

## “Profiles in Courage” The Beginnings of Pickleball in the Villages by Terry Holmquist

"This is the continuation of articles profiling those that helped magic happen in the Villages.

We move onward to Don Jackson who moved to Valle Vista in 2012. A retired Tennis club owner/operator as well as a court builder he was well aware of this strange and rapidly growing game called pickleball.

Don applied his knowledge and experience to convince the Villages the value of pickleball as well as the importance of dedicated and properly designed courts in an active senior community. Of course, with anything courts cost money so Don initiated and championed serious fundraising. This took tireless phone calls, much research, many meetings and hordes of emails. Based on his research, Don assessed: the number of courts recommended for a community of our size, the best surface for the courts, available contractors and potential cost. When the Villages Club Board of Directors (CBOD) was willing to listen, Don was ready with all the necessary information to demonstrate that this small but passionate group of “Pickleballers” were serious and ready to “rumble”.

In August 2015 Don worked to start a program accepting pledges for dedicated pickleball courts through the Evergreen Villages Foundation (EVF). He helped convince EVF to match pledges up to \$25,000. In addition, Don proposed selling engraved bricks as a way of raising money for the courts. You may notice them on the right side of the sidewalk as you enter the courts.

Once the CBOD gave the nod for a proposal, Don became a member of the research study team to build dedicated courts. Now the question became where should these courts be built, many said “not in my backyard” for fear of noise pollution. Creating a small team, they evaluated proposed sites throughout the Villages and presented them to the community.

According to Garry Gray, Don served as a team catalyst, enhancing the team's performance. He is passionate about getting the job done, and that passion is infectious. He managed to infect this writer with his suggestion that “it may be time for a long range pickleball planning committee”. Anyone up for the challenge?

A man of courage in many ways, he is always looking for ways to help. Yet, another individual that demonstrates the importance of contributing and volunteering to create a better life for all in the Villages. When you see Don walking around, remember to shake his hand, give him a hug and say “Thank you”.

