



ISRA Recognizes John O'Donnell, Jr. for Exemplary Board Service

The ISRA Board of Directors extends its heartfelt gratitude to Mr. John O'Donnell, Jr., of Champaign, Illinois, whose Board service began in 2012 and concluded with his resignation early this year. John represented and supported our Central Illinois players throughout his tenure on the Board.

John's many contributions and achievements in Racquetball have made him such a valuable Board member. To demonstrate the kind of individual we have had among us, we proudly offer this profile:

John served 33 years in the Air Force during the Korean and Vietnam wars, rising to the rank of colonel and flying for about 24 of those years. He began playing racquetball during his second tour of duty in Vietnam when he was based in Thailand.

John retired from his job as Director of Facilities at the University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics in 1994 and continued to conduct numerous free clinics each year at the facility.

He began competing in 1974 with longtime doubles partner Phil Dziuk. He won the ISRA Male Player of the Year Award in 1997 and 2011 and the ISRA Distinguished Service Award in 2014.

There are too many tournament wins to list here from the 70's to his most recent competition in June 2019 at the NMRA International Championships held at Glass Court in Lombard, Illinois, where he took 1st in Men's 85+ (at 89 years old) and 1st in Men's 75+ Doubles with Alberto Palacios.

John was the fifth inductee into the ISRA Hall of Fame, Class of 2006. (He is also a member of the NMRA Hall of Fame, Class of 2011.) Even with the five-hour round trip from Champaign to Chicago, John has rarely missed the induction of fellow ISRA Hall of Fame members.

John's frequent sponsorship of junior players, state tournaments, and pro stops has always been deeply appreciated.

Characteristically humble, John says, “I am grateful for all this sport has brought me over these many years, and I have always been pleased to be a part of the ISRA Board representing our great sport and the players of Central Illinois.”

John, at 96, and his wife Kay are involved in their community and support American Legion activities in Champaign/Urbana.

Again, the ISRA Board thanks John O’Donnell, Jr. for serving the Illinois Racquetball community with such dedication and leadership. Although he will be missed, we know we can always call on him for advice and input borne of experience over his many years as an athlete, contributor, instructor, and sponsor.

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NMRA HOF Induction 7/29/11

L to R: Tom Curran, Ben Marshall, John O’Donnell Jr., Cheryl Kirk