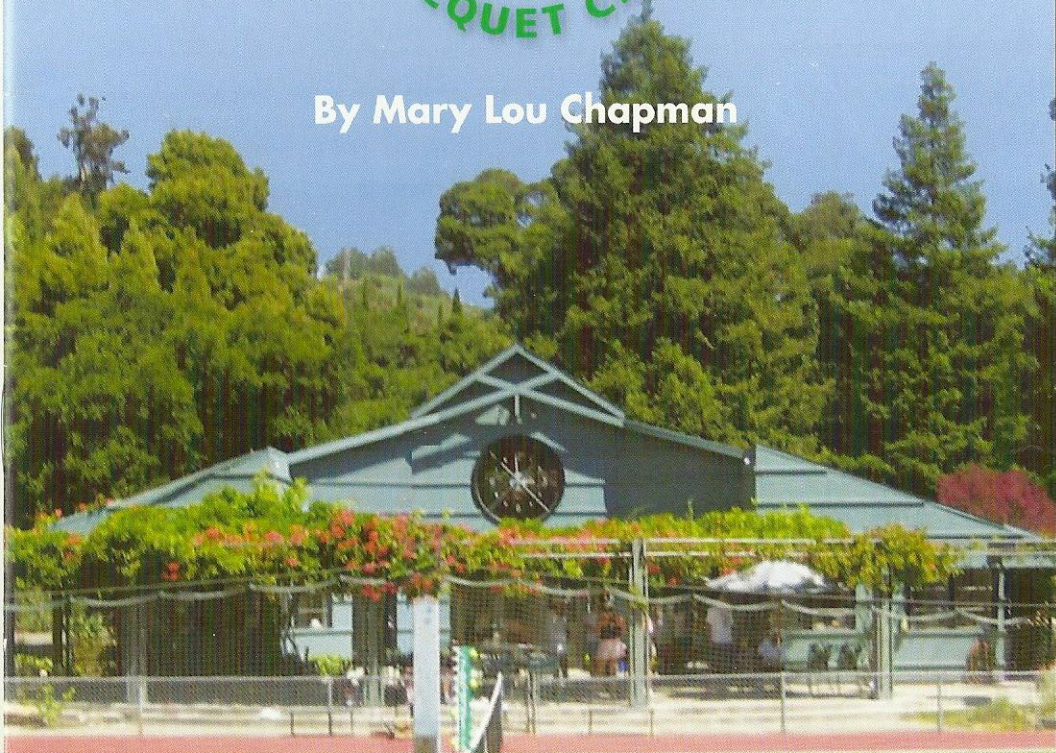


# HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE PHOENIX



By Mary Lou Chapman



**CHABOT CANYON RACQUET CLUB**



# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE PHOENIX

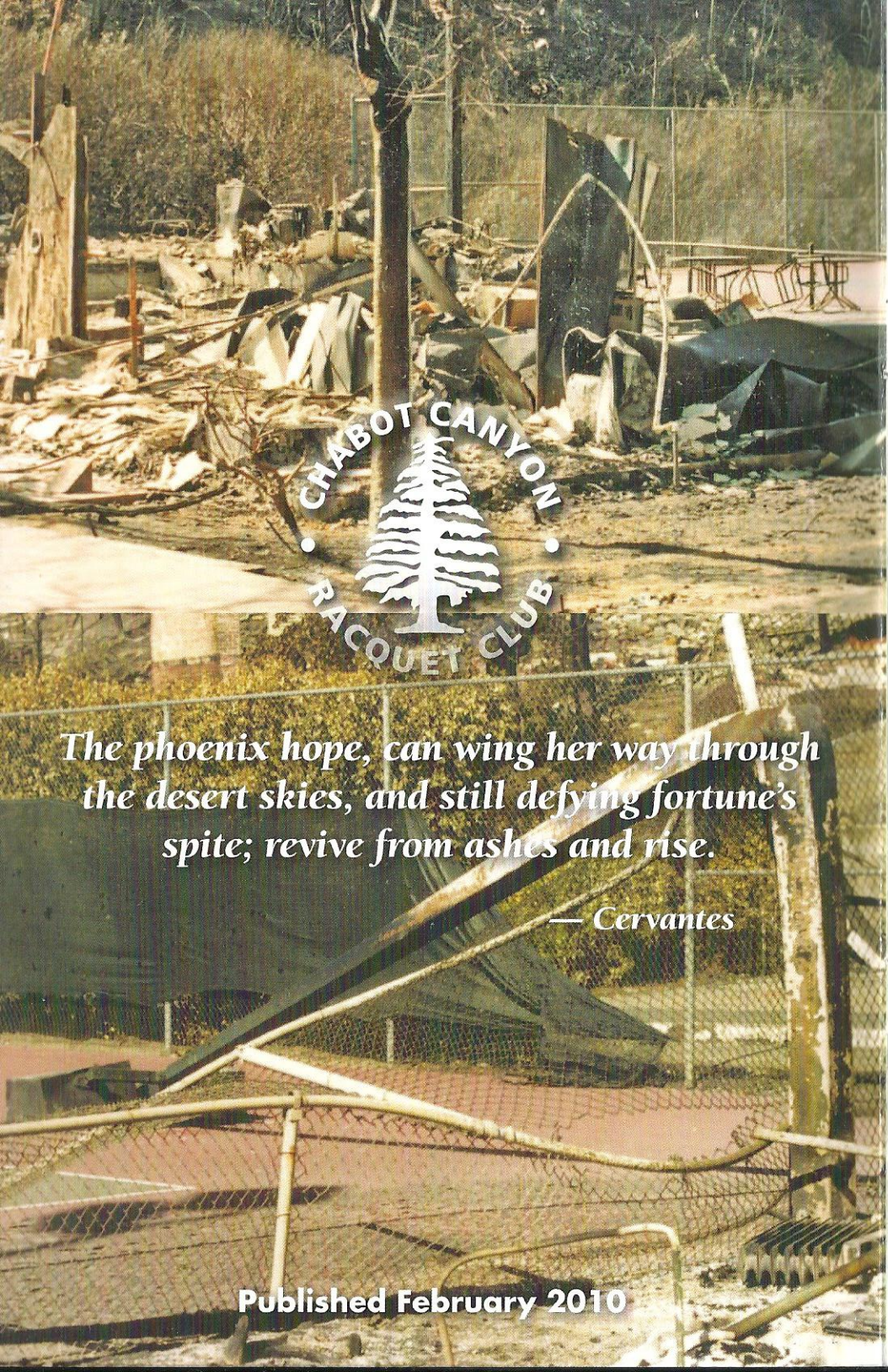
by Mary Lou Chapman

**A**s this history will show, the fact that **Chabot Canyon Racquet Club** exists at all is almost miraculous. Despite the faded dreams of its original founder, plans to raze it for condos, and a devastating fire, Chabot is a going concern and a delightful place to play tennis and make friends.

The true date and circumstances of Maurice Sockolov's building of the original courts is unknown to this writer, but construction probably started in 1973. Mr. Sockolov lives in the Yountville Veterans Home and is unable to communicate. So the story begins when Mr. Sockolov sold the property, which was known as the Piedmont Racquet Club, on April 15, 1975. It was bought by Mr. James Stoppello and a group of investors.

Apparently the building of the Clubhouse and two locker room buildings had begun in October, 1974, but was not completed until after the Club was sold. They were brown shingled buildings with trellises of trumpet flowers and wisteria. On the roof of the Clubhouse was a viewing area for all the courts. In the summer of 1975 the landscaping and planting were completed by the landscaping architects Johnson, Leffingwell & Associates. Though the Grand Opening was October 18 and 19, 1976, through the following years the Anniversary Open House Parties were always held in July. The first Board of Directors included Phillip Greenawalt, President; Charles Amondson, Charlie Hoeveler, Craig Stevens, James Stoppello, Secretary; and Richard Tambellini. Paul Wiley was Manager and Head Pro. The Club was incorporated in the State of California as Chabot Canyon Racquet Club.

