

The Pickleball Club has some fascinating members! This week, we have a member profile of two new members, Susie-Q Conklin and Marie LeBlanc. Susie-Q and Marie moved into the Villages this past Valentine's Day from Sunnyvale. Susie-Q has Parkinson's, so part of the appeal of the Villages was having all the amenities in one location, in addition to the warm community. Sunnyvale was spread out, making it more difficult to participate. And involved they are – Pickleball, golf, jazzercise, water aerobics, walking and hiking to mention a few. While some participation has lessened, everything is nearby and easy to get to.

Both women have lived incredible lives. They met through mutual friends at a New Years Eve party in 2015, and bonded over their love of golf. The relationship continued to grow, and they married in 2021. They both have had incredible lives, with some amazing achievements.

With her low handicap, Susie-Q represented Canada in Commonwealth matches in 1975 (similar to the Solheim Cup), competing at St Andrews. She was in the first group of women allowed in their Clubhouse, enjoying a beer overlooking St Andrews Bay. After leaving Montreal to attend qualifying school for the LPGA, Susie-Q competed in the mini-tour and remained in the US. She also played squash competitively, played catcher in a city league, and a little tennis. Professionally, she owned The Painter Sisters, painting interior and exterior homes for over 40 years. Busy woman!

But she's only one half of this duo! Marie studied Education in college, but after a couple of years teaching, grew bored. After visiting a friend and touring the San Diego Air Force Base, she enlisted, and went to Viet Nam in an administrative capacity.

You can read about Marie in "Other Viet Nam Women", which details women who served in capacities other than nursing. In 1971, she was awarded the Bronze Star for service above and beyond her duty on the front line. She was instrumental in getting troops home for Christmas, transporting over 3,000 men (and 3 women!) in ten days. After leaving Viet Nam, she was given her choice of duty, becoming an instructor in Biloxi, Mississippi. After resigning her commission, she moved to California with her partner.

Here at the Villages, they continue to play Pickleball together. Susie-Q started in 2014 at Mitchell Park, while Marie had played in Palm Springs, so Pickleball quickly became a shared experience they could enjoy, although that group grew large, making it difficult to find time to play. But now they both enjoy playing together here at the Villages, and plan to continue as long as they can!

