

March 2, 2016

My name is Ginger Swisher and Dr. Swisher and I were involved in the beginning of Forest Hill. I am leaving my home of 53 years and as you can imagine, reviewing old photos and letters has been quite a trip down memory lane.

The enclosed bit of history about the Club and its charter members you may already have, but I hesitated to just toss them away. So, am sending this copy to your Po Boy.

It is truly a long lasting club for many many families and Mark Wakefield had a vision and made it happen. Enjoy the read.

Just,  
Ginger Swisher

## **PREFACE**

This history of Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc. is presented to recognize the evolution of the Club, those who were instrumental in its genesis and development, and the relationship of the Club to the community. It is hoped that generations of families will appreciate the original values of the Club and their responsibilities to continue its heritage.

Much of the early Club documents have been lost. We have attempted to construct the events and dates as accurately as possible. Many events and contributions of various members do not appear in this brief history. However, we recognize that each generation has made significant contributions, and we apologize for any omissions. We would expect and urge that this first rendition will be reviewed and periodically updated so that future generations will have an accurate history of the Club.

Many individuals contributed information for this history and participated in its preparation. I wish to thank all of them.

Les Costello

## DEDICATION

Firstly, this history is dedicated to the memory of Mark Wakefield. Were it not for him, the Club would not exist and generations of families would not enjoy this magnificent facility. Mark was a developer, but he did more than develop land . . . he developed family, neighborhood, and community values. Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc. is testimony to his vision and his generosity.

Secondly, this history is dedicated to the original residents of the “Dunloggin” community who served as the Planning Committee and contributed their time, efforts, and resources which resulted in the birth of the Club. In addition, the contributions and faith of all the Charter Members who were instrumental in the early development of the Club must be appreciated by all who will follow.

## **THE PIONEERS**

### **The Original Planning Committee**

Mark Wakefield	Fred Schoenbrodt
Carroll Jenkins	Jim Conner
Martin Bankert	Gus Nelson
Pete Palladi	Irene Wakefield
Cliff Ratliff	Duane Prust
Kyle Swisher	Bob Neubauer

### **The Charter Members**

Members of the Planning Committee and their spouses plus:

Steve and Martha Kowalyshyn  
Dick and Irene Grill  
Hank and Emily Cassard  
Joe and Vivianne Dorsch  
Charles and Virginia Irwin  
Paul and Doris Guercio  
Charles and Fran Phillips  
Bob and Mary Sima  
Walt and Addie Sommerville

### **The First Board of Directors**

Mark Wakefield, President  
Cliff Turner, Consulting Vice President  
J. Richard Awalt, Consulting Vice President  
Irene Wakefield Secretary  
Fred Schoenbrodt, Treasurer  
Martin Bankert  
Jim Conner  
Gus Nelson  
Pete Palladi  
Duane Prust  
Cliff Ratliff  
Claude Skinner, Jr.  
Kyle Swisher

## THE BEGINNING

In the decade of 1950–1960, Mark Wakefield was the owner and developer of the residential area of Howard County known originally as “Dunloggin”. This area originally included the early subdivisions of Dunloggin–MacAlpine, St. Johns Lane, and Crestleigh I and II. As the subdivisions became developed in the early 50’s Mark became interested in the possibility of including a community recreational facility for the growing neighborhood. There were no existing community facilities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, children’s parks available in Howard County in these “early days”. Mark believed that the “Dunloggin” development and surrounding neighborhood needed a facility to accommodate the families who were moving into the area.

In 1958, Mark contacted several residents of the “Dunloggin” area to pursue the idea of establishing and building a neighborhood swim club. Mark agreed to provide the two major elements necessary to go forward with this project. First, he would set aside the 19 acre tract of land for the community project. Secondly, he would underwrite some financial expenses required for the initiation of the project. However, he did not want to own or operate the facility; or use the facility as a for–profit investment. He believed that this facility should be owned and operated by the community for the community.