The Board members were investors seeking a profit for their investment and sought out ways to recruit new members and keep the present members happy. In 1976 two members were invited to attend Board meetings. Howard Fuchs served in this capacity, and later Pam Seifert and Steven Dos Remedios



*The phoenix hope, can wing her way through  
the desert skies, and still defying fortune's  
spite; revive from ashes and rise.*

— Cervantes

Published February 2010





**1973**

Groundbreaking  
of original club

**1976**

**1st Board**

Phillip Greenawalt  
Charles Amondson  
Charlie Hoeveler  
Craig Stevens  
James Stoppello  
Richard Tambellini

**1976**

**Club**

incorporated  
in the State of  
California as  
Chabot Canyon  
Racquet Club

**1977**

Memberships  
Family \$35  
Single \$25  
per month

represented the Club in 1982-83. A plan for corporate memberships (\$144 for four employees) was devised and promoted as were gift certificates for clinics and private lessons. At some time, either before or after the sale, the College Preparatory School joined the Club to build their girls' and boys' teams with our pros and facilities.

In 1977 there were: 94 Family memberships @ \$35 per month, 49 Single memberships @ \$25 per month, 4 "week-day only" memberships.

Also in 1977 all the courts were resurfaced. About this time new names appear in the monthly bulletins. Mary Beth Lamb was the Manager and Steve Bartlett the Head Pro.

Starting in 1978 and for the next ten years the staff was fairly stable: Jane Tishkoff, Manager; Holly Faust, Assistant Manager and Activities Director until 1983; Ann Perry, Activities Director, 1983 – 1987; Diana Muller, Mame Wisniewski, Office Manager; Steve Bartlett, Head Pro; and Connie Mock.

During the 80's the Club was the busiest place in town, according to the sizable monthly bulletins which carried scheduled activities, tennis tips and member travels, injuries and milestones. The bulletin would even carry free an ad for a member's business if he or she would give the other members 10% off. Some of the activities of the 80's were Team Tennis, member-guest tournaments, bridge night, new member clinics, running club, white water rafting, interclub parties, Share Your Heart fund raisers, Court House Athletic Club privileges, USTA tournaments and the Bay Area Ladies League (BALL) league.

Chabot Canyon joined the BALL league in the season of 1986-87. Mary Lou Chapman was the first captain. The team met weekly even during the summer with Pro Steve Bartlett and later with



Chabot doubles partners Linda Morris  
and Sandy Meyers in Kauai

Chuck Bleckinger, who took Steve's place. The second year the team purchased uniform tennis skirts from Bleckinger's Tennis Shop. In the 1989-90 season Chabot formed a Senior BALL Team (over 50). The BALL teams are still playing in this, the 2009-2010 season.

To encourage members to participate in Club activities, points were given and prizes awarded to the winners. Mary Spletter, Robert Kwok and Mary Lou Chapman usually were the top contenders. One of the unusual features of the Club was its sunken Jacuzzi pool built of stone and slate in a shrubbery and tree-shaded area. It was a heavenly spot to dangle one's feet after a couple of hours on a hot tennis court or to submerge on a warm evening, beer in hand. According to Jane Tishkoff, whose papers and keepsakes supplied most of this early history, the pool was also the locale of lots of late night Cal parties. In the *East Bay Express* newspaper's Best of the Best column, Chabot was rated the "best place to break into and party." Jane also commented that the manager's problems were the court lights, the toilets and break-ins. Same as today.

Another problem is reflected in a petition signed by 40 members asking management to do something about the bees that were attacking them, especially on court 4. It seems the neighbors across the street had a bee hive. There is no mention in the record of how it was resolved.

In 1983 there were 207 members and the dues in 1988 were \$65 for singles and \$85 for families. Then in the fall of 1988 rumors began to circulate and were soon confirmed when members received a letter from the owners. The land was worth more than the Club and it would be sold to Tony Wilson, a Rockridge developer. There were two issues: (1) the members wanted to keep the Club and play tennis, and (2) the neighbors didn't want condo housing across the street. Groups formed around both issues. In November Robert Kwok and Carol Seldon met with Mr. Stoppello and Mr. Wilson and learned that Mr. Wilson was open to releasing the Club from its contract with him so the members could buy it. They encouraged the members group to continue in their efforts to gather support to buy the Club and wanted the neighborhood group to desist in their campaign.

