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The Paddle Fiasco

For many years I carried a business card on which, under my name, were the words “Physics, Squash, and Skiing.” None of those three things now has much importance in my present life here in Grand Rapids.

My physics involvement basically ended in 2014 with my last publication, done in collaboration with Terry Goldman. In my opinion, “The Mesonic Deuteron,” never got as much recognition as it should have. At least as compared with three other publications, more pedagogical, dating back to 2005. Enough said.

I gave up skiing after we moved to Brookdale Senior Living in Santa Fe in 2018. This was because Maggie needed some help in Assisted Living to recover from a series of operations on her left hip. I sold off both our ski equipment at the Santa Fe Ski Swap that year and that was that. Interested folk might want to read [Skiing.pdf](#) at my internet site, pages.swcp.com/~silbar/Essays/.

However, my involvement with squash lasted until the pandemic of Covid-19. Other than a few travels to play doubles, I gave up singles around 2020. It was becoming difficult to find playing partners after we left Los Alamos. Oh well, you can look at [Essays/Squash.pdf](#).

So this was about the time I started playing pickleball instead of squash. There were tennis courts across the street from Brookdale which were being used for pickleball. This had involved someone painting in new lines for the smaller courts. And, players had to come with their own pickleball nets, the nets in place on the tennis courts being too tall. So, I bought a \$25 wooden paddle and walked across the street to join the pickleball aficionados who gathered there. Summer times, of course, when the Covid masks weren’t considered necessary in the open air.

Ah, unlike squash, which is played in indoor courts, what happens to pickleball in the winter? It turned out that two-or-three mornings a week, the gym at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center was set up for pickleball, this time with the county providing the nets. So I started playing there after the snows came, wearing masks of course. And it was now time to graduate from my wooden paddle to something a bit better, an Electrum, for something less than \$70. (You should recall that my friends say that I am very tight-fisted when it comes to spending money.) By the next summer, Santa Fe County had resurfaced some little-used tennis courts and set up six pickleball courts near

the baseball stadium. It was there and at the Chavez that I learned enough about the game to begin to prefer it over squash (which was still basically unavailable).

In May 2024 I left Santa Fe to live near my remaining family in Grand Rapids (see [Essays/MovingGRaps.pdf](#)) . Grand Rapids is rich in pickleball courts – the game is very popular – and devoid of people playing squash. I have settled down to playing pickball about three times a week at Belknap Park summers and indoors at a gym in winter.

Enough on background, and what is the “fiasco” mentioned in the title of this essay? Around a month or two ago my fancy Electrum paddle, no longer new, started to disintegrate. No problem, I responded to an ad on the PlayTime Scheduler app that I use to set up my games with a group of twenty-or-so people who love to play at 6:30 AM.

This photo shows what I ordered, on July 12, from a company named FridayPickle at a *sale price* of \$99.00 (plus \$14.50 for shipping and delivery protection). The sale was confirmed and presumably the paddle was on its way to me in a few days. On July 18 I received an e-mail from Friday saying it “has been delivered.”



Unfortunately, it was *not* delivered to me in Grand Rapids. After some e-mail exchanges with Friday, it became clear that the paddle was indeed delivered, but to my *former* address in Santa Fe. I still don’t know *how* Friday came up with that shipping address, but if I had been diligent enough to check the shipping address on the sale confirmation when I got it, we *might* have been able to correct the mistake in time. Could it possibly have been that my computer had a memory of the old address from its storage of the credit card I used for the purchase?

Thus began a long series of about forty e-mails between me and Friday to try to straighten this out. What follows is a short version of the exchange. Which, I might suggest, could have gone a *lot* quicker if we could just talk about it on the phone. But this never occurred to them, despite my signatures containing my phone number. For what it’s worth, I was unable to find *any* phone number for them, on their web-site or in a fairly extensive search of the web. Seems like an odd way to run a business.

Anyway, on July 19, by calling the front desk at Brookdale, I was assured that the package with the paddle was indeed sitting on the table with other peoples’ packages. Annette, who said she still recognized my voice!, said she would try to get Amazon to return the package to Friday.

Unfortunately, I only learned a few days later, that the Amazon driver *refused* to return the package to Friday. Apparently, to go back, the package needed a return label. It was evidently, in Friday's mind, that it was *my* responsibility to get the paddle back to them.

After another batch of e-mails between me and Friday on this, I was eventually sent a PDF of a return label on July 30. Surprisingly, it was a label for the USPS, not Amazon. Calling the Brookdale front desk again, Annette asked me to forward that PDF to Brookdale's executive director. I did so on July 31, and it was she who attached the label and got it into the US postal system on August 1.

It eventually arrived at Friday six days later, on August 7. At which time they informed me that they were refunding the cost of the mis-shipped paddle, \$99. It did show up on my credit card account, but it still took me a while before I saw, on August 15, that it had actually arrived.

So, after more than a month since I ordered the paddle and about 40 e-mail messages, I was now only out \$14.50. Needless to say, I have decided not to do any more business with Friday. To put some whipped cream on the pickle, yesterday I went to a local Meijer's Supermarket and bought an equivalent \$99.99 paddle. The advantage of going local is that I did *not* have to pay for shipping, but did pay about six dollars in Michigan sales tax.