With this starting point, the original “planning group” was persuaded to proceed with the project. This group consisted of Mark Wakefield, Carroll Jenkins, Martin Bankert, Pete Palladi, Cliff Ratliff, Kyle Swisher, Fred Schoenbrodt, Jim Conner, Gus Nelson, Duane Prust, Irene Wakefield (Mark’s wife), and Bob Neubauer, who served as Counsel to the group. Many months of meetings, two or three times a week, followed to deal with the many issues that needed to be addressed. Architectural plans, facilities to be included, financing, memberships, State and County requirements, and a whole host of major and minor problems had to be reconciled. Obviously, this was a major undertaking which was time consuming. Yet, those original planners persisted with the effort. It is important to note that all their time and effort was provided “pro bono”. The planning

meetings were held at Mark's office, known as "the Barn". Irene Wakefield acted as Secretary, and Fred Schoenbrodt was the Chairman of the group.

Finally, in late summer of 1958, the efforts of the group began to reach fruition. After much debate, it was decided to name the facility "Forest Hill Swim Club". Bob Neubauer was given the responsibility of preparing and filing the Charter for the Club with the State Tax Commission. The official name of the Club was filed as Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc. However, the Club was seeking a tax-exempt status which was difficult to obtain. The persistence and efforts of Bob Neubauer were responsible for achieving this goal; and on September 29, 1958, at 3:00 p.m. the Articles of Incorporation of Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc. was approved and recorded by the State of Maryland. This is the birth date of Forest Hill Swim Club.

Now, the Club had a birth date but nothing else. The next step was the generous contribution by Mark Wakefield in which he deeded 19 acres to Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc. It is not clear whether Mark provided the land at valued price of \$7,000 for the entire parcel or at a price of \$1,500/acre. In either case, the price was far below its value since half-acre lots in Crestleigh were being sold for approximately \$3,500. Since the Club had no money or assets, Mark essentially donated the land and additionally made further personal financial contributions to establish the Club. Since the land was part of the residential subdivision of Crestleigh II of the "Dunloggin" area, its use as a recreational facility required an exception or special purpose zoning. It had to operate under conditions which would not be adverse to the residential community. Restrictions on the use and/or sale of alcoholic beverages, the management and control of noise and music, the safety of the neighborhood, and the elimination of other potential negative impacts on the neighborhood had to be assured in order to proceed with the special use of the land. Once again, Bob Neubauer's efforts on behalf of the Club and the neighborhood resulted in the Club gaining approval from the County for the project.

By Fall of 1958, the Club had a name and a site. The next major step was to determine the facilities which were to be included in the Club and the mechanism to finance the project. Before

any of this could be achieved, a Board of Directors had to be selected to assume the obligations of the Club. It was decided that the members of the planning committee would assume this responsibility. The Board agreed that the Club facilities would include a main swimming pool, a baby pool, and the clubhouse which contained locker-bathrooms. The issue was raised as to the plausibility of including tennis courts. One must remember that tennis was not a popular activity in the 1950's. After considerable debate, the Board decided to include two tennis courts in the initial construction plans. The Board reasoned that the addition of tennis courts could help in the sale of memberships. This completed the original planning of the facilities. The Club would contain a swimming pool (which is currently the main swimming pool), locker-bathroom facilities (which are the current clubhouse facilities), and two tennis courts (which are the current courts nos. 1 and 2), the baby pool (which was renovated in 1994 and named in honor of Bill Straehle, and extensive landscaping.

Now, the big issue was "how will this project be financed." The only asset of the Club was the 19 acres of Crestleigh subdivision which Mark Wakefield set aside and deeded to the Club. Most noteworthy were the financial commitments of the Board members. They purchased early memberships for themselves, and in some instances for their friends. In addition, Carroll Jenkins, the president of Commercial and Farmers Bank, went out on a limb and personally assisted with some bank financing. Martin Bankert personally loaned money to the Club, and Mark Wakefield agreed to assume some of the debt. Other original charter members prepurchased memberships in addition to the Board members. These charter members received 22 free guest passes to distribute to other "Dunloggin" community residents and to their friends as an effort to increase the membership. They literally went door-to-door throughout the community and surrounding areas soliciting Club memberships. Brochures were created, and the membership drive was in full gear.