**1986**

Mary Lou  
Chapman  
captains first  
BALL team



**1988**

*East Bay Express*  
rates Chabot as  
best place to  
break into  
and party

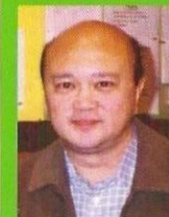


**1989**

Senior BALL  
teams formed

**1988**

Members  
received letters  
about club  
being sold



Robert Kwok







**1983**  
CCRC  
newsletter  
features  
Wayne Lippman

**1988**  
"Save Chabot  
Canyon  
Racquet Club  
Committee"  
created  
**SAVE CHABOT**

**1989**  
**1st Board elected**  
John Chalik  
Robert Kwok  
Mary Lou Chapman  
Ann Chalik  
Steve Cohen  
Sandy Meyer  
Lloyd Bracewell  
Milton Cook  
Gail Unno



*Two past Board Presidents  
John Chalik and Frank Fuller*



*Steven and Sylvia Dos Remedios  
at Annual Club Holiday Party*

Meanwhile many of the members learned for the first time that BART owned the land on which part of court 4 and all of 5 and 6 had been built. On December 9, 1988, there was a meeting of the membership in the College Preparatory School auditorium where "The Save Chabot Canyon Racquet Club Committee" presented its known facts. Briefly, the sale price to Mr. Wilson had been set at \$625,000 and the rent to BART was \$430.00 with 14 more years on the contract. The deadline was April 15, 1989. The following were on the Committee: Lloyd Bracewell, John Chalik, Karen Garrity (now Kelley), Carol Seldon-Kerbel, Robert Kwok, Randolph Langenbach, Sandra Meyers, Noah Sherman, and Pam Seifert. They were later joined by Ann Chalik and Gail Unno. There were more meetings, many headaches, and a disappointing number of members left the Club. In March there were 104 paid members.

On April 16 there was an Open House to recruit members. However, the Phoenix raised its head again on May 1 when the Committee (now called the Interim Board) announced that on May 23 we would have a champagne and strawberry party to celebrate victory: 126 memberships were sold and paid. Members paid \$2000 for a single and \$3400 for a family membership. An extra \$200 was assessed for attorney fees. Those who joined became Equity members in a member-owned Club.

Included in the negotiations is a clause that Mr. Wilson would have first refusal should the Club fail. There were also other provisions which assured the members that their in-

vestment was fairly safe. The new monthly dues were \$80 for singles and \$120 for families.

The first Annual meeting was held June 15, 1989, and the first Board was elected. They were John Chalik, Robert Kwok, Mary Lou Chapman, Ann Chalik, Steve Cohen, Sandy Meyers, Lloyd Bracewell, Milton Cook, and Gail Unno. In the first months the Club was short \$90,000 of \$200,000 owed. A few members loaned the Club cash in \$5,000 units to meet the shortfall. The staff of Jane Tishkoff, Mame Wisniewski and Connie Mock were stalwarts throughout this period, and some members' names will always be remembered: John Chalik and Robert Kwok and those on the Interim and first Board of Directors. There is a plaque in the Clubhouse in tribute.

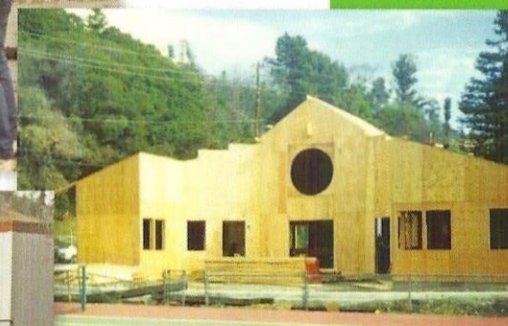
Jane finished her law degree that year and Marilyn Curry was hired as manager. The Club was meeting its bills in the next two years but not gaining headway on its debt. It was gradually gaining new members. In January 1991 there were 133 Equity members and 16 Associate members. It was tough sledding but there was no doubt that one day the Club would be free of debt and full of members.



