

The man who inspired the Pacific Association Tom Moore Award

The Tom Moore Award is meant to recognize outstanding life-long achievement and service to track and field and USATF Pacific. It is named in honor of the man who founded the Modesto Relays and kept them running for over 50 years. The award was instituted in 2002, and the first one was presented to Tom shortly before he passed away. The Awards Chair and Committee (along with any member of Pacific Association) may nominate candidates for the Moore Award. Honorees are chosen by the Board of Directors.

Tom Moore was one of the true great gentlemen of our sport, dedicating his life to the sport of Track and Field and to the athletes coaches and officials who participated. His legacy is the California Relays (Modesto Relays), over which he presided for over 63 years.



A graduate of Petaluma High School and later the University of California, Tom competed for the legendary Brutus Hamilton at Cal in the 1930's. He tied the world's record in the 120 yard high hurdles with a time of 14.2 seconds. In 1942, Tom moved to Ceres, California, a suburb of the sleepy farming town of Modesto in California's central valley, to help with the family's lumber yard. Competing for the Olympic Club of San Francisco Tom ran in the first three meetings of a new meet called the Northern California Relays. In 1945 Tom took over the duties of Meet Director and official starter, changing into this uniform and spikes for the hurdles race, then resuming his role as starter and meet director.

Tom presided over the Relays during the glory years of our sport. The meet continued to grow under his direction, complete with a downtown parade, Hollywood stars on hand and programs and posters designed by Walt Disney Studios. With little of offer beyond a few bucks, a hotel room and one hell of a track meet, Tom hosted the worlds best in Modesto. "When you came to Modesto, you were family", many a great athlete can recall. This included the traditional BBQ at Tom's home after the meet, where all gathered to share the stories of the day, some laughs and to plan for the next year. As world record holder John Smith once said "Tom is one of us, an athlete, you know you are going to be treated fairly here".

During those years Tom could be found at every Cal, Stanford and high school meet in the region with his starter's pistol raised ready to start the next generation of track and field stars. A dedicated official along with his partner in life, his wife Kay, who participated along side Tom in every California Relays. Tom was the starter for the 1968 Olympic Trials as well as many other significant meets of the era including the 1977 Soviet Meet and the 1984 Olympics.

Tom's smile, warm handshake and sense of fairness transcended many of the political and racial issues of the day. Tom always recognized you for the person you were, and invited each and everyone to come to compete in Modesto at a time when some college programs were not invited to many meets. Tom truly had no enemies, and as longtime friend and former Cal coach Erv Hunt remarked at a recent tribute to Tom, "Tom was indeed the perfect Man".

Tom passed quietly on the eve of the 64th meeting of his meet, leaving behind the great legacy of his life's work, the California Relays, 67 years of great track and field, incredible memories and 34 world records, but most importantly to Tom, are the many many friends he made along the way. Tom Moore was truly a gift to the sport of Track and Field and all who knew him, and his legacy will benefit the sport for long into the future.

