

Gary Grear

Personal Contributor/Tennis

The city of Memphis and the game of tennis have had a longtime “love” affair. From the early 1970s until the present day, the game of tennis has deep roots within the fabric of Memphis sports history and community. And the reason tennis is played so much, respected so much — and yes, “loved so much” — is because of the efforts of people like Gary Grear.

His long connection with Memphis tennis began around 50 years ago in the 1970s. It started when he first served on the World Championship Tennis (WTC) Tournament Committee in 1975. He then added positions of the Racquet Club Tennis Tournament Committee in 1976 and USTA National Indoor Championships Tournament Committee in 1977 and was President of the Memphis Tennis Association in 1977. During the 1970s, Gary also was the Chair of the Tournament Committee for the Memphis Parks Commission.

Gary has also supported the growth of tennis around the region via his own generosity through Tennis Memphis. Over the years, he has donated tennis clothing, racquets and shoes to youth who wanted to play but could not afford them. He’s provided free racquets to up-and-coming players who were unable to purchase them. And he’s given the University of Memphis tennis program racquets, strings, court equipment and clothing to help the Tigers remain a force on the national level.

However, Gary’s largest imprint on the Memphis tennis community came in 2016 with his vision for the rebuilding of the Leftwich Tennis Center. Called the “father of the idea for Leftwich,” Gary led a small group to plan and execute the project. The project incurred a lot of start-up expenses, and Gary paid for a lot of that himself. In addition, he helped raise more than \$16 million toward the building of the facility.

Not only that, but Gary also made sure to have the Leftwich family be integrated in the tennis center. He researched the Leftwich family history — Colonel Leftwich passed away while serving in the Vietnam War — and made connections with several family members. Gary even worked with the Marine Foundation to secure the Leftwich Trophy, which is now displayed at the tennis center.

On November 11, 2023, on Veteran’s Day, the Leftwich Tennis Center opened for tennis enthusiasts, players, University of Memphis tennis and the entire city of Memphis to enjoy. The Center’s 24 outdoor and 12 indoor courts make it one of the southeast region’s largest facilities of its kind which can host major national tournaments and NCAA and conference championships.

Please welcome to the Hall of Fame, as a personal contributor in the sport of tennis — Gary Grear.