

# Intriguing Items at the INTERNATIONAL TENNIS HALL of FAME

by Chris Nicholson  
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THIS SUMMER THE INTERNATIONAL Tennis Hall of Fame celebrates the distinguished careers of Germany's Steffi Graf, Sweden's Stefan Edberg and California's Dodo Cheney by honoring them as the Hall's newest enshrinees.

Also in 2004, the Hall of Fame celebrates its 50th anniversary. Founded in 1954 by James Van Alen, the Hall is the world's premier showcase for all that tennis has been and is today, from the outmoded to the modern, from the historical to the history-making, from the sepia-toned antiques of yesteryear to the vibrant colors of the 21st-century game.

Located at the Newport Casino in Newport, R.I., the ITHOF is a visual chronicle of tennis, a museum of the sport's curiosities, artifacts and photographs. In honor of the golden anniversary, *USTA Magazine* walks you through the hallowed halls of our sport's shrine and offers a glimpse at some of the more intriguing slices of history housed within.



2 >>> Vitas Gerulaitis' Rickenbacker six-string was purchased by the ATP at a charity auction and later loaned to the Hall of Fame.



1 ^ The Newport Casino's famed Horseshoe Court is more than a pretty showpiece. It's a court that hosts recreational players from May through September. With a reservation, anyone can play on this grass court built in the 1960s. The court is in the Horseshoe Piazza, part of the original Casino construction in 1880.

3 v The official US Open trophies, when not at Flushing Meadows for the late-summer Grand Slam tournament, are kept protected and on display at the Hall of Fame.



5 <<< In 2003 the Hall of Fame put on exhibit a collection of tennis ball containers dating back to the 1920s. The collection includes balls bagged in paper, tubed in cardboard and sealed in pressurized tin cans. Some of the containers have never been opened, still harboring tennis balls untouched since leaving the factory almost a century ago.

4 v The tennis shoes and news-making lycra catsuit that Puma designed for Serena Williams' title run at the 2002 US Open were a gift from Serena to the Hall of Fame.





**6** ^ This 17th- or 18th-century French *battoir*, the earliest type of racquet known to exist, is in excellent condition with a vellum covering and sheepskin grip. It's one of only seven in the world, all of which were discovered together in 1989, spotted in a bucket at a London flea market.

**7** >>> Martina Navratilova loaned her collection of nine Wimbledon singles trophies (seen here with the Prince racquet she used in winning the 2003 Wimbledon mixed

doubles title) to the Hall of Fame for a display honoring her induction in 2000. A few times since, the Hall of Fame has offered to return the trophies, but Navratilova has declined, content to have them on display in Newport.



**9** >>> In the early 1900s, horses were used for rolling grass tennis courts. To prevent hoof marks on the lawns, the equines were fitted with horse shoe boots, which helped distribute the horses' weight more evenly on the turf.

**10** ^ An early lawn tennis set circa 1879 includes, in a wood carrying case with a hinged top: racquets, a net, net posts, stakes, a mallet, balls and a rule book—everything you need to set up and play the game on your local croquet lawn.



**11** <<< Ever wonder how to bend wood into a tool for taming a tennis ball? The Kent Racket Company of Massachusetts could have told you that it's a matter of wetting some ash, adding glue and pressing the wood into shape with a Racquet-Bending Machine. Kent, which produced the first American-made tennis racquets in the late 19th century, used this machine in 1876.

## Distinguished Dodo

OF ALL THE TENNIS ACHIEVEMENTS THAT Dorothy "Dodo" Cheney has registered—including becoming the first American woman to win the Australian National Championships (the precursor to the Australian Open) in 1938 and reaching the final of the mixed doubles events at the French Open and Wimbledon in 1946—what distinguishes her most is that, for eight decades, she's never stopped competing.

"For the love of the game, I've just kept playing. I've just always loved to play, and I still love it," says Cheney, who has gone on to become a legend in USTA adult and senior tennis. As of mid-April, the 87-year-old resident of La Jolla, Calif., has won 346 USTA National titles, over 200 more than the player with the next most number of titles.

Her titles and long history in the game have earned Cheney induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, where she'll be enshrined alongside pro legends Stefan Edberg and Steffi Graf on July 11.

Cheney, who has three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, inherited her passion for the game from her parents, May Sutton Bundy and Thomas Bundy, both tennis champions. In fact, in 1905 Cheney's mother became the first American to win a singles title at Wimbledon and in 1956 herself was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Cheney and her mother are the first mother-daughter combination to be inducted.

