

## Gunter Guirten

Inducted January 31, 2004

Gunter Guirten arrived in Oklahoma in 1960 and one of the first things he did was to find a soccer team on which to play. He was pleased to discover several teams in the Oklahoma City area, and the twenty-six year old German immigrant signed up to play with the Celtics. For seventeen years. Gunter played adult soccer for a number of teams and helped recruit players to a variety of squads. In 1967, Oklahoma Soccer Association was formed with input from Guirten. He was one of four registered USSF referees in the state at the time.

He was one of the first state Referees in Oklahoma and quickly became involved in officiating matches at the adult and youth level. He became well known across the state as a referee and promoter of soccer officiating. By the 1970's, he had become an assessor, assignor, and instructor of referees working with Peter Aradi in the Tulsa area. Gunter set up assessor and instructor training for referees in the Oklahoma City area. He helped form an Oklahoma City referee chapter and was eventually named assistant State Referee Administrator, overseeing all referees in the western half of Oklahoma.

In 1971, Gunter took on a new role -father. for his wife, Maria, a native of Venezuela, their son Gunther would provide plenty of opportunity to continue their involvement in soccer. When Gunther was old enough to sign up Gunter coached his son through the U12 age bracket. When professional soccer appeared in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Gunter was there to lend his experience. He was often a 4th official at the games and was by now a State Assessor and Instructor who watched as some of his proteges were given the opportunity to work in those matches.

High Schools began offering varsity soccer in 1985, and again Gunter volunteered to assist in the training and assigning of those officials. As he had for years, he used his experience to aid in the development of young officials who were just getting started in refereeing. Whether they officiated club, adult, high school, or college matches. Gunter provided them insight and direction as they progressed on their referee careers.

When Maria passed away in 1998, Gunter stepped away from soccer for a time, but he recently announced he is ready to return to instructing and assessing a game that he has loved since he was a little boy in Germany. The referees of Oklahoma look forward to having input from Gunter for several more years and when they hear his comments, they will know how profound he enjoys the game of soccer- a game to which he has devoted his life.