



USTA NORTH CAROLINA

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Roy William "Mont"
Montrose Graham, Jr.

Roy William "Mont" Montrose Graham, Jr passed away at age 95 on March 7, 2021. He was a wonderful volunteer for North Carolina Tennis. He will be known by many "juniors" who played in the 1970's and 1980's. Because of his many accomplishments he was given the NC Tennis Association's Tennis Personality of the Year in 1982 by then President Jim Haslam. Jim paints a wonderful picture of Mont's contributions. Please enjoy excerpts from Jim's remarks:

MARCH 18, 2021

"Mont Graham was born in Annapolis MD – a navy brat- the son of an admiral. He graduated from high school while living in Hawaii and attended the University of Hawaii, the Naval Academy and graduated from the University of Tennessee. When he came to Greensboro to work for Burlington Industries, he met and married Shirley Pruden and made North Carolina his home. They lived in Greensboro, Mooresville, and Reidsville and later in Sandy Springs, GA where they spent the rest of their married life.

This man started out as a normal parent who played tennis. He had played on his high school and Annapolis team. All four of Mont's children played NC Jr Tennis - three sons (Rip, John and Jim) and one daughter (Helen Marshall). It was only when Helen Marshall beat him that he put away his racket and thought it would be a good idea to be just a normal tennis parent- whatever that is.

As his daughter's game developed and she began winning a few rounds—Dad got to see a bit about how tournaments were run and got to thinking. As we know, making suggestions means volunteering- better known as put up or shut up. He couldn't do the latter so was forced to do the former. That all started a decade of work for tennis in this state in which the name of Mont Graham meant Junior Tennis. He was chairman of the Junior Tennis Council (now known as the Jr Tournament Committee) most of the time, official advisor the rest of the time, and unofficial advisor anytime.

The Junior Tennis Council hardly existed before Mont Graham came on the scene, but that all changed with his all-night-long marathons- considering matters ranging from junior housing codes to late night scheduling of matches. It even got to the point that pre-sessions sessions were held to cut down the meeting times. Never one to steamroll, Mont always made sure that all sides of the issues were represented on his committees, and that all viewpoints were properly aired. He never dodged the controversial matters and kept everyone thinking of new and better ways to improve tournaments and regulations for junior players. He is the first, maybe the only tennis volunteer known to be able to look up previous minutes to confirm what was agreed on-maybe he even invented the file.

He is responsible for the standardization of our junior tournaments and most of the rules and regulations. The Spring and Fall Circuit were Mont's brainchild and helped keep the North Carolina players on the courts and a step ahead of other districts in the Southern Section. Financial aid for junior players traveling to major tournaments was also pushed by Mont. The Junior Workshop at Davidson College was established during his tenure as Junior Tennis Council Chairman and was a model program throughout the South.

To kids for all over North Carolina, he was Mr. Junior Tennis. When the Wightman Cup team needed transportation to South Carolina to compete, Mont not only rented a van, but also drove the van and with "Pru" acted as chaperone for the team. Our tennis newsletter at one time carried an open letter from "Uncle Mont" to the kids, giving them kindly but stern advice on their court behavior.

No one ever had more respect than Mont Graham for the "non-paid, well meaning" volunteer tournament committee. But he also knew the committees could do better and insisted that they do so with more education through seminars and workshops. It was not unusual for Mont to receive calls from Tournament Directors with serious problems and very typical of him to leave home, go to the site and stay all weekend and help run the tournament.

For many years Mont was the STA Junior Representative and then their ranking chairman. For the last two years he has been Sanction and Schedule Chairman for North Carolina. His daughter, Helen Marshall, was one of the best players ever in North Carolina winning multiple state and southern titles. She went on to compete for the University of GA."

But there was more to the story...

Because he was so gifted at being the most knowledgeable tournament director around, the new world of officiating was a natural for him. Beginning in 1982, Mont became a Certified Official and that led him to introduce many people to the officiating world. For all he had done for Junior Tennis in North Carolina, he now jumped headfirst into lifting North Carolina officials to a professional level that exists today. Long time official Rebel Good commented, "Mont Graham was a seminal influence in establishing an elite corps of tennis officials in North Carolina. He came onto the officiating scene as the USTA was making the transition from volunteer officials to trained professionals. In the 1980s he led the training of new officials, instilling in them his intense respect for the game, its rules, and officiating procedures. His influence on tennis officiating in North Carolina continues to this day"

Mont Graham was the model of the modern official. Working the US OPEN four years, evaluating others as a Sectional Evaluator, serving as a member of the USTA Umpire Committee, wrote referee exams and was Umpire of the year for both North Carolina and Southern.

Mont Graham was one who never tired of helping others achieve their dreams. He gave in so many ways. Along with gifts to the Boy Scouts, his family would also welcome contributions in his honor and memory to the NC Tennis Foundation (501c3).

Checks may be made out and sent to:
NC Tennis Foundation
2709 Henry St
Greensboro NC 27407

For online donations please go to www.nctennisfoundation.com.

Please indicate the gift is for Mont Graham's incredible tennis legacy. His family will receive a list of donors.