

## ***From The Picklehood***

***January, 2023***

After a year of monthly columns about “all things pickleball,” I was fortunate to experience, this first month of 2023, a reminder of the importance of Pickleball in general and our Picklehood in particular. I capitalize both for emphasis. I’m also sharing a recent excerpt from ***The Dink Newsletter***.....In a recent survey, pickleball players were asked to respond—with one word—to this question: What is one positive thing this game has given to you. The number one response was FRIENDS, followed by words like “joy,” “sanity,” “health,” “feel,” and, of course, “fun.”

What follows is a chance meeting and friendship I had a chance to be part of.

### ***A Picklehood Reunion.....after 40 years.***

To the best of my memory, we were standing around talking to **Danette (Tano) Griffiths**, a pickleball playing visitor from Yakima, WA. During the course of the conversation, Danette mentioned she was born and raised in Wahiawa, Oahu, but at the age of 15 left her family on Oahu to live with her Aunt Marge and Uncle Tony Magaoay here on Kaua’i. She mentioned graduating from Waimea High in 1982. Local player Reni Pereira overheard the conversation and said something to the effect....”oh my goodness, I graduated from Waimea High in 1982.” What followed was a gleeful shared scream, hugs and the exchanging of high school family names....Danette Tano and Reni Beppu. The connection had been made and another ‘friendship’ started via the Picklehood.

Washington State visitor Danette went on to tell me more about her pickleball background..... “I have to admit that I was a little snob when it came to pickleball. I played tennis for over 20 years at the indoor/outdoor club in Yakima, WA where I currently live. Every time I would hear those pickleballers on adjacent courts, I’d get irritated. I also would think that pickleball was so easy, why don’t they play a real sport or that pickleball was for old people!! Boy, was I so wrong. Here I am today, pickleball snob to pickleball lover. How? We had a tennis pro whose name might be very familiar to the pickleball community....Tyson McGuffin. Always positive. Full of energy. Vibes that made learning this game much easier. Seeing Tyson play pickleball, made us naysayers all realize that this game wasn’t just for the older folks. A couple of years later, as things started opening up after Covid, a friend of mine kept inviting me to come play some pickleball. I finally went and what I came to discover is that pickleball is so so fun! The people are always so nice. I also love that if you wake up in the morning and you decide that you don’t want to play, it’s ok. Like Jack always says, when asked if wife Stephanie is coming to

play this morning. He replies “probably, but it’s 50-50 at this time.” Hahaha!! I love that!!

So how did I find pickleball in Kalaheo? Well, I looked online and there it was...a lot of info about all the places you can play. How awesome is that?! Because of the numerous venues on Kaua’i, locals and visitors alike are getting out in the morning and enjoying life on the pickleball courts. I find that wherever I go to play here on the Garden Island, everyone has the aloha spirit. One person in particular is Reni Pereira who I met just a few days ago. Little did we know that we were classmates at Waimea High School 40 years ago. Reni has such a happy disposition. Quite contagious. It makes everybody’s day. Do you know the saying ‘a person wears their heart on their sleeve?’ Well, Reni wears it on the back of her shirt every time she plays pickleball because when she sweats, it is in the shape of a heart! I’m not kidding!! True story!! It shows the love that she has for the people and for this amazing game of pickleball. I want to express my gratitude to all the lovely pickleballers I have met at Kalawai Park. When I visited Honolulu last week, I asked a local pickleball player if he knew if Kauai had places to play pickleball. He replied, ‘Probably not because the island is so small.’ I’m happy to say he was wrong. Kauai not only has many places and people to play pickleball with, but a visitor can go there knowing they will be welcomed with open arms and be made to feel like family.”

Via the chance meeting and a new friendship created, local Kaua’i player **Reni (Beppu) Pereira** had this to say....”As Danette mentioned, we were Waimea High School classmates who hadn’t seen each other since graduating in June, 1982. 40 years ago. Who would’ve thought that we’d meet 40 years later on a pickleball court?! This sport is so welcoming and awesome, bringing people together from near and far. It stands to reason family/friends/place connections will sometimes be made. It is, indeed, a small world.

While in high school, Danette played basketball and I played tennis and bowled. We both had common interests in playing tennis after high school and we both started playing pickleball just over a year ago. One evening, while playing tennis at the Hanapepe Courts, Lucia Bartels and Roxanne Vidinha invited me to join them for some pickleball. Like Danette, I too was a tennis snob and thought pickleball was for “old folks”. I didn’t like the fact that the pickleballers had drawn lines on our tennis courts. Confusing to say the least. I thought to myself, how was it even possible to get a good workout when the court is so small? Boy was I WRONG! As pickleball is everything tennis is not, I needed all the help I could get. I didn’t even own a paddle. Lucia was very kind in lending me a paddle or two until I purchased one. I didn’t even know the rules and how to keep score. I struggled with something as simple as my serve. Thanks to the patience and mentoring of Lucia and Ray Bartels who have welcomed and taken

me under their wing, coaching from Gene Shimatsu and Jack Hodges (who can easily pick apart my game and provide great pointers), I am officially an ADDICT! What's next???.... work on my third shot, dinking and a much softer game (yes, I am a "banger" as old habits from tennis and swinging through the ball are hard to break). I'm happy to say that pickleball has changed my life."

Who'd a thunk that this fun game with a funny name, described by naysayers as easy, irritating and noisy, is now the fastest growing sport in the country and continues to open the door to so many new and lasting friendships. The game really has enhanced our lives. And, by the way, the noise coming from courts adjacent to tennis courts or neighborhood homes....that's the sound of people having fun!!

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