The first official meeting of the Forest Hill Swim Club was held on September 25, 1958. The first elected Board of Directors were Mark Wakefield (President), Cliff Turner (Consulting Vice President), J. Richard Awalt (Consulting Vice President), Irene Wakefield (Secretary), Fred

Schoenbrodt (Treasurer), Martin Bankert, James Conner, Gus Nelson, Pete Palladi, Duane Prust, Cliff Ratliff, Claude Skinner, Jr., and Kyle Swisher. The original membership was set at 400 families. Some years later, Howard County imposed a maximal membership limit at 425 families in order to limit excessive growth of the Club as a measure to continue to protect the neighborhood from any negative impact of the Club. The annual dues for the first year was set at \$65, and the annual operating budget was \$23,000. Although the Club membership was set at 400, it took from 1959 to 1961 to reach 369 memberships, and finally in 1962, the Club reached its full membership. Despite the fact that the Club membership in 1958 was small, the energy, enthusiasm, and commitment of the members pushed the project forward. Clark Harmon was hired to draw up the blueprints and plans for the Club. George S. Awalt and Co. was selected as the builders. The Club secured a construction/permanent loan through the good auspices of Mark Wakefield (Loan Guarantee) from Baltimore Savings and Loan. The initial cost of construction of the Club facilities was \$42,000. The major landscaping was donated by Mark Wakefield's subcontractors. Construction of the Club was begun on March 4, 1959. The construction progressed rapidly enough to allow the OFFICIAL OPENING DAY ON JUNE 27, 1959, WITH DEDICATION CEREMONIES SCHEDULED AT 3:00 PM. Back in those days, the swimming pool was filled by well water and water was brought in by tanker truck. It took weeks to fill and ready the main pool. Although all facilities were not completed by opening day, the Club was fully operational by the end of the 1959 season.



## THE GROWTH OF THE CLUB

The membership of the Club was originally set at 400 family unit memberships. In the initial year the membership was less than 200. Over the next 2–3 years, the membership grew to capacity. With a full membership complement in 1962, the Club was able to prosper and to expand its facilities to meet the needs of the community and maintain harmony with the neighborhood. Since 1962, the Club has enjoyed a full membership and has become a favorite facility of residents of Dunloggin and neighboring areas.

The growth of the membership along with the increase in popularity of tennis soon made the original two tennis courts inadequate for the requirements of the Club members. Consequently, two additional courts were added around 1964. During the hot summer months, the tennis players and spectators could be seen huddling in the shade provided by some surrounding trees. It became evident that some type of viewing and sitting pavilion was necessary. However, the Board had considerable difficulty in agreeing to provide for such a project. One of the Club's tennis enthusiasts, Bob Fox appeared at the Board meeting in 1968 with an offer. He would personally provide the funds to build a tennis pavilion with the Board's approval. Obviously, the Board could not reject such a gratuitous offering. The first tennis pavilion was built in 1971. However, some vandals burned down the wooden pavilion in 1975. The Club immediately authorized the construction of a replacement tennis pavilion on the same site of the original pavilion. Unlike the first pavilion, the new pavilion was to include a building which would contain lavatories and a tennis office. The current pavilion which was constructed in 1976 was appropriately rededicated in 1994 as the Bob Fox pavilion in recognition of his initial generous contribution.

In the early 1970's, the growth in tennis activities and participants was exceptional. It was not uncommon to observe the full use of the courts well into dusk. The members were requesting solutions to the overcrowding and limitations of the tennis facilities. To address this problem, the Board recommended that the Club investigate the possibility of adding lighting to the tennis facility. This would allow for evening tennis and reduce the waiting period for court availability at dusk.

In 1971 the Club authorized the addition of lighting on Courts 1 – 4 and the addition of Court 5 which would also benefit from the new lighting. About this time, it became apparent that the Club had evolved into a combination swim and tennis facility, and the Club's name was amended to "Forest Hill Swim and Tennis Club".

