

# HISTORY OF THE PENTWATER TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL CLUB

## 50th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

**1973 - 2023**

The Pentwater Tennis and Pickleball Club will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2023, with a Golden Jubilee Celebration on Thursday, July 27 at Lincoln Hills Banquet Center in Ludington. In honor of this milestone, we're pleased to share this brief historical perspective on the genesis of the Club.

It all goes back to 1918, when men such as John Lent, Harold Husband, Mr. Vanswald and George Edmunds started playing tennis regularly on a private court in the Village belonging to Girard and Olive Sands. It is believed, this was the only tennis court between Muskegon and Traverse City at the time.

These men were summer residents, and their love of the game was evident as they got together to play doubles almost every afternoon. Harold Shaw, remembered when he was at the age of 15, and laying in the grass with his racket in hopes of being asked to fill in when one of the men was either late arriving or unable to play. After a while, with so many players hoping to participate, it became a challenge to satisfy the demand with a single court.

This led to the Pentwater Garden Club's decision to construct a new tennis court at the north end of the Village in the early 1930's. As the popularity of tennis surged, the Village decided to construct a second court, and the Garden Club deeded their original court to the Village. An informal men's group began to play on the Village's two municipal courts, and by the mid 1950's, the group had grown to more than 30 men.

Eventually, there were complaints the men were monopolizing the municipal courts. The core group formed a three person steering committee in 1972 to explore the possibility of acquiring land, and selling memberships in a brand new private tennis club. Harold Husband, Rich Franke and George Green had an initial vision to purchase enough land to construct four courts. The original plan was to sell 25 memberships at \$250 each, and then secure a bank mortgage to help finance the construction costs.

The steering committee contacted a young Walter Urick, who was an aspiring attorney in Hart at the time. Walt was asked to help them to form a corporation called the Pentwater Tennis Club, and to close a real estate sale and bank mortgage transaction. The committee secured an option from Ed Moore to purchase land, and it was decided that two tennis courts would be built where the Club's six pickleball courts now reside.

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Construction of courts 1 & 2 began in May of 1973, and in June of that year the Club elected its first officers: Rich Franke as President; Harold Husband as Vice President; and George Green as Secretary/ Treasurer. The first two courts were officially christened for play by Rich Franke on July 4, 1973. Eventually, the Club purchased three more acres, where four more tennis courts were constructed, along two bathrooms plus storage.

After being instrumental in the formation of the Club, Walt Urick happily accepted a charter membership in the Club in lieu of payment of his bill. That was almost 50 years ago. Walt now says it was one of the better decisions he 's ever made in his life!

From the beginning, the club has maintained a family atmosphere, with a history of promoting juniors tennis. The seeds were planted by Dick Schnell, who was very active in the formation of the Club. During the season of 1978, he started giving lessons to all the junior members each Tuesday and Thursday. Parents became interested in what their kids were doing, and began to come down each day to watch Dick as he gave his lessons. The tradition continues, as the Club holds its annual Youth Tennis Clinic each July.

In 2008, the Club raised almost \$20,000 in a capital campaign that was used to remodel and expand our bathrooms, construct a kitchen area, and retire the existing loan of \$7,138.

In 2020, the Club recognized the need to invest in infrastructure improvements, launching a major capital campaign that has raised over \$90,000 to date. The money has been used to repurpose two tennis courts into six individually-fenced, permanent pickleball courts; to completely rebuild tennis courts 5 & 6; to resurface tennis courts 3 & 4; to update the entire clubhouse facilities; and to expand the parking lot.

These improvements were instrumental in helping the Club to grow in numbers to the current 135 membership units. The Club decided to change its name in 2020 to become the Pentwater Tennis and Pickleball Club. This is reflective of the ever increasing popularity of the sport of pickleball.

The future of the Club looks bright, with the potential to expand both the number of tennis and pickleball courts on our existing land. We look forward to celebrating the Club's 50th Anniversary with you during the summer of 2023.