

*The following article was written by Rose Boggs, a longtime resident of the Ojai Valley who has been involved with the tournament for 80 years. She has taught tennis for the Ojai Recreation Department and also served a stint as the Nordhoff tennis coach. This article appeared in the April 18, 1990, issue of the Ojai Valley News.*

By Rose Boggs

Let me take you back to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ojai Valley Tennis Tournament.

Imagine a five-year-old girl sitting on wooden planks that had been carefully placed over the dirt and around the tennis courts. Through big, brown eyes she sat for hours at a time watching the champions and future champions.

That little girl was me. I was having my first tennis lesson. I learned to play while watching the tennis players every year.

Ojai was a quiet little town in those days. The Ojai Valley Tennis Tournament was about the most exciting event happening each year. Ojai has grown, and in the process, a lot of things that were a part of The Ojai have disappeared.

The clubhouse was a charming, dark green, wooden building located near court three and the bowl. It had a viewing porch, bathrooms, and showers, and a storage room. At times there was a pro shop. Only the players in the tournament were allowed to use the showers and the bathrooms. The rest of the year, they were locked up.

The building was there when I was growing up, but about the time the bowl was built the clubhouse disappeared. From the porch of the clubhouse you could look across courts three and four and see the hexagon-shaped orange juice stand, another dark green and very small wooden building.

Players and spectators were served orange juice in small paper cups from 10 a.m. until noon each day. Now the orange juice is served from the Tea Tent.

The entrance gate to the tournament was at the front of the park, just west of the bank parking lot. There was a small, dark green, wooden building that stood there year-round. I never had to pay to enter. Since my father was the park caretaker, I just smiled at the ticket taker and said I had to go in to see my dad. It worked until the years when I was a player in the tournament.

As I mentioned before, the clubhouse bathrooms were for the players. The spectators used the small public bathrooms behind the post office. These bathrooms disappeared when the post office was enlarged.

The Thursday night street dance has also disappeared from the scene. What a thrill it was to dance with players such as Ted Schroeder on the main street in front of the Lion's Head Fountain!

Energetic teenagers sat all over the wall and arches that were opposite the Arcade. Along with the street dance, the walls and arches and beautiful wisteria have disappeared.

In recent years the Friday night dance at Nordhoff has gone the way of the Thursday night street dance. Nordhoff students and teachers decorated the gym. Live bands were brought in. Parents and faculty were chaperones. Mr. Pierpont's special punch was served.

What a thrill it was when Shirley Temple attended the dance in 1942! She danced with several Nordhoff students. Since she was not a player in the tournament she had to have a ticket to get in. She came to The Ojai that year to cheer for her classmates at Westlake School who were in the finals. Boys had to wear a coat and tie to attend the dance. Today's teenagers would rather wear Big Dog shorts and Nikes.

The Tea Tent Tradition is in no danger of disappearing and has undergone very little change. Missing is the permanent rectangular iron frame that stood in the park to the west of court one. We used to climb and swing from the bars. Over this frame the tan canvas tea tent was placed each April. The frame has disappeared, but a lovely green tent appears each year.

Ojai Valley Garden Club members arrange the floral centerpieces for the Tea Table. The floral scheme is based on the colors of the high schools in Ojai. Thursday's flowers are blue and

gold in honor of Nordhoff High; Friday, it's red and white for Ojai Valley School; Saturday, blue and White for Villanova and Sunday honors Thacher School with green and gold.

The silver urns, silver sugar tongs and china cups and saucers are still used. Complimentary tea and cookies are served from 3-5 p.m. daily for players and spectators. The only ingredients missing from the Tea Tent are the Girl Scouts washing the cups and the Girl Scout cookies.

At one time there were lights strung down the middle of courts one and three. They were inadequate as they were far too dim and subject to being shattered by mishit balls and vandalism. I can't say that they are missed.

The oak trees that shaded those dark green wood buildings are fewer in number. The trees in the park and the perfume of the orange blossoms permeating the air are what makes The Ojai so special.

Ojai is not the quiet little town it once was. You can no longer stand on Main Street and hear the "whack" of the tennis balls. Nor can you hear the public address system ... "Tracy Austin, please report to the tournament desk."

The Ojai is still the most exciting event happening in Ojai each year. I hope it never disappears. I played in The Ojai. Our children played in The Ojai. Our grandchildren will play in The Ojai. It's tradition.