour and one of the world's most visible authorities in organized tennis. But Eastern veterans remember him as the junior player from Merrick, N.Y., who won the New York State High School singles title and ranked second in the East.

Bill Stanley, a longtime friend and rival, said recently, "I have known Larry since we first competed against each other and played doubles together in the 12s. I stole him as a partner from Charles Tebbe so that we could play at the nationals...we lost in the round of 16 to one of the top seeded teams, Matt Frooman and Will Daniels.

"Larry had a two handed backhand, then a one handed backhand and again a two handed backhand. He worked hard on his game...and was a fierce competitor," Stanley confided. "I knew him when he was a baseliner and a serve and

volleyer, when he used a wood Bancroft racquet and a Prince Graphite, when he had a big Afro that would have made John McEnroe proud in his heyday. It was the 70's! I am not sure if he had any control of his hairline or if it affected his game... Larry is a people person and always got along with everybody, especially the sponsors. He had a maturity well beyond his years and knew how to get sponsored by the newest and hottest companies of our era, such as Ellesse and Prince, which has served him well...with the ATP and now the WTA."

Bob Binnis, Larry's junior coach at the Port Washington Tennis Academy, agrees that his one-time protégé "was always a thinking player looking for an angle to

out strategize his opponent. He always found a way to win and that has followed him throughout his life."

Two days ago, on April 16, Larry celebrated his fifth anniversary at the helm of the WTA Tour and acknowledged that his years of experience in the game have helped him deal with the sport's challenging issues. One of his first initiatives was to ink the sponsorship deal with Sony Ericsson. Larry hired the International Management Group (IMG) as the WTA's agent. IMG contacted Sony Ericsson and Larry negotiated the deal personally with the company's worldwide head of marketing.

Tennis Week's news editor Richard Pagliaro, who refers to Scott as a tennis guru, said that "the six-year, \$88 million title sponsorship commitment from Sony Ericsson that Larry helped procure dwarfs the Tour's past deals...in its size and scope and remains the largest sponsorship commitment in the history of women's sports..."

Larry also worked the system to get equal prize money for the women at the Grand Slams and received kudos from Billie Jean King, a co-founder of the women's pro tour. "Larry Scott has made a difference in women's tennis — a very big difference," said King, emphasizing that he is making the Tour one of the most viable and successful sports properties in the world today. "Because of his strong marketing skills, he understands the needs of the players, the requirements of the sponsors and the desires of the fans. He worked diligently to help secure equal prize money for women this past year at both Wimbledon and the French Open."

Asked why he felt so strongly about the equality issue, Larry said frankly that "if you're the head of women's tennis it has to be one of your top political priorities. I felt passionate about it and used all the equity in my relationships with the leaders of Wimbledon and Roland Garros. I campaigned very hard for it and made sure to involve our players...particularly Venus Williams...The players were very much front and center on the campaign. I also used a world class public relations firm to help us and we got it done.

"Of all the things I may have accomplished in tennis as an executive," he said, "that will be the most

satisfying to me, that I was able to lead the effort to finally get equality for the women at the Grand Slams...It started with Billie Jean King well over 30 years ago. I just happened to be the steward of the organization at a good time where we were able to get it over the line."

Before he arrived at the WTA, Larry spent over a decade as the chief operating officer of the ATP Tour, president of ATP Properties and executive vice president of the International Group. He was also the vice president of the ATP Players' Council and a founding member of the ATP Board of Directors.

His rise in the tennis business is a typical tale of life in transition, or maybe a case of being in the right place at the right time. "I got my start at the US Open," he said. "I was underage, about 15 and playing the junior circuit. Leo Tedesco sneaked me in and got me a job as a runner for Suzanne Maguire (assistant tournament manager) and Mike Byrnes (tournament manager) in the tournament office. They were running the whole show — the Open sponsorship, the box seats, dealing with the players and their agents. For a kid it was kind of like peeking behind the curtain and seeing the Wizard of Oz, to see

at a very early age how professional tennis worked at the highest level. I was pretty inspired by that...I loved tennis my whole life and having that experience stayed with me."

He went on to Harvard University, where he earned Tennis All-Ivy and All-America honors, played first singles and doubles and was captain of the tennis team. And his pal Bill Stanley was still with him. "We played against each other and together throughout the juniors and in college," Stanley said. "Besides Harvard, we were teammates on the U.S. Junior Davis Cup team, on the Prentice Cup (a match between a joint Oxford/Cambridge team and a combined Harvard/Yale team) and the U.S. Maccabiah teams. We were also members of the same finals club at college; he nominated me to join. He was a captain and leader on each team and helped everyone to achieve his best."

