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**By Brian Shanley**

**NON-COACH MIGHTY INFLUENCE IN TENNIS**

Ed Patenaude loved tennis. He loved everything about it. From the 1960s until very recently he was either playing the game he loved, or sitting courtside dispensing equal parts instruction and good-natured sarcasm.

For generations of tennis players at Bearcroft Swim & Tennis Club in Attleboro, he was simply known as "Mr. P" (inset), where he was as ubiquitous as yellow tennis balls and chaise lounges.

Often during the week he would come directly from his work as a graphic designer at the Foxboro Co. to get in a set or two before dark. On summer weekends he would zip through the parking lot in one of his Volkswagens, pop open the hatch and have his cooler, racquet and towel ready for the first taker.

Once I asked him if he ever went to Longwood or Forest Hills to see the professionals compete. He said he would never do that because "he might miss out on an opportunity to play." For him it was all about what happened on the court.

And that's one of the reasons he was so dear to so many of us. Mr. P. would play with anyone of any ability level. For the vast majority of us at Bearcroft, whether your name was Medgysey, Shanley, Vaughan, Casey, Lonergan, Foley, Silvia, O'Donnell, Chatfield, Oglivie, Guillette, or McNally, probably the first time you played with an adult who wasn't related to you, was when you played with Mr. P. Certainly there were others. Dr. Lonergan, Ron Kindberg, Dr. O'Donnell, John Medgyesy Sr. and Norm Turcotte come to mind, but playing with Eddie P. was a rite of passage. It meant you would now always have a game and that you had the potential to play on Court 1, the show court. He provided the credibility and exposure that playing on Court 8 or the backboard never could.

He was a character. When a new fad came across the tennis scene Mr. P. was all over it. He read Tennis Magazine like an architect studies a blueprint. Aluminum racquets, shoe goo, terrycloth grips, sawdust, headbands, grip powder and strange looking tennis ball pressurizing devices could at anytime fly out of his tennis bag.

One day he was walking particularly pigeon-toed on the court and I asked him what was going on? He said, "Well, I was reading that most of the great Australian players walk that way and I thought I'd give it a try." After falling a couple of times on the asphalt court he reverted to his own gait.

It was perfect Mr. P., everything was worth a shot.

Unfortunately Ed Patnaude died last week at age 84. It was a sad day when the news made its rounds.

He never coached, and to my knowledge never played in a championship match, but he helped develop dozens of Attleboro area champions. He leaves his wife, two daughters, two grandchildren and scores of others like me who were fortunate enough to have played alongside him. **BRIAN SHANLEY** of Newport, R.I., is a former Attleboro resident and city tennis champion.