*Surveying  
the damage*



*"The Trailer." Our interim office while rebuilding.*



*The new Clubhouse  
under construction.*

**1991**  
133 Equity  
members and  
16 Associate  
members

**1992**  
**Oakland Hills  
Fire razes the  
Club buildings**



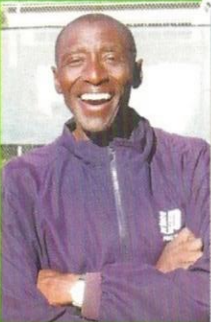
**1993**  
All lights on the  
courts and night  
tennis resumes

**1994**  
Phillip Banta  
Architecture  
chosen for  
new design





**1993**  
Wendell Pierce  
joins Chabot  
as Head Pro



**1994**  
**Clubhouse**  
**Grand**  
**Opening**  
**Oakland**  
**Mayor**  
**Elihu Harris**  
**attends**

**1996**  
BART land  
purchased for  
\$100,000

**1997**  
Memberships  
Family \$119  
Single \$77  
per month



That is, until October 20, 1992. The infamous Oakland Hills Fire razed the Club buildings, toppled one light tower and melted the nettings; a sorry sight. However, there were players on some of the less damaged courts the next day.

The leadership of two years before came forth, led by John Chalik. There were parties on the cement foundations of the old Clubhouse and soon a trailer appeared. It housed an office, a lounge, a unisex shower and two dressing rooms separated by a 6ft. curtain. In January and February, member meetings were held at St. Clement's Episcopal Church to discuss restoring the Club. A Small Business loan (SBA) of \$419,000 was arranged; the paper work was enormous. There is one document of 14 pages of small print listing losses of items within the buildings totaling \$75,600. And remember, all the records were burned. By February 1993, all the lights on the courts were working and night tennis resumed.

However, all was not light. There developed a diversity of opinion in regard to the cost and design of the new Clubhouse. Finally, the membership coalesced with the less expensive plans designed by Phillip Banta of Architecture/Phillip Banta of Emeryville, and built what stands today. Finally, the Phoenix showed its head for the third time and on May 15, 1994, the



Philip Banta (architect; Marilyn Curry, Manager; Greg Baldridge, board member; Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris; Councilmember Sheila Jordan and pros Wendell Pierce and Anne Lowry.



Members gather on the patio to watch a big match on Court 1.



Wendell Pierce, former manager Jane Tishkoff and Mary Lou Chapman reminisce on the patio in 2009.

Clubhouse was ready and a Grand Opening was held. Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris attended and the press coverage was excellent. Dues were \$65 for singles and \$100 for families.

Now 20 years later the debt has dwindled and the membership has grown. The membership-owned Club is solvent enough to resurface the courts every two years and has recently refurbished the interior. In 1996 the BART land was purchased for \$100,000. Membership stands at 209 with Equity dues at \$77 for singles and \$119 for families. Liabilities as of the 2009 Annual meeting are \$88,338. The trumpet vine and wisteria are flourishing once again.



**1993**  
Anne Lowry  
joins Chabot  
as pro



**2007**  
Turkey  
Team  
Tennis

With  
Christina Cory  
& Al Rebensdorf

**2009**  
*Chabot*  
*Celebrates*  
**20**  
*years*





2002

Woodies  
Tournament



2007

Clubhouse  
redecorated

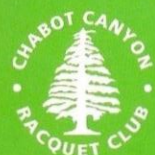


2009

Members  
vote to resurface  
courts to blue



Thank you to  
all members who  
participated in  
helping to get  
this Club history  
published,  
and especially  
to Jane Tishkoff,  
John Chalik,  
Nidia Mikkonen,  
Linda Morris,  
and Lisa Schrag.



Woodies and  
Whites Day  
at Chabot.



New furniture,  
new floor and  
new paint in the  
Clubhouse.