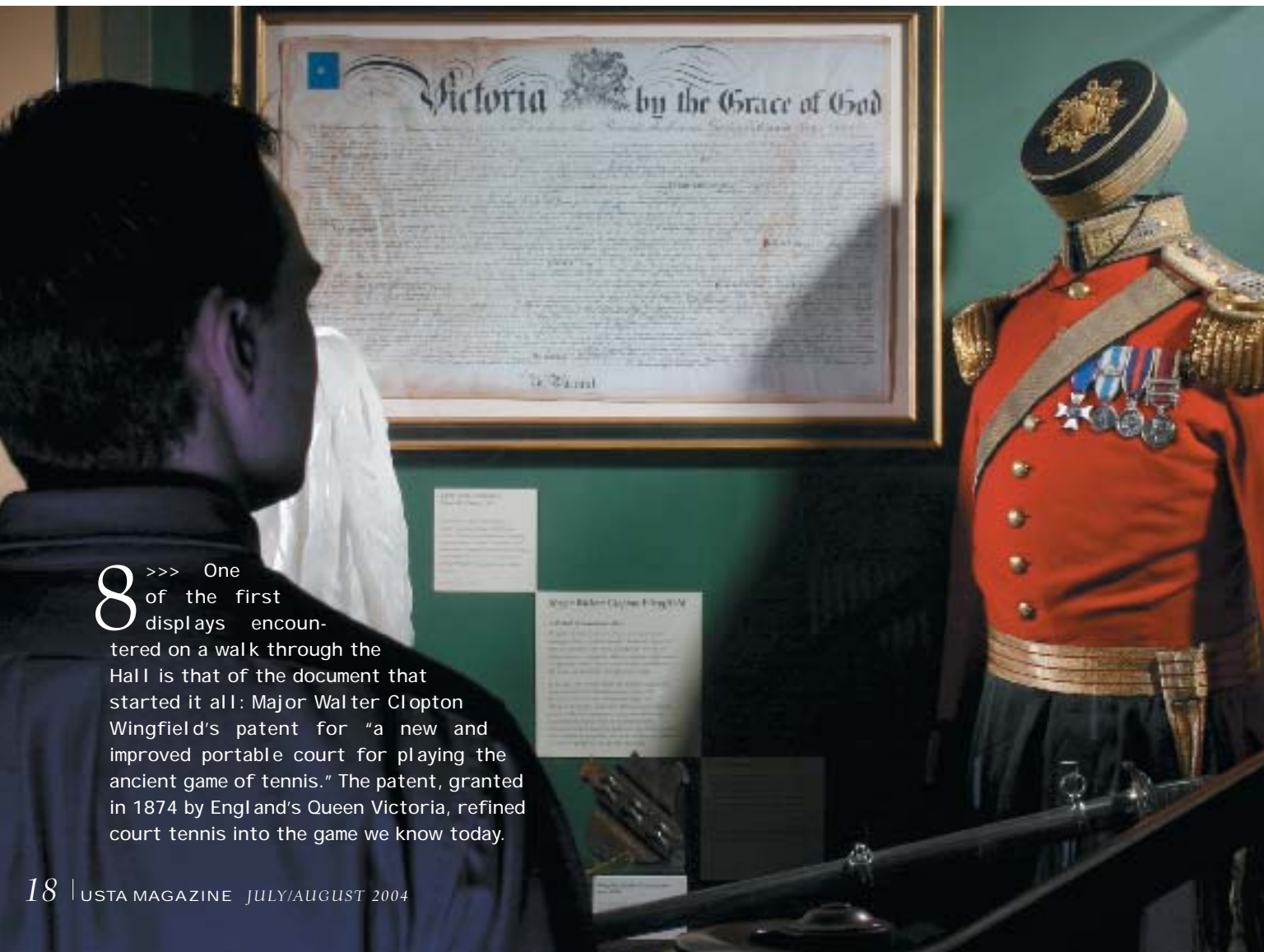
But perhaps equally important to Cheney's success is her attitude toward the game. On the court she is cagey and loves a challenge. But above all, she's kept tennis fun. Her son, Brian Cheney, says if he were writing a book on his mother he would title it *Life is a Game*, for her penchant for turning everything from tennis to mundane chores into enjoyable sport. Cheney says it was simply having a good time that led to her victory at the Australian National Championships, which started with a three-week boat trip to Australia. "Because I had such a good time, I played well," she says.

The USTA national title she cherishes most? "The one I won with my daughter [Christine Putnam] in the Mother/Daughter Open in 1976. Because it was with my daughter, and we've always been very close, and we just love to play."

—Brian Cleary



MARY SCHILPP



**8** >>> One of the first displays encountered on a walk through the Hall is that of the document that started it all: Major Walter Clopton Wingfield's patent for "a new and improved portable court for playing the ancient game of tennis." The patent, granted in 1874 by England's Queen Victoria, refined court tennis into the game we know today.