

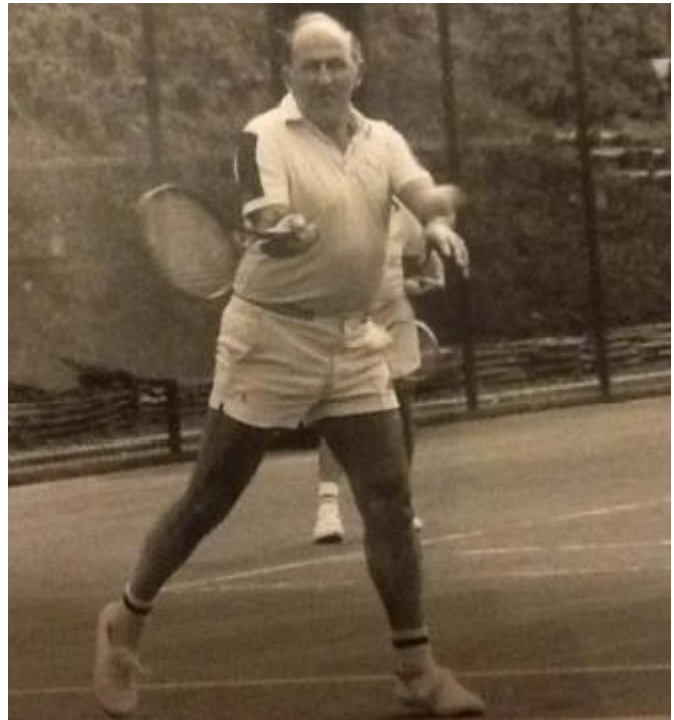
John MEHAFFEY

1924 – 2017

John MEHAFFEY died in his sleep peacefully on 10 December 2017 in New Zealand. He was aged 93.

Many younger Tennis Seniors SA members would legitimately ask “Who is John MEHAFFEY? What did he do to earn the renowned acknowledgement and recognition that Tennis Seniors SA gives now?”

John is particularly important in Tennis Seniors SA’s history. He was instrumental in establishing the Tennis Veterans Association of SA in the early 1970s, which was the inaugural Tennis club in SA specifically for older tennis players.



The Tennis Veterans Association is now called Tennis Seniors Association of SA following its name change in later years. For initiating and developing Seniors Tennis in SA, Tennis Seniors SA expresses its acknowledgement and appreciation for John’s major contribution to Seniors Tennis in SA and Australia.

The inaugural meeting to establish the Tennis Veterans Association of SA was held in the President’s room of the SA Lawn Tennis Association, Memorial Drive in December 1972. John MEHAFFEY was elected President and he continued in this role until 1983. The original members of Tennis Veterans SA Association included the top ranked players from SA, including John, Tom WARHURST, Neville QUIST and Gordon SCHWARTZ.

Some early members, including Stan HAWKINS, Bob OLIVER and Tom GRAY maintained their membership for many years into the 2000’s. In these earlier days, members had to be aged 45 years and above, and the major activity of players was to compete in Veteran Carnivals against Veteran Tennis teams from other Australian states. Membership was entirely male until 1975, when several women were introduced into the Association and made up a SA team, which also competed in Australian Carnivals. The weekly team events, a strong current feature of Tennis Seniors SA, commenced in the early 1980s under John’s presidency. They were initiated, based on an idea from Don PIKE, another early member that many current members would remember.

John also played regular social tennis with other early Tennis Veteran members for many years, including Lew WARD and Eddie DRUMMOND.

In the photograph to the right, John is on the left together with (L. to R.) Eddie DRUMMOND, Vin KEAN & Ray STONEHAM.



John played tennis at the highest level both in SA and nationally. He held No. 1 ranking in SA in the 1940's and won several state titles. He also competed in Australian Open tournaments from 1946 to 1951 and again in 1955, competing against Australia's best, including Frank SEDGMAN and Mervyn ROSE.

In later years as a Tennis Senior, John held several Australian Seniors doubles and mixed doubles titles and continued his tennis success in New Zealand Seniors tennis events after moving to New Zealand with his wife, Laurel.

John was a prominent and talented all-round SA sportsman, showing elite level skills in several other sports in addition to tennis. He played SANFL football for West Torrens and South Australia with distinction. He was also prominent in table tennis, badminton, and golf. He also commented on sports events for the ABC on radio and TV. John also established his own sports store in Adelaide, which became widely known and provided many SA tennis players with equipment for many years.

Tennis Seniors SA expresses its sympathy to John's family and friends following his passing and gladly acknowledges his large and important contribution to Seniors Tennis in South Australia and Australia. They can be proud of the legacy that he has left. He was the leader responsible for establishing tennis specifically for seniors in SA. Tennis Veterans SA provided a successful forum for the early members. His presidency also provided a firm base for the growth in Tennis Seniors SA that occurred over the following years, resulting in the strong and successful club that we have currently in SA. Tennis Seniors SA remembers you and thanks you for your lasting contribution.

Sources:

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