

Carmel Valley Tennis Camp to return this June

By JERRY STEWART

BACK IN 1997, Carmel resident Steve Proulx and his wife Susan Reeder found themselves at one of life's crossroads, in the middle of the flatlands of Kansas.

Proulx was working as the head of a private upper school in Wichita, and life was going well. But the pair felt that something was missing.

"We did some soul-searching," reflected Proulx. "We were asking ourselves, 'What path do we want to take?'"

Five years earlier Proulx and Reeder purchased the Carmel Valley Tennis Camp from Dennis and Jan Shepherd, who are now owners of the Carmel Valley Racquet Club.

Located on Rancho San Carlos Road, the camp was initially a smash for Proulx and Reeder, and for tennis enthusiasts old and young. But the nets suddenly wilted in 1996.

The camp was shut down. Time had served up an ace to the Carmel Valley Tennis Camp.

Or so it seemed.

The soul-searching led Proulx and Reeder to return to Carmel Valley after their three-year hiatus.

"We realized that we wanted to work together and friends wanted us to reopen the Carmel Valley Tennis Camp," said Proulx. "There was a wave of momentum and we decided to ride it."

According to Proulx, the camp is slated to reopen at its new home on Cachagua Road June 1 with the first session for campers set for June 6.

Currently under construction, the new site will include



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Thanks to the efforts of Steve Proulx (pictured) and his wife Susan Reeder, a new Carmel Valley Tennis Camp will be available to local kids beginning mid-year.

four tennis courts, a pool, a 2,600-square-foot dormitory, dining hall, kitchen and miles of hiking trails.

Not to mention the summer sun of Carmel Valley.

"The excitement now is for us to have our own facility," said Proulx, who played tennis at Cal Berkeley and once reached the quarter finals in the NCAA doubles championship. The camp's wide range of facilities will make its slogan, "Tennis . . . And a Whole Lot More," appropriate: Plans call for construction of a huge climbing wall, an archery range and a sand volleyball pit.

"It'll be great for kids who have never played tennis up to kids who are ranked juniors," said Proulx. "It's not just about hitting tennis balls, or just being at camp. It's about being with a group of people with the same purpose, and that's to get better in any number of ways and to have fun."

Plans for the tennis camp have been running so smoothly that Proulx expects it to be the first one west of the Mississippi accredited by the stringent American Camping Association.

While on the courts, campers will learn the game by hitting balls, developing their own style and participating as members of a team. A staff of 20 college students will act as counselors.

"The camp exists for the campers," said Reeder, who was a ranked junior herself and coached Eastern Michigan University's women's team. "It's their resort, or teen heaven, where the counselors will be great role models, teachers and friends."

"It's the rebirth of the camp," said Proulx. And — more importantly — the renewal of kids' tennis dreams.