

STREET SCENE

Inside **S²**

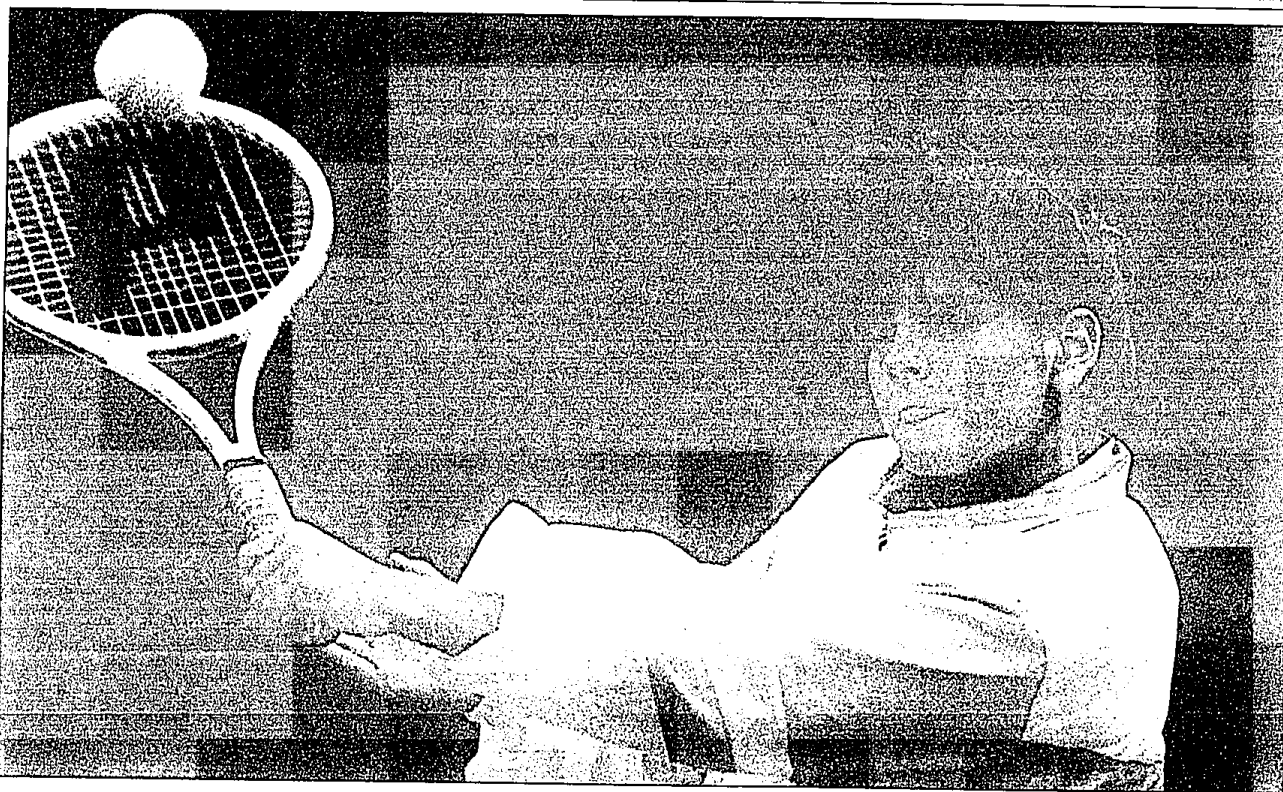
Scintillating state sites

A ride along the "little finger" in Michigan's northwest quadrant reveals farmyards, wineries, country lodgings and other refreshing surprises for a perfect getaway. Street Scene takes you on a tour on Page 6D.

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★ 1D



STEPHEN CAMERON/staff photographer

Livonia resident Carrie Cunningham, a nationally ranked junior, concentrates as she swings at the ball.

By Janice Brunson
Staff writer

In 1973, Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs staged a tennis spectacular in the Houston Astrodome, a theatrical match that pitted female athlete against male in a test of wit and athletic prowess.

The event caught the attention of the nation. At the same time, Chris Evert and Jimmy Connors became two of the first Americans to rank tops in worldwide tennis competition, capturing the hearts of Americans who readily identify with winners.

Seemingly overnight, tennis became the athletic sensation of the era, the premiere physical endeavor undertaken by both the talented and the not so talented, the young and the old, male and female.

The early 1970s were a heady time, the glory years in the world of tennis when interest in and devotion to the game peaked in the United States, according to area tennis buffs.

California, Florida and, surprisingly enough, Michigan became acknowledged national centers for the sport, producing on the average more world-class tennis champions than other parts of the country, according to these same buffs.

In addition, countless amateurs flocked to tennis clubs springing up in Palm Beach, Santa Monica and the Bloomfields, whiling away long hours thumping tennis balls back and forth.

"INTEREST PEAKED in the 1970s, at least the first part of the 1970s," according to Leon Crimmins who

DOWNSWING Tennis bounces with trends

manages one of the last remaining clubs in the area devoted exclusively to tennis, Centaur Racquet Club in West Bloomfield.

By the late 1970s, however, interest in the sport started to wane, settling into a steady level of participation the past decade, Crimmins said. He has been in the business seven years, both in Michigan and elsewhere.

