



Tiger Teusink
1936 -2021

Tiger's Memorial Service was held at Pillar Church in Holland on what would have been his 85th birthday. In attendance were Gary Ellis (who gave a reading), Gina Mazzolini, Tom Leyrer, Marv Ellis, Peter Militzer, Gordy Boettcher, Jorge Capestany, Dan Hutcheson, and Ed Waits.

It would be a safe bet that the vast majority of people who have lived in the generation of the man being eulogized here are familiar with the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross." It was written by a Michigander in 1913. More to the point, it contains the line: "Till my trophies at last I lay down."

For tennis players and coaches, that line resonates. We all remember hovering around the table at the beginning of a tournament where the awards were displayed. Everyone had a fantasy about taking one home. Only a couple of players actually got to put one on their respective mantles.

It is no secret that Tiger Teusink collected a multitude of trophies, both literal and figurative. His achievements have been chronicled at length on the sports pages of the Holland Sentinel and in MHSTeCA Memories, the ongoing history of the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association. The man was a giant in our organization, a president for three years and the secretary-treasurer for the next 20. If Bob Wood was the founder and face, Tiger was the foundation. He was to be found in the midst of everything that was truly important with regard to high school tennis.

- He served on the MHSTeCA Board of Directors starting in 1981 until almost the present. Although he didn't attend the early board meetings, he was deeply involved in the association's development when it was established in 1976.

- He was often appointed to the MHSAA Tennis Committee, an extremely important position if an innovation was to be advanced to the Representative Council.
- He served on the first state seeding committee in the fall of 1980 and then virtually every year afterward. He took great pride in the accuracy of the predictions and provided statistics to prove it.
- He was instrumental in establishing the MHSTeCA Hall of Fame and for many years organized ticket arrangements for the banquets and awards for the inductees.
- He was an annual fixture at the MHSTeCA Workshop where he helped with registration and occasionally gave presentations.
- He managed not only innumerable Saturday tournaments and MHSAA regional tournaments but also multiple state tournaments, a formidable task given pressure from high-octane coaches.
- If you were ever a coach of the year or if one or more of your players was declared all state status, Tiger Teusink had a lot to do with it because he helped found an association with the credibility to award these honors.
- He was inducted into the very first class of the MHSTeCA in 1986 at the same time that his own coach, Joe Moran, was also inducted. Coach and former player -- who would become a great coach in his own right -- traveled to that ceremony together. What may be even more impressive is that Tiger is one of only three tennis coaches in the high school history of our sport to be inducted into *four* Halls of Fame.

What may be even more significant is that his reaction to many of these accolades was simply: "I am humbled by this honor."

An axiom of all humanity is that none of us will get out of here alive. Another is that you can't take it with you. On Monday, Sept. 6th, Tiger lay down a large collection of trophies. But for those of us who worked with him, competed against him, shared stories with him, played golf with him, played in tournaments administered by him, and served on committees with him, he has provided cherished memories that have more than a tinge of historical significance. He leaves behind an astonishing and long-lasting legacy. A classic example is that the high school tennis courts where he did so much good work were named after him in Sept. 2016 and he was alive to see it.

Tiger was the wave that lifted all of our boats and made what we did that much better. It is a bragging right to be able to say that you knew him. It was an honor to have served beside him. He makes letting go a two-edged sword: a deep sorrow that we can't savor so much of this history anymore with him but a profound gratitude for what together we had shared for so long.

*Till my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

Amen