



## **Arnold and Esther Belinsky: Philanthropy (1931-2016) (1932- )**

Arnold and Esther have always taken an active interest in local tennis. And, when they took an interest in something, they would make things happen. They were a couple of “movers & shakers” in San Diego tennis. And, their influence resonates to this day.

Arnold was born in Detroit in 1931. He joined the Navy and was stationed in Coronado. He quickly grew to love it here. Esther was born in Tampico, Mexico in 1932 to a Polish father and Russian mother. Both had immigrated to Mexico to escape anti-Semitic persecution. In 1945, Esther moved to Chula Vista, gained dual citizenship, attended USC for a year, and then finished at San Diego State. While in the Navy, Arnold met Esther at Congregation Beth Israel. They fell in love and married in 1954.

At the age of 21, Arnold began another lifelong love affair -- this time with tennis. He worked diligently at the game and rose to #8 on Balboa Tennis Club’s Men’s Ladder and ultimately achieved a San Diego #1 ranking in Men’s 65 Singles in 1997.

After the Navy and upon getting married, Arnold went to work for Esther’s father’s retail chain, *Union Furniture*. A quick study, he learned the furniture business inside and out. Then, in 1966, Arnold opened his own store, *Arnold’s Furniture & Interiors* (“from our Family to Yours”). It was a complete success. Beginning that year, Arnold and Esther established stores on El Cajon Blvd., in Chula Vista, San Marcos, Miramar Road, and Kearney Mesa, the chain’s flagship store, at the *San Diego Home Furnishing Center*, before selling out in 1991.

As their family grew, Arnold wanted to introduce his children to the sport he loved so well. Arnold reasoned that tennis would be more fun if the kids played along side their friends. Accordingly, Arnold devised the “College Racquetees.” The “College Racquetees” was a group of kids, comprised of all ages, from the Del Cerro/College area. They would gather to play on San Diego State’s old courts. Sometimes, Bob Ray would join Arnold in giving the kids instruction. Periodically, Arnold would invite some of San Diego’s top junior players, like Roy Barth, to give inspirational talks to the kids. Nine of the “Racquetees” went on to become ranked players in San Diego. A few played for their universities.

Arnold and Esther expanded their support for tennis from the days of the “Racquetees” to all of the San Diego tennis community by donating to improve our area’s older tennis facilities, and to build new ones, including:

- Founding contributors to the Barnes Tennis Center and annual contributors ever since.
- They were greatly instrumental in refurbishing the Balboa Tennis Club at Morley Field and to honor Arnold and Esther, the clubhouse was named after them.
- They funded the Arnold and Esther Belinsky Family Playground at the Booth Educational Building located at Barnes Tennis Center.
- Arnold and Esther founded the Belinsky Family Tennis Complex at the San Diego Jewish Academy.
- Court 6 at the Barnes Tennis Center was named THE BELINSKY FAMILY court to honor their valued contributions to youth tennis.

Arnold passed away in 2016 from Parkinson’s disease and is survived by Esther and their three- playing children: Larry (Judy), Craig, and Sheila as well as six grandchildren, and two great-granddaughters.

Esther enjoys her family visits at “Glendale,” the dream home she and Arnold built in Rancho Santa Fe.