

Tahoe ski, tennis legend George Galante died

By Harry Spencer, Sparks Tribune

Long-time North Lake Tahoe resident George Galante, 69, passed away at Renown Medical Center in Reno on Nov. 21. He was born to Florence and George Galante in 1943 in Newark, N.J. He was the oldest of four children.

He arrived at Incline Village in 1968, after spending time as the coach of the U.S. Ski Team in Jackson Hole, Wyo. It was his intention to try the skiing the Sierra offered at that time and then move on to other locales. But like most people, he fell victim to the scenic wonder of Lake Tahoe and spent the remainder of his life there. During the winter months, he skied and taught skiing every day the mountains had snow.

Early that first year, in addition to hiking and biking, he sought out other physical activities and discovered the sport of tennis. At that time, Incline Village was a hotbed for the racket sport. Galante soon was taken under the wing of legendary tennis pro Fred Earl, who worked with him until Galante was able to take his turn as a teaching pro on the courts. A natural athlete, in his early years back East he excelled at ice hockey and race car driving. Of medium height and a sturdy physique, he gained the highest ranking in karate and was a daily presence at the local gym.

He had a brilliant tennis career competing with many of the most famous names in the sport at that time. He enjoyed one of his most successful tennis seasons this year at the Tahoe Vista area, where his students nicknamed it "Camp George" in his honor. As a teaching pro, during his 44-year career he taught at all of the tennis facilities on the North Shore and served as a pro bono tennis coach at Incline High.

George is best remembered for his wit and humor, which led him to emcee gatherings large and small. Relying on previous experience from back East, he once did a stint as a standup comic at the Tahoe Biltmore where he was also the marketing director. Another facet of his personality led him to a job as maitre'd during the Cal-Neva Lodge's heyday.

One of his favorite haunts at Incline was the Village Ski Loft, where he acted as a rep for manufacturers and participated as a ski expert during annual sales events. He also donated his time as a mentor to members of the Incline High ski team, where he developed many outstanding young skiers.

He had a legion of friends, whom he could call upon to assist him in his special event promotions that he did both locally and regionally. Two major events of which he was most proud of were the Long Beach Grand Prix and the Oakland Raiders "Snow Wars" celebrity ski event.

He is a legend at the Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe Resort, where he is remembered on its Facebook page. A celebration of life is pending and will be announced at a later date.