



Pioneers In Tennis

Sheldon Westervelt

At the forefront of facility design

When professional engineer Sheldon Westervelt and a group of his colleagues in the sports facility industry decided over drinks that there should be a trade association with the goal of improving the quality of tennis court construction, they knew they were thinking ahead. They just didn't know that they were thinking several decades ahead.

It was 1964 when Westervelt, Bob Caldwell (whose company, California Stucco Corp., would later become California Products), Gene Edwards of Malott Peterson Grundy, Robert Lee (of Lee Tennis Court Products) and several others held their first official meeting in Baltimore. They dubbed their group the U.S. Tennis Court & Track Builders Association.

More than 45 years down the road, that organization is still meeting, still has its original goals and Westervelt is still actively involved. The group is now the American Sports Builders Association, and its membership has grown from a handful of contractors to a wide range of professionals in the athletic facility design, construction and supply industry. ASBA meetings have educational and technical sessions, there are multiple certification programs and the organization publishes a variety of manuals, construction guidelines and more. Quite an impressive amount of growth for an organization invented, as Westervelt himself likes to say, "on a night when steamed crabs and beer were involved."

The business Westervelt and his father were involved in at the time of that meeting was William C. Westervelt & Sons. Westervelt now works internationally as a tennis consultant with Global Sports & Tennis Design Group. He remains a key player in the industry, having overseen the design and construction of nearly 7,000 tennis projects

around the world, including indoor and outdoor facilities at parks, educational institutions, rehabilitation facilities, resorts and residences.

In addition to his work in the industry, for which he has won numerous design awards, Westervelt has served on the faculty of the Athletic Business Conference, NRPA, Congress for Recreation and Parks, USPTA, PTR, the USTA Tennis Teachers Conference and USTA section meetings. He was a founding



member of the USTA Tennis Facilities Committee. In 2006 he received the USTA's 40-Year Volunteer Service Award. In addition, he has worked with the ITF and was a member of an ASTM subcommittee on tennis courts and running tracks. In 1994, he was honored with a life membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers.

In December, the ASBA honored its founders and charter members, including Westervelt, with the Industry Merit Award, ASBA's highest honor. "I'm looking around tonight," Westervelt said after the standing ovation, "and I'm remembering that we started this association to make the industry better. I just want everyone to remember that, and to keep working for it."

"Sheldon has long been a driving force in our industry," said Randy Futty, who nominated Westervelt and his colleagues for the award. "Whether as a tennis court builder who worked to refine methods for building courts in the 1960s and '70s, as a founding father and first chairman of the ASBA in the mid-1960s, or as one of the leaders of the world's foremost tennis design companies, he has truly been a visionary leader in our industry. If there was a hall of fame for tennis design and construction, Shel most certainly would be inducted on the first ballot."

—Mary Helen Sprecher ▶

"Pioneers in Tennis," an occasional column in RSI, draws attention to trailblazers in the sport. Have someone to suggest? E-mail rsi@racquettech.com.

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