There are many opportunities for play and social activities. Over the years Chabot has fielded many USTA teams, at least two BALL teams, and held many social tennis days with neighboring Clubs. There is always a fun holiday party with great platters of delicacies prepared by Ursula Holmes. Barbecues are well attended on Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day. Other yearly holidays don't go unnoticed, either.

The membership tends toward singles and couples. College Preparatory School is still a member; the boys' team practices and plays its matches in the spring and the girls in the fall. The pros hold clinics and classes for all ages and skill levels.



Going blue!

Every weekday evening there is an opportunity to get in a game on Hot Courts without a reservation. Club championships are held in the summer and one can view the tennis greats' matches on the big screen TV.

Wendell Pierce, the head pro since 1993, has many national trophies and was inducted into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame. The members are very proud of Wendell's accomplishments and are appreciative of his devotion to Chabot.

There is a great bond among tennis players, though they do separate themselves by skill level. When the chips were down, as has happened too much at Chabot, everyone came together no matter if they were 3.0s or 5.0s. All had the same dedication to save the Club and were willing to give their best, whether it was time, talents or money. May this story of the past serve as an inspiration to present and future players at Chabot Canyon Racquet Club.

*"You can discover more about a  
person in an hour of play than  
in a year of conversation."*

*- Plato*

On the following pages are memories from members and former members. The vignettes really impart the depth of feeling members have for Chabot and reinforce the narrative of the history. I am so grateful to all who responded. As John Chalik used to remind us, the phone number is 652-6 love 6 love.

*- Mary Lou Chapman*

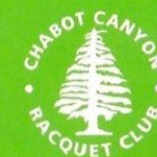


## Board Presidents

- 1989  
John Chalik
- 1993-1995  
Greg Baldridge
- 1995-1998  
Steve Matthews
- 1998-2000  
Linda Morris
- 2000-2002  
Margie Samberg
- 2002-2003  
Julia Partridge
- 2003-2004  
Frank Fuller
- 2004-2005  
Antonio Robles
- 2005-2007  
Mary Palafox
- 2007-2009  
Linda Morris
- 2009-2010  
Julia Partridge

## Chabot Managers

- Mary Beth Lamb
- Jane Tishkoff
- Marilyn Curry
- Katie Pratt
- Phillis Lee
- Gary Fox
- Lisa Loper Schrag







## CHABOT MEMORIES by Gail Unno

Kaz and I joined CCRC in the fall of 1975. It was a small Club with enthusiastic tennis players and it was possible to spend an entire weekend afternoon picking up games from members who hung out and waited for other members to arrive. It was possible to play without reservations for an entire day. The first Club manager was Mary Beth Lamb and the pro was Steve Bartlett. Steve was the #1 junior player from Hawaii and played for UC. He was a joy to watch and often played against Chuck Bleckinger in exhibition matches. Later on he played against a young Wendell Pierce, an up-and-coming player who played for Cal State Hayward.

This was before the time of USTA rankings, so players were ranked as an A, B, or C player, and we had many intra and interclub activities based on these rankings. One of the most fun events was patterned after Team Tennis, when we divided into teams from all levels, playing singles, women's men's and mixed doubles.

We had a beautifully landscaped sunken Jacuzzi pool and often ended up there after a night of tennis and not leaving until the staff insisted they had to close up.

In the late 1980's the tranquility of our Club was shaken by the news that the owner wanted to sell the land to developers who wanted to build condominiums. Many people spent huge amounts of time, despite holding down full time jobs, organizing, strategizing, conferring with other members and finally developing a plan to buy the Club and write a charter, but the person who stands out during this difficult time is John Chalikh, who served as President of the Board and who devoted himself to realize our dream of owning a Club that meant so much to so many people.



## DOUBLES TALK by Barbara Rhine

When I was younger and innocent (as in ignorant of the finer points of tennis), I joined Chabot with Bill Brockett. Chuck Bleckinger was our pro at that time. I signed up for the BALL League, and got tennis instruction in team tactics from Chuck, the first time I had learned anything formal about the game since junior high school.

Chuck taught us about the "Avenue of Attack." That is volleying from the net in doubles on an angle BETWEEN the opposing players. I started doing this regularly, and lo and behold, I had a winning season on a winning team. Of course it didn't hurt that I'd made friends with a tall lanky excellent athlete named Mary Bedford, who became my partner.