The major focus of the Club was initially associated with the swimming activities. Mark Wakefield, the Club President, reported in 1960 that the Club started a junior swim team, gave swim lessons to 279 members (adults and children), gave diving lessons to 128 children and adult members, qualified 25 youngsters for Official Red Cross Life Saving Instruction, initiated teen nights, and put on a water show comprised almost entirely of Club members. These were amazing accomplishments for a one-year old club. According to some of the early members, the financing of much of the junior swim activities was personally underwritten by Mark Wakefield who believed it was important to establish the family recreational program. The swimming program became so successful that the pool could not accommodate the simultaneous use by juniors and adults. For a period of time, the swimming pool use operated under the 20-minute rule. At peak hours, a 20-minute period (from 20 minutes of the hour to the hour) was designated as "adult swim time". During this period, all of the children had to vacate the pool so that adults could have some swimming room. It was a humorous situation to watch all the kids sitting on the pool apron waiting for the hourly whistle. At 2 minutes before the hour, the hoards of children would line up along the pool apron in a dive position and begin the countdown 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 . . . a tremendous big splash and the kids re-entered the pool.

Nevertheless, it became apparent that the Club needed to expand its swimming facility. Obviously, this was a major capital expense. However, the Club approved the construction of a second main pool which would serve as a swim meet pool and adult pool. The construction of the second pool was completed in 1973. It was dedicated as the Philips pool in honor of Charlie Philips who was instrumental in the development and activities of the swim team and the metropolitan junior swim program.

The growth in swimming, tennis, and general use of the Club placed a demand on the availability of a "food service" facility. The original clubhouse did not have any canteen or food service. For years the Boards wrestled with this problem. Finally, in 1969, the Club authorized the addition of the snack bar facility.

Despite the growth and enhancement of the tennis facility, the continued demands on the five lighted tennis courts exceeded the availability of court time. It was not uncommon to have long waiting lists for the court time on weekends and weekday evenings. Increased adult use coupled with the development of a junior tennis program necessitated additional tennis courts. In 1977 the Club authorized the construction of three additional courts, currently designated as the lower Courts 6, 7, and 8. Simultaneously the courts were provided with lighting.

Thus, we now complete the growth of major facilities as of 1994. Other enhancements have been added, such as the playground area and volleyball area. What a magnificent facility has evolved, a spacious beautiful setting in harmony with its quiet residential community and with outstanding facilities.

## PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

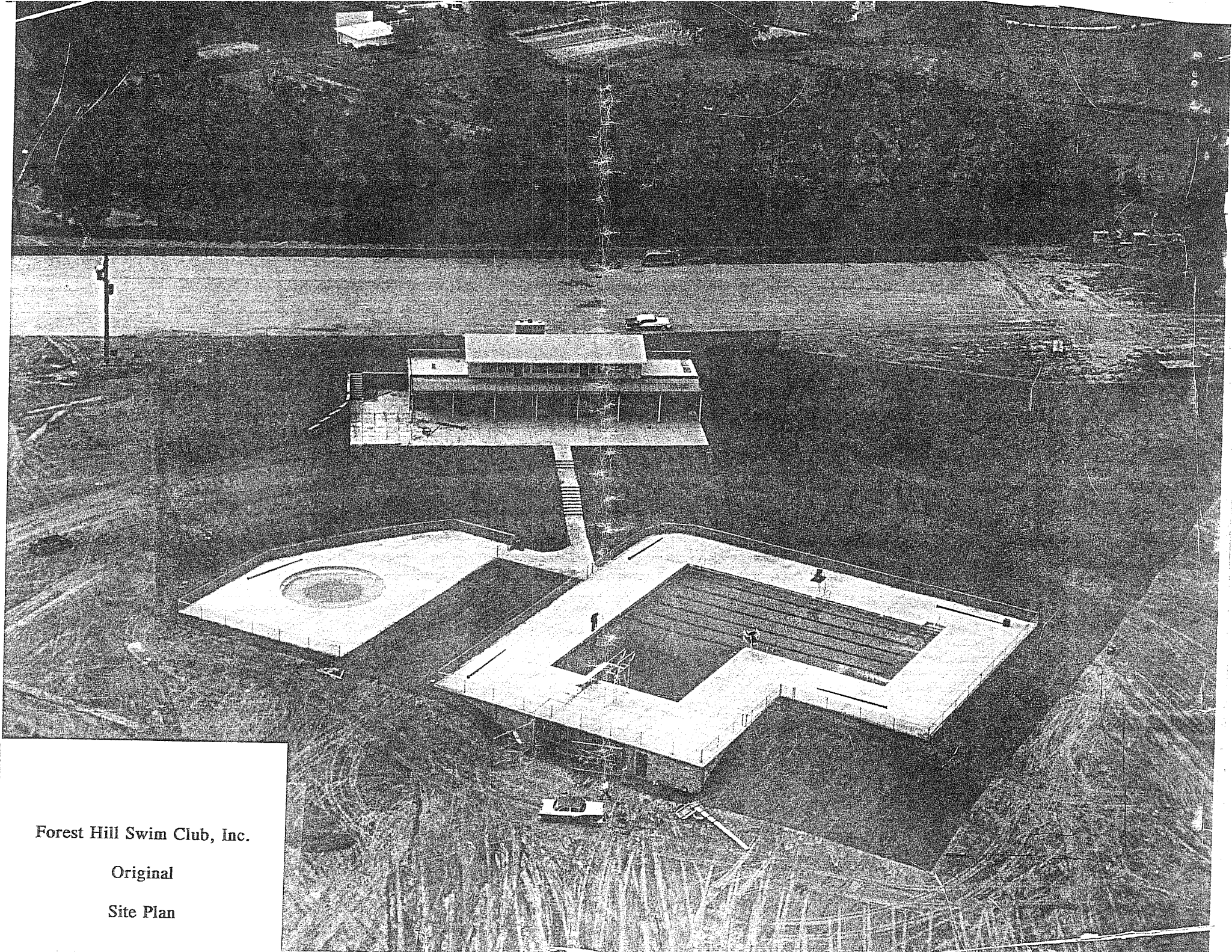
One year after the Club opened, a junior swim team was established in 1960. The team started the season with 20 swimmers and ended the season with 46 swimmers. This youthful team competed in the old Metropolitan Swim League against well established swim clubs. While short on victories, the young team was highly enthusiastic and dedicated. Within a couple of years, the number of young swimmers increased dramatically. The Club hired "PJ" Kesmodel as swimming coach. FHSC (known as the "Frogs") soon became a powerhouse. The Frogs won three consecutive league championships (1968–1970) to retire the League Trophy. The following year, the Frogs had their most memorable swimming match. The last meet of the year was against first place Padonia at Padonia. The Frogs needed a victory to tie for the League championship. The last event was the girls' relay and Padonia was ahead going into this event. The race began, and after three legs, Padonia was ahead by over a half pool length. Julie Gable, swimming the final leg, entered the pool with a splash and immediately began to make up ground. Going into the last five yards, she overtook the Padonia swimmer and won the race by a finger-touch. A jubilant Frogs team overcame the impossible and added a fourth straight championship. The junior swimming program became so popular that a "B" division team was also formed. The junior Frogs won four straight championships from 1973–1976.

In 1970 the Club established a junior tennis team. Like the junior swim team, the tennis team began with a handful of youngsters. However, within a couple of years, the junior tennis team mushroomed. Over the period of 1973–1978, the tennis team became a powerhouse, winning all of its matches. Along with the growth of the junior tennis program, the adult tennis program also exploded with the addition of tennis lessons and tennis clinics. Under the early supervision of "Easy Ed" Young, the men's tennis team was established in 1967 along with the men's Suburban Tennis League. The team gained immediate success and consistently won league championships. There is one most memorable match which occurred around 1972. Ed Young and Tom Yokel comprised one of our doubles teams. They had split their first two sets. In the third set, they trailed by a game

score of 5–0, and were behind in 15–40 in the sixth game. They came from behind to win the sixth game and went on to win the set and the match. What a comeback! The men's tennis became so popular that a "B" team was also established.

At about the same time as the men's league was established, the Forest Hill women's tennis team was formed by Clair Weiss as first president forming the Howard County Tennis League and winning the first two league tournaments. Later, this became the Patapsco Valley Women's Tennis League including a wider range of clubs in which they also won their fair share of championships.

There have been many events and activities in addition to those highlighted above. Club picnics, dances, holiday events, tennis covered dishes, metropolitan swim championships, tennis tournaments, the junior diving team . . . ,etc. The vision of Mark Wakefield and the early pioneers has materialized and continues to be realized. The family-oriented neighborhood recreational Club has served the community well. It is the responsibility of each generation of Club members to maintain and sustain the operation of the Club consistent with the values and tradition of its history.



Forest Hill Swim Club, Inc.

Original

Site Plan