

Still Competing

"I Stay Fit Playing Tennis"



Alex Swetka and wife Sally

Profile: *Alex Swetka,*
National Champion Tennis Player

Born: *1917*

Residence: *Mountain View, CA*

Former occupation: *Grade school teacher*

Marital Status: *Married to Sally, 80,*
over 50 years

Five days a week, you'll find Alex Swetka, 92, on the tennis courts at Cuesta Park in Mountain View doing what he loves best: playing tennis one to two hours a day. And he's really good. In 2008, he won eight Gold Balls (trophies) playing both singles and doubles in National Tournaments sponsored by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Last month, he was in New York receiving his awards. He has won over 60 national titles and is one of the top ranked tennis players in the world for his age group. Since the day he turned 65, Alex has been ranked number one in the world in 65s, 70s, 75s, 80s and now 90s.

When I interviewed him in September, he had defeated a guy earlier who was 41 years his junior--in singles, 6-2, 6-2. Amazing.

What's his secret in playing competitive tennis at 92? For that matter, just playing tennis socially?

"Clean living," he joked. "I eat lots of vegetables and fruits. Plus having a good wife who also hits with me. She keeps me going." Sally is 80 and plays tennis, too.

Alex started playing tennis at age 30 while studying at San Francisco State University in 1948. He's been playing ever since and has been injury free for the most part of his life, although he has had some recent leg, knee and back problems.

In May 2009, he underwent leg bypass surgery to correct poor circulation. "I'm only 70% recovered but getting better every day. But it doesn't prevent me from playing tennis."

Besides tennis, he stays active by planting and maintaining a large garden in his backyard where he grows vegetables year round, especially lettuce and tomatoes which he attributes to his good health and well being.

Alex founded the Swetka Tennis Shop in Mountain View in 1969 which his son, John, now runs. The store was recently ranked as the #1 tennis shop in the nation. It offers over 500 demo racquets that players can try out before buying.

Being a USTA 3.5 player, I had to ask him about his tennis racquet. What special racquet does this champion player use? A 20 year old Prince Extender! He has tried all the newest models but feels more comfortable with his old racquet. Who can argue with lifelong success?

And at what tension does he string his racquet? 32 lb! (For the non-tennis players, most racquets today are strung between 50 to 60.) No "gut" strings for him. Nylon works just fine.

Goals? He's aiming to play until 100 and looks forward to playing in the next National Tournament on clay at Pine Hearst in North Carolina.

CHUCKLES CHUCKLES CHUCKLES

- ★ Don't take life so seriously. It's not permanent.
 - ★ If you're old enough to know better, you're too old to do it.
 - ★ There's one advantage to being 102. No peer pressure.
 - ★ Always be nice to your children because they're the ones who will choose your rest home.
 - ★ You know you're getting old when you stop buying green bananas.
- Source: *unknown*



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