Another piece of advice from Chuck? No "negative self-talk." This happened over twenty years ago and not a doubles match goes by when I don't repeat both of these instructions to myself. And ever since, membership in Chabot has been one of the best things in my life.



## CHABOT by Mary Spletter

I have so many fond memories of Chabot — the fun women's teams, the great coaching, and most of all, the fantastic food; I was hooked on tennis when I learned that most tennis players love good food. My favorite time there had to be when food entrepreneur John Chalikh was courting social director Ann Perry. MMMMMM, the food was five star. IF only they had maintained the relationship, I might have ended up on the tennis circuit.



## THOUGHTS ABOUT CHABOT by Linda Morris

When I think of the history of Chabot, two personalities dominate my thinking—John Chalikh and the late Sandy Meyers. Sandy and I were tennis partners and joined the Club together when we encountered one hassle too many on the public courts. Because I commuted to UC Davis from Berkeley most of my professional career, Chabot became my anchor in the Bay Area. It was the place where I formed friendships, played on USTA teams, and in the Club championships, and ultimately served twice as President of the Board. Just as soon as I settled into Chabot, word came that the Club had been sold and was going to become the site of a string of condominiums. Here's where Sandy and John became figures larger than life in my eyes.

Along with others, but very publicly, they spearheaded the "Save Chabot Canyon Racquet Club" campaign, and with great determination succeeded in "buying" the Club back as a tennis venue.

I'm sure it was John who was largely responsible for writing the By-Laws that still govern the Club, and recruiting enough people to make ours a member-owned Club. It was the best \$2000 investment I've ever made.

Then one day that in retrospect seems to have been only a few months later, Sandy and John were at a 49er's game (John was President at that time) and received a cell phone call that the Oakland hills were on fire, and our Club house had been one of the first structures to burn to the ground. So Sandy and John (and I know others such as Gail Unno and Mary Lou Chapman) once again began a campaign to "Save Chabot" for the second time. It involved long hours of work on obtaining small-business loans to rebuild the Club house, bringing in a temporary building, voting on competing designs for the new facilities, reconstructing membership records, with dozens of people not as visible as Sandy and John working tirelessly behind the scene.

The Club seems to me now stronger and more viable than it ever has been, and a place that since I've retired and am no longer commuting, is even more of a social and athletic center for me—new friends, new competition, a new Board, and the old spirit of Chabot living on. What we need now is for the next generation of



players to invest in the Club by becoming equity members, and to take over the leadership and governance of Chabot—believe me, it's an investment that repays dedicated players many times over.



## MEMORIES OF CHABOT CANYON TENNIS CLUB

by Larry and Marcia Kolb

The 1991 fire began Saturday, October 19, but did not really become visible until the following Sunday morning. I remember that the day was the warmest of the year in the Bay Area, with so-called Mt. Diablo winds blowing hot from the east.

Marcia recalls playing doubles that morning with Gail, Jo and Pam, and halting play around 11, as embers began falling on the court, and they could smell smoke. They are among the last players at the old Club. At some point in the afternoon, with the fire in full fury, I (Larry) rode my bike up Chabot Road to see if Chabot Elementary was still there. It was, but there were fire engines from other Bay Area cities at the intersection of Chabot and Golden Gate. The firemen said they wanted to stop the fire at that point, where Chabot opened out from its canyon.

I decided to bike a little further up the hill, and found that once you were in the canyon, with hills on either side, it was almost like night—really dark and smoky, and I thought scary. I went only as far as the Club. It was still there, and there was a young man with a hose trying to water everything down. I told him to leave, that we could not stop the fire. He did so right away, and so did I.

I recall returning to the site a few days later. There were glass-topped tables with the glass melted into strange shapes. There were dozens of balls melted into the chain link fencing. They had apparently burst with the heat, hit the fence, and stayed there melted by the hot metal. The courts were mostly intact, but the Clubhouse was entirely gone. I remember someone told me the Club should now be called the Charcoal Canyon Tennis Club.