Larry graduated from Harvard in 1986 and competed on the pro circuit for three years. He won an ATP event at Newport and defeated NCAA champ Greg Holmes at

Wimbledon in 1987. But by 1988 he felt that his game had stalled and he started focusing on some player issues.

"I was in Singapore in April of '88," he said, "and Vijay Amritraj, who was running for president of the ATP Players' Council, asked me to run as his vice president. We were elected and simultaneously elected as founding members of the board. It was a dynamic, interesting time of upset between the ATP and the Men's Tennis Council, which eventually led to the creation of the ATP Tour circuit which was going to start in 1990. I loved the business side and was intrigued at the idea of going from a journeyman player to one of the most powerful positions a player can have."

Larry wrestles with many challenges facing the women's pro circuit, such as a shorter season and more combined men's and women's events in the future. He was an influential leader in the 2007 passage of the Roadmap 2010 initiative, a reform package designed to create a more understandable calendar structure for fans and one that builds stars and rivalries by ensuring that top players remain healthy and consistently play against one another on the sport's biggest stages.

He acknowledges that getting tennis on television is a huge problem, that the sport is being squeezed out and needs a broader distribution...He believes that stars like Maria Sharapova, who were not necessarily born in the U.S. but who do live here, resonate with fans. And that tennis, particularly around the US Open, is not that parochial, that many players from around the globe have star power.

But there is one challenge that Larry Scott refuses to deal with. Asked if he plays tennis with any of the women pros, he laughed and said, "I have resisted the temptation. I figure it wouldn't be a good career move; it's a no win situation. So no, that is not in my agenda."



From left, Larry Scott, his three children, Alexander, Sebastien and Alannah, and his wife Cybille.

DONALD VAN BLAKE

By Nancy Gill McShea

Donald Van Blake, the 86-year-old ambassador of tennis in Plainfield, N.J., is known for the slogan "Tennis, Tennis, Tennis everyone" which is inscribed on the monument in front of the Donald Van Blake Tennis Courts.

Van Blake is one of the most decorated tennis coaches ever, yet he didn't start playing until he was 55. Asked why, he mentioned the expression "Cherchez la femme" and explained that he was courting a lady who played tennis and wanted to impress her. The relationship faded but he fell in love with the racket. He has since coached the Plainfield High School Boys' Varsity Tennis team for 30 years (he retired in 2006). In 1983 he helped found the Plainfield Tennis Council and then organized community programs in every nook and cranny available. He has been honored with all sorts of awards in New Jersey — for distinguished service, as sportsman of the



It's tennis, tennis everyone, in the world according to Donald Van Blake.

year, for his efforts on behalf of grassroots tennis, along with a special commendation as an "Educator, Role Model and Positive Influence to Youth." He was also named the 1991 *Star Ledger* and *Courier News* Coach of the Year and has been honored with Eastern's Southern Volunteer of the Year and Special Services awards. In 2001, the 16 Hub Stine courts in Plainfield were named for him.

He likes to say that "you can play tennis with someone for months and not know what their job is. You know their backhand but that's it." In Donald's world, no personal judgment calls exist inside the white lines — no prejudice, no comparisons regarding material possessions or status — only the one-on-one chase to the tennis ball. And his only agenda has been to inspire every kid in the community to share his love of the game and his philosophy of equality.

"I was not raised in the kind of community where I could play tennis," said Van Blake, who was born in Plainfield in 1921 and attended de facto segregated public schools there. "One of the challenges of the sport was that it was so closed to blacks. Plainfield did not have a recreational tennis program even into the 1980s.

Laura Canfield got me started; she was my guiding light."

When Donald first called Canfield, then the director of Eastern junior programs, he told her he had just retired from teaching metal shop at the Hubbard Middle School in Plainfield and wanted to become a full-time tennis volunteer. "Donald basically retired on a Tuesday, drove to the USTA Princeton office on Wednesday and called me at the Eastern office on Thursday to schedule a meeting," Laura said. She helped him organize a middle school program and develop a schedule of play. She agreed to ship him tennis balls, rackets and anything else he wanted.

"I once met Donald and the pro Willie Washington at about 5 p.m. on a weekday afternoon and they discussed scheduling some future school assemblies," Laura said. "Willie called me at noon the very next day and said the two assemblies he and Donald had done that morning went very well.

