



From the Picklehood

October 2023

By Jack Hodges

Fran and Sherri Graziano moved to Kaua'i a little over ten years ago. They had been vacationing here for extended periods of time for almost 40 years. Princeville seemed like the best fit for them because of the location, people and amenities. Especially attractive were the recreational opportunities. An avid tennis player, Fran was introduced to pickleball here on Kaua'i and in April of 2015, he traded in his tennis racket for a paddle. The fun game with the funny name not only changed his life, it literally saved his life. More on that later.

On May 30, 2015, organized pickleball was first played on the North Shore at Emmalani Park (EP) in Princeville. My wife Stephanie and I were asked by Ted Steinberg and friends if we would conduct a clinic on that Saturday morning. 30 people attended. From that one clinic, the North Shore Pickleball Ohana (NSPO) was created by 10 of those players who wanted to continue to learn, exercise, and socialize. NSPO grew to an email list of 154 players. Many lived on the mainland. EP and at the Kilauea Gym were the two North Shore venues until COVID shut down play. When the county cleared outdoor play for small groups, the On Island Pickleballers were formed in May 2020. In the next year, North Shore pickleball became stronger than ever. Play was governed by COVID restrictions. Some wore masks, balls were cleaned with alcohol after each game and safety protocol was mandatory. So was exercising and having fun with friends.

I only have one side of the story, but I know the source(s) and I trust the tellers.

From the very beginning, three courts at Emmalani Park were available from 8:30 a.m. to dusk. No complaints were filed. The courts were beginning to really show wear, but because quotes came in ranging from \$50k to \$90k, Princeville at Hanalei Community Association (PHCA) said it was not in their budget. One of Princeville's most involved players, Bob Day, who was also a contractor, did the engineering computations to resurface. He determined that if PHCA would buy the materials, estimated to be less than \$15k, he would recruit volunteer pickleballers to provide the labor for resurfacing, thus saving anywhere from \$35k-\$50k. The volunteers worked over 700 hours and the work was completed Jan 31, 2022.

On 12/2/22, Princeville pickleballplayers were notified that effective Sunday, December 11, 2022, new rules for court usage would go into effect:

- ONLY two of the three courts would be open for play Tuesday through Saturday.
- Times of play would be 9am - 11am and 3pm - 5pm.
- No ball could be struck prior to or after these time periods even for warm up.
- No pickleball play at all on Sunday and Monday.

As it turned out, 18 residents signed a petition that PB was too noisy. Over 200 residents signed a petition disputing that fact. A PHCA board meeting was scheduled for Dec 15. To appeal, one or two pickleball representatives would be allowed to present for five minutes, then reply to complainers for three minutes.

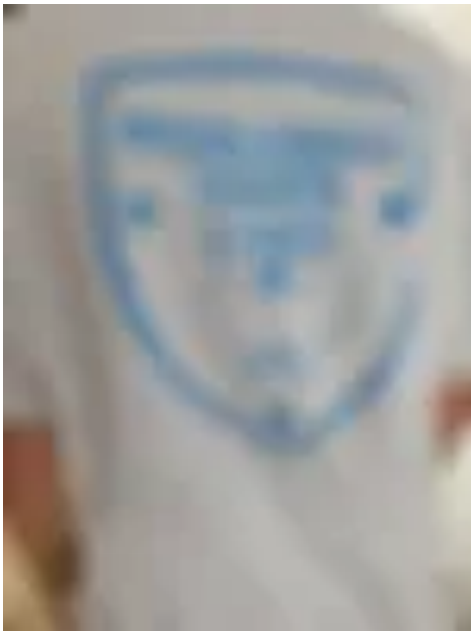
Many points were presented, including the fact that the PHCA had sent out a survey to all PHCA members asking for input as to what would make the community better. One question (#19 on the survey) asked if having additional pickleball courts would be beneficial to the community. 59% Agreed it would be beneficial; 13% Disagreed; 28% Neutral (probably didn't 'know what pickleball was). Players felt they had made some strong arguments—namely that Emmalani Park was designated as a Community Park and that the majority of the members were for expanding PB, not limiting it. Also, with the restrictive hours, members who worked until 5 during the week would only be able to play on Saturday.

Players at Emmalani had been following the reduced playing time mandates and using only 2 of the 3 courts. Of particular interest was the fact that a noise expert had been consulted. He determined the noise difference (when compared to other activities on the courts and in the park) was miniscule. On Oct 12, 2023, there was an email sent out informing homeowners of a PHCA Special Board Meeting on Oct 19, 2023. That seemed strange, since the PHCA has already scheduled a board meeting on Oct 21. Clicking on the agenda revealed that one of the items was a Resolution to ban pickleball permanently from Emmalani Park starting Dec 1, 2023.

That ban was approved by a Board vote of 3-1 on the afternoon of October 19, 2023. The sound of pickleball players exercising, socializing and having fun would be no more. Homeowners' concerns about property values and the right to neighborhood "quiet," backed by the threat of legal action, had once again won out. Similar stories are being told

across the country.

I end this month's column with the following positive information. A recent Mayo Clinic study revealed that people who play racket sports a minimum of 3 times a week can increase their life expectancy by an average of 8 years. This is especially true for players over the age of 60. Apple released findings that as of July, 2023, pickleball had become the most popular racket sport—according to Apple Watch users. They meticulously analyzed data from 250,000 anonymous workouts to draw this conclusion. Apple also mentioned that pickleball players burned more calories than tennis or racketball players in comparable length of time workouts. Both pickleball and tennis saw comparable heart rate peaks during extended play, "contributing to a strong likelihood of benefit in both quality of life and healthy aging."



Remember my reference to Fran Graziano's life being saved because of pickleball? Here is my segue.....In March of 2023, Fran suffered a massive heart attack and was airlifted to Honolulu. His heart stopped four times. He had two major surgeries. Every attending physician commented that his excellent physical fitness saved his life. This included cardiologists here on Kaua'i, in Honolulu and in California. Fran has been back playing with us for a couple months and he is pickling better than ever. As of this writing, Fran is seriously considering a "Pickleball Saved My Life" tattoo.

Happy October, 2023

Jack Hodges - District Pickleball Ambassador
State of Hawaii
Kaua'i Resident

Note: A special thank you to a good number of Princeville pickleball players who contributed to this month's column. You are appreciated.

Previous Month's Articles: