

## A History of Pine Hill Park

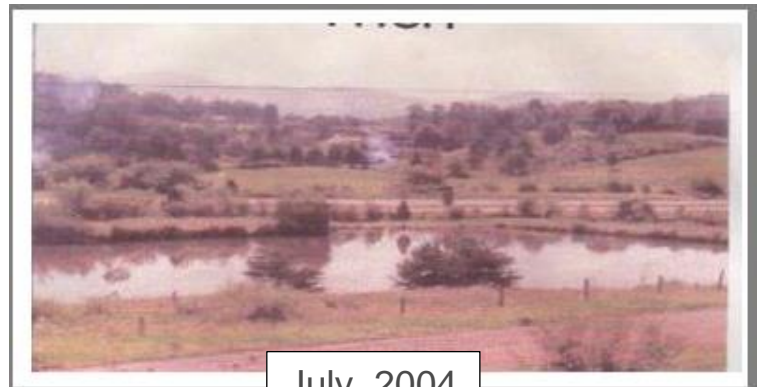
By Mary L. Bermke

(with the help of other residents and former residents!)

Peter and I moved here in September, 2014. We heard about the park from a friend and started a conversation with Debbie, in the office. I also searched Google Earth and other online sources to see if this was a town and park where we wanted to live. Our initial reaction to entering the park after our long drive from Oregon, was pleasant. We liked the clean, neat and orderly look of the park. All the homes reflected pride of community which was most impressive. We liked the cooperative nature of the park, in that we each owned a share of the corporation and could participate in the running of the park. As we attended functions, we noticed that everyone was very friendly and congenial. What a wonderful place to call home, were the comments and impressions that we received in those initial contacts with residents. We understood that prior to our purchase, a few residents acted as 'real estate agents' so that a park resident could sell homes themselves. That changed with the purchase of our home as the sale was conducted by a licensed real estate agent. That practice has continued with good results. When we arrived that September, there were twenty-two homes for sale. Now, we often have nothing for sale. In fact, I heard recently that local realtors have lists of people who would like to move into our lovely park. That has to make all we shareholders proud to live here. It is definitely a reflection of how well we keep up the appearance of our homes and common areas.

Arline Borisch, a former resident who was very active in our park, told me; "When I first moved here in 1993 there were only about six residents, who stayed over the winter. Most of us had homes in FLorida. The clubhouse wasn't open during the winter as it didn't have heat. Franklin was just a sleepy little town during the winter but more than doubled its population in the summer. I laughed when I first saw the phonebook as it only had about thirty pages, which included Sylva. We only had one McDonalds and that was the one on Highway 441 South, also called the Georgia Rd. Very few restaurants were open on Sunday. Macon county was a dry county then. If you wanted any liquor you had to drive down to Georgia. We didn't have any of the chain restaurants. They came after the no-liquor law was voted out. Lowe's was much smaller and located a little west of the Chrysler dealer on Highland Rd. There was a motel located where the new McDonalds now stands and another one in a strip mall where the gas company is now."

"The land across Thomas Rd. used to be part of the Pine Hill Park campground with a small lake and pastures. The views were beautiful beyond but after the bi-pass was built, the area started to grow. The owner of Pine Hill Park sold the property to Joanne and Barry but retained the land across the street. He wanted to build a nursing home there but couldn't get town approval. He filled the lake and leased the land to Jennings."



July, 2004

"We were all shocked when we came up in the spring and found that Jennings had put up a store. We didn't have any warning. It was especially hard on the residents along Thomas Road as it was such a change and brought in so much traffic. The land was still swampy in the lake area but they've gradually filled it in and put in more buildings. This is a picture I took in July, 2004. Fortunately, the residents planted a lot of seedling trees around the lake, which have now grown and are nicer to look at than piles of lumber." "While Barry and Joanne were still operating the park, there were four apartment units across from the pool. Families stayed here during the season. Barry brought in new mobiles and placed them where the apartment building once stood. The pool was built around the

same time to entice seasonal renters. Barry and Joanne lived at 28 Hill Street and used the front bedroom as the office, hence the large parking area in front. Before they bought the park, the office was at 59 South Front Street. The stairs along the side of the house led to the basement, where there was a coin operated laundry. There were clothes lines in the area just north of the building. No laundry was allowed to be hung out on Sunday or overnight. When Barry bought the park, that building was changed into a rental. The building that is now our office was originally a maintenance shed but renovated to be a rental cottage.”



“The residents purchased Pine Hill Park from the former owner in 2004. Arline and her husband, Jack Kasdan, were very involved in the park. Arline was a former realtor and sold homes in the park as a volunteer. She was on the board for several years. Jack was chairman of our social committee. Barry Dockett came over to their house in October of 2004 and presented a desire to sell the park to the residents. He wanted Jack to set up a meeting at the clubhouse for all the residents. Barry bought the park several years before and changed it from an RV park to a mostly residential community. His plan was to sell eighty-eight shares for \$16,000 to any and all residents. Most of the residents at that time lived in Florida during the winter and heard horror stories of the park being purchased and developed into condominiums. They liked the idea of being able to invest in their winter home park. Barry and Jack announced the plan to the residents and asked those who were interested to sign up. Barry wanted the deal to be completed in one month. Luckily, Jack and a few other alert residents decided to consult an attorney. The biggest problem was that a cooperative, resident-owned community like the one proposed, had never been formed in NC prior to this time. There were no guidelines to follow. Fortunately, a few residents lived in cooperative communities in Florida where there were bylaws already in place. Using those bylaws as a prototype, Pine Hill Residents, Inc. Bylaws were drawn up. On November 1, 2004 a corporation was formed with the purchase from Barry. Barry and his wife, Joanne, continued to manage the park. In addition to the resident owned homes, there were also rentals. The Dockett’s also held several shares which they continued to sell throughout the following years. The park had one full-time employee, John Green, who helped Barry and a part-time employee who helped in the office. John was very helpful in the park as he could fix anything. He started working for the park when he was a teenager and stayed on as the park was sold and sold again. He did all the lawn cutting, collected and drove garbage and yard waste to the dump, winterized mobiles, cleaned the clubhouse and helped Barry on maintenance projects around the park.”

Even with a full-time employee, residents helped with many of the maintenance chores and selling homes. Arline’s daughter, Judy and her husband, who stayed in the park for a while during the construction of their home in the mountains, helped with leaf pickup. At that time, the park had a leaf blower and Judy and Ron walked beside the truck raking leaves into the blower. It was quite an operation. They also helped some residents with gutter clean up around the park. That is the power of volunteering. Neighbors helping neighbors and keeping our community beautiful. Larry and June Elliot joined our little community in 2010. They bought a share and signed a lease to the space at 207 Park Avenue. They installed a new mobile home. When settled, they enjoyed helping with maintenance and home sales. He related to me recently that on one interesting occasion, while cleaning something in front of the clubhouse, an old, beat-up, dually, diesel truck pulled up. A woman got out to get a brochure of homes for sale. Larry asked if he could help her and she said “obviously you are the maintenance man, I need a sales person”. He gave her directions to the office. When the truck rounded the bend past the shuffleboard court, Larry dashed up the hill, past the pool and straight to the office where he unlocked the door. He positioned the open sign and sat at the desk.

Catching his breath, he answered the knock on the front door of the office and the lady came in. Larry said: "not expecting to see the lowly maintenance man? We locked eyes; speechless." Finally, she said she was interested in 876 Thomas Road. "Sure," Larry answered. I will locate the key and meet you at the back door. As she took off in her truck, Larry darted down North Front, over the bank beside #26, ducked under the clothes line, went behind #59 the old laundry room, and opened up the house. He was sitting on the back step, again catching his breath, when she parked and came around to the door. There was a surprised look on the woman's face when she saw him. She walked through the house and left. It was a relief to many of the residents over the next few weeks that the woman never returned as she was known at a local campground and not very well liked. Later, after John passed away, Larry became an employee of the park and worked in the office. He hired Terry to work maintenance, part time. Larry often helped Terry with park projects. After a while, Terry left and maintenance was handled by contractors and volunteers. Terry is the same person who comes in during our summer season and takes care of the pool. He has been a big help to the park for years.

Another story that Larry told me was about an office worker who was hired but only stayed a very short time. She walked out one Friday in February and never came back. Larry and Harry were the only board members in the park that winter as all the others were back in Florida. Larry had to figure out how to get into the computer. He had to take a crash course in Quick Books from his daughter who was a corporate accountant in Oregon. He had to write out the paychecks and pay the bills. He said it was very interesting as the first check was printed on the back, the second one was upside down and finally he figured it out. Soon after that they hired an accountant, who we still use to this day. They purchased a riding lawn mower and Larry mowed all the park and used the weed eater every week.

There were many social activities in and outside of the park. Before the clubhouse was built, social activities were held in the barn. I have been told that they had square dancing with music and it was very lively. Lois Jean said she was told that the former owner of the RV park and his wife liked to dance so that is why the floor is so nice.

Here is an article published in the "Franklin Press in August, 1993 written by Mary McManus: Musicians in the Pine Hill Musical Disasters Fun Band look forward each summer to being part of the downtown Pickin' on the Square Saturday evening program. Mark your calendar for September 5<sup>th</sup>, bring your favorite folding chairs and come on out to support your band. Amateur groups such as ours, are scheduled between 6:30 and 8 PM. No definite time has yet been assigned for the Disasters' half an hour show. The covered pavilion at Macon County Recreation Facility on South 441, has been reserved for the annual Labor Day Picnic. Time to check out your grills and coolers. Entertainment by the popular singing group, The Carolines, will be at 3:30 PM with the picnic to follow. Welcome to new owner, Arline Borisch. Arline came from Florida to visit Jerri Stirgwolt, fell in love with the Park and within days of arrival, purchased 26 South Front Street. She is a bridge player. We invite Arline to participate in all clubhouse activities. Have you noticed the rock fairy does her handiwork daily on the low pilaster, corner of Park and Robinson Avenue, in front of the Cramer's place? While we are all asleep, she rearranges the stones to form intricate patterns." This was the park news for the Franklin residents once a week. Franklin was a small town then and our news was their news. After our clubhouse was built, activities took place here in the park.



In June 2018, Arline wrote – “Information about COW picture, I remember that cow very well. Barry had dumped some concrete over the fence at the bottom of Old Well Road. She could climb up on the cement to get in the park to wander around the park. I saw her one day down at the pool and luckily had my camera in the car. I got out of the car to take a picture and the cow started toward me. I'd forgotten how big they were so I got back in the car and didn't get the picture. One night my friend Mary, who lived on Corey, was coming home from Bingo and was startled when her flashlight found the cow on her road. Several of us had the farmer's phone number and we'd call him and he'd come in his truck to get her. He told me that she'd had twins. She would come here to get away from them for a while. We had some well fertilized lawns. In the spring when they took the calves away you could hear them crying.” The picture above is of the cow by our mailboxes finally captured in 2009



Other social activities can be viewed in the photo albums at our clubhouse in the bookshelves at the back of the room. Pine Hill Park had its own band and chorus. Here is a picture of the group in their red shirts and white slacks putting on a performance. Check out our very own Peggy grooving to the music.



Who is clowning around? Ask one of our long-time residents who was all dressed up for a special party. Boy, they went all out then.



Al Capone gets his gal. Charles Edwards



Check out Al Capone and his flapper girlfriend on July, 2006.



The entire cast-show after a pot luck dinner at Pine Hill Park.

They held their annual July 4<sup>th</sup> golf cart parade but if you didn't have a golf cart, no problem, you just walked. Check out the leader of the pack and his drum.



Larry Elliott gave me the following story. "PHP was a campground before it became a senior park. The farm house served as the clubhouse located at 31 and 39 Pine Avenue. In 2010 the barns upper section had a pool table benches and chairs. Evidently, quite a few activities were held regularly in the upper barn."

"On the back wall were storage spaces for rent. Barn's lower section held lawn equipment, leaf pick-up machine and also, left-over junk from many projects over many years were stored down there. The Activities Committee needed more storage space so I built a larger unit. That left the smaller units available for rent to residents which meant more income."

"In the lower section mixed with the junk, were two metal wagon wheels. I had these welded together creating the ring for our campfire wood. There was an extremely old junk riding mower, a washing machine and plow blade. I sorted all, sold the scrap metal, copper, aluminum, brass and steel and donated the money to the Activity Committee."

"The annual barn sale was always a big hit and drew crowds from the surrounding community. Of course, we residents were given the privilege of early-bird shopping. Close to September, volunteers were pricing and sorting. One quick look for me, just to make certain no treasure fell into someone else's hands. Oh! My gosh, my heart skipped several beats for there are the barn chairs, that I admired, for sale. The chairs that had tempted me many times to become a thief. YES, the Herman Miller Art Deco Chairs used many years dating back to campground days. There were two grey chairs and one black, identification decals were still in place, all original except for a little over spray of red barn paint. They were marked \$5.00 each, that is \$15.00 for three. I quickly paid Debbie Johnson and told her the remaining chairs were collectibles and valuable. They were worth more than \$5 each. To my best recollection Debbie advertised them somewhere and within hours were sold for \$30 or \$35 which provided for more dollars for park activities. I later learned that the Shell Chair was designed in 1948 for the International Competition of Low-Cost Furniture Design held by the Museum of Modern Art. To me they are priceless."



Often in March, there was a lot of wind that caused damage to several homes. Not unusual to have high winds in the park during the winter. That is why it is important that your mobiles, sheds and awnings are anchored securely. See the awning that blew off one roof, damaged the awning on another roof as it tumbled through the air and landed across the street, where it luckily was stopped by the hill.

These are some pictures taken from the many scrapbooks at the Clubhouse available for you to view and think about old times at Pine Hill Park our wonderful home in the Great Smoky Mountains.

*I hope you enjoy this little bit of history.  
Mary & friends.*



Photo/Merritt N. Shaw

### March lives up to her name

High winds on Friday caused damage to this mobile home in Pine Hill Park, an adult park in the East Franklin part of town. The carport was blown over this trailer and dented the porch awning, landing across the street.