"I was dumbfounded and actually asked if he meant to say the two assemblies 'they were planning.' Wrong! Somehow, after I left them, Donald contacted a couple

of principals that same night and arranged two assemblies for the very next morning! I envisioned him knocking on the doors of the principals' homes at 10 p.m. and was amazed by his passion and his connections."

Donald said that when Jenny Schnitzer succeeded Laura at Eastern "she was always there for me, too, when I starting getting into the USTA [organiza-

tion] myself." His big projects have always been in the schools, including gym classes and after school programs, and on playgrounds and in parks.

"Donald's whole focus has been to get kids off the streets and onto the courts and let's see where it goes from there," said his friend of 25 years, Curtiss Young.

"I was not looking for champions," Donald pointed out. "I love it when kids come through the program and make the varsity squad but you never want to lose track of those who don't make the team. I would love every kid to be able to play tennis for recreation now and in later years. So we sponsored Town Tennis summer leagues to keep them playing at every level against teams in surrounding towns and recreational clubs. It's free and parents volunteered to drive them to matches. And the Board of Education got me a bus so I could drive

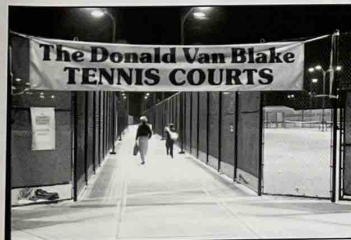
them, too... Learning to play tennis is frustrating but that's part of the wonder of it. And you meet all kinds of people..."

In his life before tennis, Van Blake was scarred personally by the reality of segregation. "A whole lot can happen to you in 86 years," he said. He served in the U.S. Army in two segregated outfits — one a harassing mounted artillery unit, and the other, engineering — and saw action at the front during World War II, in North Africa and Italy. In the early 1950s he earned his degree on the G.I. Bill at Virginia's Hampton Institute (now University), where he trained for a career in painting and decorating. "I wanted to go into my own business to make money," he said. "I had a strong feeling about black men making money... that when you had money you had power.

"I ran the business for 25 years but I never made a million," he admitted with a chuckle.

The civil rights movement exploded in the 1960s and he took on the role of Plainfield's chairman of the NAACP political action committee. "I organized marches for six months," he said. "We marched five days a week. We would have 200 or 300 people carrying signs and singing. It was the time of Martin Luther King's 1963 march on Washington and his 1965 register-to-vote march to the county courthouse in Selma, Alabama, and the sit-ins... There were spontaneous protests in each community. These were the ancestors of black people who over the centuries were trod upon, stepped upon, spit upon. The whole feeling was 'we have had enough!'"

Perhaps inspired by the advancement of civil rights, he tapped into his humanitarian values to focus on helping kids. While teaching metal shop courses in the Hubbard Middle School he also taught his students about black history. "We didn't teach our young people about who they are [like other cultures and religions have done]," he said. "This has been an awful loss to our young people, and to me. Some of my most glorious years were the years I spent in black schools... because they do reach you our history." In Plainfield, he said, black history ran



...Donald favors regional rallies.

about a page or two in the book and the teachers said Egypt was in Europe. At college he learned that Egypt was in Africa, that the black people had societies on the west coast.

Friends and relatives at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania helped him borrow African American artifacts from the museum there. "We put them on show and related them to the work we were doing in shop class," he said. "The kids loved it. I started an African American history club, told them blacks had contributed to this country, with inventions like stop lights, and with the medical initiatives of people like Dr. Charles Drew, who discovered blood plasma and developed the nation's first blood bank and the storage of blood plasma for transfusions. The kids rushed to join."

In his leisure time, Donald sang second tenor for 13 years in the Ric Charles traveling choral ensemble. Laura Canfield attended one of his concerts and said he was "Awesome!" And about ten years ago, he modeled gentlemen's clothing in newspapers and magazines for a Philadelphia agency. "That's hard work," he said. "You have to go on a lot of 'Go Sees' (auditions) so that potential clients can take a look at you and determine if you're the right type for a job."

Asked if he thinks black people today are as angry as he was, he said "No, especially now since Obama is running. Maybe we will reach some kind of agreement or goal. I'd like my four grandchildren to live in an equal society..."

And how does the sport of tennis rate in the whole scheme of Donald's world? "Everybody has equal footing on the tennis court," he said.