

Garber Courts Origin

Guy S. “Ike” Garber, Jr., was born in Saginaw, Michigan, March 3, 1920, to Guy and Hazel Garber, and passed away September 24, 2012. He became a life-long tennis player and supporter of the sport. Ike’s first exposure to tennis was when a local family built a private court near Linwood Beach where Ike and his family spent their summer vacations. In the Fall of 1933, Ike asked his father if he could join the Saginaw Tennis Club. (what and where was that) The cost of membership was \$5. The following year Ike won the Saginaw City Boy’s Championship.

Ike attended Arthur Hill High School and twice won the Class A State Championship. He received a scholarship at the University of Miami (Florida) where he roomed with Pancho Segura, one of America’s greatest tennis players. Ike and Pancho became best friends and tennis partners. Together and individually they won several tournaments. In 1947, at the National Intercollegiate Championships, Ike and Pancho lost to Jimmy Evert, father of tennis great Chris Evert. Throughout his competitive playing days, Ike crossed paths with some of the legends of tennis, including Pancho Gonzales, Jack Kramer, and Jimmy Evert.

Ike joined the Marines during World War II and after the fighting ended in the Pacific, found himself in Peking, China, where he met and befriended George Chang, the champion Chinese tennis player. China’s best could never beat this young man from Saginaw.

When Ike returned from the war, he noted that the City of Saginaw had no public facilities for tennis. Working with his father and other civic leaders, the Garber family was instrumental in providing a special gift to the citizens of Saginaw by building what has become known to generations of tennis players in the region as “Garber Courts,” the 12-court complex near Ojibway Island.

As an adult, Ike continued his outstanding career by winning three consecutive Michigan State Men’s titles and by undertaking various opportunities in his hometown to generate interest and support for the game he loved. In the early 1960’s, Ike invited his friend Pancho Segura to visit Saginaw for a clinic and exhibition match played at the former South Intermediate School tennis courts, which helped considerably to promote the game of tennis in the area.

Again, in the 1970’s Ike and Pancho teamed up to put together a charity tennis event in Saginaw that tennis fans in the area will always remember. It brought to Saginaw for an exhibition match, a then relatively unknown young player by the name of Jimmy Connors. Both of these events were festive, well-attended occasions that underscore the unparalleled contribution that Ike and his family have made to the game of tennis in Saginaw County.