

David M. Nigel, our Ninth President

As told by David Nigel

Born in Harbin, Manchuria, David's family moved to and was raised in Seattle during his early years, but mainly grew up in San Francisco, David was our Association's ninth President between 1978-1979. He has always loved Parks and Recreation having played in many San Francisco parks and recreation facilities at an early age. His family moved to Manila, Philippines during his high school years where he attended a very special American private school that was a huge influence on his life. Besides a strenuous academic curriculum, athletics was huge at the school. David played a variety of sports but his love for basketball was at the top of his pleasure and enjoyment. He was a member the only American high school basketball team ever to win the National Basketball High School championship of the Philippines. He played the Harlem Globetrotters guarded by the famous Meadowlark Lemon, and also was coached for two weeks by the incredible 1936 Olympian Jesse Owens. David is also so very proud to have earned his Boy Scout Eagle badge during his time in Manila.

Upon returning home to his beloved San Francisco, he enrolled at City College where he played Junior Varsity Basketball and was a member of the championship Recreation Association Club intramural basketball and northern California Junior College championship co-ed volleyball teams. Upon earning his Associate of Arts degree, David transferred to San Francisco State College where he majored in and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. He was also a member of the Junior Varsity Tennis Team and President of the Student California Teachers Association. David met the love of his life Rose who was also studying to become a teacher and they were married in 1963. Both ended up teaching in adjacent school districts on the San Francisco Peninsula in San Bruno and Millbrae. In addition to his teaching, David coached fifth grade boys' basketball and initiated a basketball league consisting of eight teams serving as Co-Commissioner working for the San Bruno Recreation Department. After six years, he moved to Engvall Intermediate school as a classroom teacher and coaching seventh grade basketball and eighth grade baseball. At this time, the family's two children were born. During his teaching career, David received the "1991 Teacher of the Year Award at McKinley Elementary School. He was also honored by the Burlingame School District as "1991 Teacher of the Year."

In 1968, he worked during the next twenty summers at the University of California, Berkeley, teaching hiking and nature, baseball, soccer, and tennis. This was an elite program offering a huge spectrum of activities to over 1,500 youngsters ages six to eighteen. He eventually became Director of the program.

May of 1970, David applied for an opening for the City of San Bruno Parks and Recreation Commission and was appointed for a four-year term of office. He continues to serve in that capacity now participating in his fifty-fourth year of service. At that time, David became an active member of the California Association of Park and Recreation Commissioners and Board Members. He served in many capacities evenly being elected president. Following a successful term of office, David started working on Scholarship funding and is currently Chairman of the CAPRCBM Scholarship Committee. For his long dedication and achievement to the Association's scholarship program the organization honored him during the fall 2022 Board of Directors meeting by naming the scholarship in his honor, a gesture that touched his heart immensely. In 2016 David received notice that CAPRCBM's nomination was successful led by President Denise Damrow of Signal Hill that he has been selected by the National Recreation and Park Association to receive the 2016 Robert M. Artz Citizen Advocacy Award, recognizing him for his exceptional service and outstanding efforts to forward public parks and recreation through education and activating the public in his community, California. David was recognized and presented with this award at the National

Recreation and Parks Association Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, Thursday, October 6, 2016 at the “Best of the Best” ceremony.

In 1972, David began coaching high school basketball players in the Jewish Youth Athletic League. In 1979, he became Co-Commissioner and developed the league from four teams to twelve teams until his retirement from the league in 1996. All the history and records for the league that began in the 1920s is now available at the University of California, Berkeley Bancroft Library.

Under David’s hard work and the strong support of Executive Director Paul Romero, the Association once presented three significant scholarship stipends to students majoring in Recreation Supervision and/or Park Management.

David was recognized by the Association’s President Frank Jelinich, Officers, and Board of Directors at the 2004 Conference in Sacramento with the President’s C.A.P.R.C.B.M. “Hall of Fame” Award.

The San Mateo Elks Lodge presented David the “Distinguished Citizen of the Year” Award on March 26, 2011 for thirty-one years of participating as an official in the National Free Throw Shooting Competition for girls and boys ages 6 to 14.

November 15, 2015 – David was nominated and inducted into the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame of Northern California. Son Marc Nigel and Co-Commissioner Bill Black gave induction speeches.

David continues to be very active as an instructor of Holocaust Studies and a weekly Zoom program for seniors of news and current events entitled “Let’s Talk About It.”

He loves recreation and is still committed to Parks and Recreation in his San Bruno Community and throughout California. David is a proud, active, and devoted member of CAPRCBM and has been for more than 54 years.