Before it was over the fire had burned 2500 homes and cost about \$3 billion in property damage, the most costly wildfire in US history. I was involved in kids' soccer at the time, and recall that we had to cancel games the following Saturday because it rained, a week too late.



## ALL HEART as told to Mary Lou Chapman by Arthur Haskell

Jim Rice was fortunate when playing doubles one day to have a cardiologist playing on the next court. Dr. Clark Daniels and Arthur Haskell saw Jim crumble and being carried to the court bench. Dr. Daniels rushed to administer CPR while Art ran to the Clubhouse to call 911. Jim lived to tell the tale.

Clark and Art immediately suggested that the Club buy a defibrillator. The Club

resisted in fear that by administering aid and failing, the Club could be sued. Clark checked the law and found the Club was protected by the Good Samaritan Law. He then shopped for defibrillators that were reliable, easy to use and not too expensive, while Art kept the pressure on the Club. Eventually one was purchased and an intercom system was installed on the courts so that no time is lost in getting the machine to the victim. Anyone can operate the defibrillator by following the simple directions on the machine. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Daniels and Arthur Haskell.



## A MEMORY by Stephen Sugarman

A tragic loss to the Club happened on 9/11 when Alan Beaven was killed on the United Airlines plane that went down in Pennsylvania. Having played Sunday doubles with Alan for many years prior to the tragedy, I and other partners of his are confident that he was among the leaders who stormed the cockpit to prevent the terrorists from doing even more harm. Alan and his family were about to move temporarily to Asia, and it was a sad irony that he happened to be on that flight, returning to the Bay Area to complete some matters before they left. To this day, when someone serves an especially hard-to-return serve shot deep into the corner at the center line, we often mention that this was a Beaven-like serve.



## WHY I JOINED CHABOT by Nancy Boswell

I have always been a baseball fan—so when I was told that Joe Morgan (announcer and former pro baseball player) was a member at Chabot... well impressive. Any way of getting in touch with him for any stories? He has been to many sports venues but I bet he rates Chabot as one of the best.



## A MEMORY OF CHABOT from England's Sally Haird

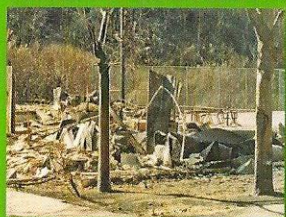
Nestled in the canyon, at almost the end of the road and surrounded by trees is Chabot Canyon. On first impressions it appears quite low key but this could be farther from the truth. It is a vibrant member-owned club comprised of friendly competitiveness combined with professional coaching and encouragement of improving one's game. We arrived in Oakland knowing only one person who recommended Chabot Canyon as a tennis club. The Club runs like clockwork under an efficient manager plus a team of members. The Club is very welcoming, encouraging team membership, joining clinics and last but not least taking part in the social events leading to making life-long friends on and off the court.

POST SCRIPT: Two features of Chabot are our logo, the Redwood Tree, long used but officially adopted in 1997, and our huge clock. The clock was given in memory of Bill Brockett by his family. The commemorative plaque quotes one of Bill's mottos. "I believe in living life to the fullest or 11 O'clock, whichever comes first."



# 20 Years at Chabot

*Tennis • Friendship • Fun*



## *Did you know?*

- In 1989, a group of special folks banded together forming a member-owned nonprofit to save our Chabot courts from being sold to a developer. They are our original Equity members.
- In 1991, many of these same Equity members worked to rebuild Chabot after the Oakland Hills fire.

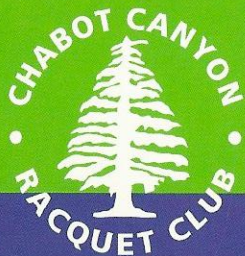
**Chabot is a special place with history and spirit.**

**Support our tennis community by becoming an Equity member.**

**For information about Equity membership, please see the Club Manager.**

**7040 Chabot Road  
Oakland, CA 94618  
(510) 652-6060**

**[www.chabotcanyon.org](http://www.chabotcanyon.org)**



*Be a part of our history.*