Rick DuRei, manager of the Grand Slam Tennis Club sponsored since 1973 by the Livonia YMCA said business has been "quite slow" until recently, even though it is one of only a very few clubs in southwestern Wayne County.

Business has picked up enough the past two years to consider expanding the club's five indoor and six outdoor courts, DuRei added.

Franklin Racquet Club in Southfield, the largest and possibly oldest tennis club in Oakland County, reflects changing trends in tennis interest.

When construction began in 1969, four indoor courts

were planned. Before construction was completed, four additional courts had already been added in response to customer demand.

By 1976, the year tennis buffs agree interest peaked, Franklin boasted 20 courts, each filled 100 percent to capacity, according to Joseph Chalmers who joined the staff the following year.

But by 1977, "people were tiring of indoor tennis. Like all fads, interest waned and the sport declined," Chalmers said.

THE EARLY 1980s saw club owners targeting new markets, tennis players interested in honing playing technique and competing in amateur tournaments.

"This segment of the market is now the backbone of the business," Chalmers said, especially cultivation of the young player who it is hoped will become tomorrow's devoted fan.

Clubs also expanded into other revenue-producing areas. Racquet ball courts appeared briefly, "a bright

flame that quickly burned out," Chalmers said, followed by health fitness centers and other sports facilities.

Some clubs, like Bloomfield Tennis House in Troy, failed to survive the transition. A few, like Centaur, survived without diversifying facilities.

"Considering our climate, this area has remained one of the hot beds of tennis in the country," said Crimmins, adding the game is particularly popular in West Bloomfield. "We have high, high interest."

Most clubs, however, survived by offering a wider variety of activity, moving from exclusively tennis clubs to multi-sport centers.

Beverly Hills Racquet and Health Club is a case in point.

"WE'VE ALWAYS been on the cutting edge of change," said manager Tom McCarthy who has been with the club since it opened in 1973. "I've seen all the changes."

Beverly Hills, once a club with a dozen special synthetic-clay courts, is now an 85,000-square-foot enclosed facility offering both tennis and racquet ball, a fitness center, basketball and track.

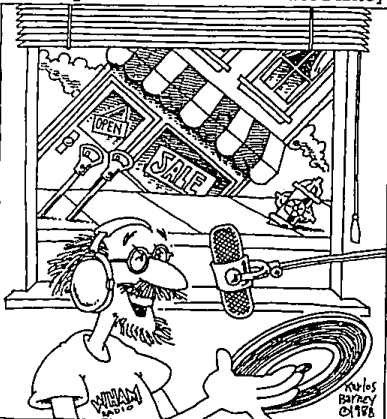
"People do more than one thing now. They enjoy a variety of activities. Things aren't so faddish. Clubs had to diversify."

As clubs expanded, membership changed, appealing to a wider segment of the population than the typically upscale tennis player who enjoys exercising in a relaxed

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R.U. Syrius

Karlos Barney



Spas send soothing sensations melting away chills, anxieties

By Bill Casper
Staff writer

Spring has finally delivered us from cold man winter's unrelenting grip. But let's dare to ponder the unthinkable — and you may never fear the frozen earth again.

Imagine a dark, mid-December's night. The crisp air is easy to breathe and see against a black backdrop. There's an eerie, yet tranquil stillness as a light snow silently falls.

Everyone in the neighborhood is deep in hibernation. Except you. You're outside on an enclosed patio behind your house, wearing nothing save a bathing suit, maybe less.

THE FROSTY AIR reddens your face, but it does not sting your nose or bite your ears. You're floating, comfortably warm and totally relaxed — immersed to your neck in a

'It's very relaxing and helps relieve tension and soreness from your body.'

— John Wilkie
spa owner

large pool of hot, bubbling water that is pulsating and swirling around you as crystal flakes of white powder melt on contact.

You may not be alone. You may have a friend, or two or six sharing this exhilarating, potentially X-rated, experience.

All you need is a hot tub, a.k.a. spa, and this Hollywood fantasy becomes real — except on the West Coast where snow is but a rumor.

This soothing, sensual, almost sin-

ful California-style leisure is becoming increasingly popular in warmer climates as much for its sheer pleasure as for its therapeutic value the year round, inside or outside.

Just ask a portable spa owner. "It's the next best thing to a couple of martinis," said John Wilkie, 44, an architect living in Grosse Ile.

"It's very relaxing and helps relieve tension and soreness from your body. My wife and two sons (ages 15 and 21) enjoy using spas in hotels while we're on vacation and they urged me to buy one. I did some research and bought a Hot Springs Spa for about \$4,500.

"We had it installed inside our home two or three months ago and we all use it at least once a day," he said. "It's a beautiful piece of equipment, complete with a lounge chair and massager. We can move it anywhere we want it. It's easy to operate and maintain."

OR ASK a retailer.

"Spas can prolong life," claims Al-ten Brody, director of sales and marketing for California Comfort Spa and Sauna Co., with retail outlets in Southfield, Rochester and Ann Arbor. "The reason they gained popularity in California is because of their therapeutic benefits. People over 60 use them for therapy."

"The normal spa can seat an average of four to six persons and they're easy to install anywhere, inside or outside," he said. "Some people use them all year round, some only use them during the summer, others only during the winter."

But it's taken a little longer for these fountain-of-youth spas to catch on outside of California. People think it's too cold to use spas in cold weather, but there's

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