***Director’s Message—February, 2019***

***‘Let’s Face it’***

**Over the years many in the industry have been distorting figures about the game of racquetball. When court clubs were being constructed in many cities and towns in the 1970’s and 1980’s, numbers of players were routinely bloated to between ten and fifteen million. A more realistic number of occasional and core players was about half. Promoters sang grand verses of growth before the shifting of gears by the athletic club industry. Venue owners and operators started spinning their wheels, internalizing an unsound business strategy that might heighten their bottom lines. Such was the transitioning of courts to other uses in the name of ‘Dollars per square foot’, and ‘Fitness’. Racquetball and other indoor court sport disciplines were becoming captive to the choking of their bread and butter—the infrastructure. Many transitions did not pan out and large expenditures were incurred for reconstruction of space that had been comfortably in place for years. A limited annual budget for smart court maintenance could have maintained the original structures as safe, vibrant, and significant income producing centers.**

**Many of us realize that the cost of real estate in the USA now precludes vast sums of dollars invested on erecting new courts; or, building new clubs with more than one small bank of courts. The existing larger facilities with more than eight handball-racquetball courts are now rare, outdated, and probably mortgaged multiple times. Some of these have been recently demolished, such as the Maverick in Arlington, Texas; the Royal in Farmington, New Mexico; and Sorrento Valley in San Diego, California. There are others; including YMCA’s, JCC’s, and College/University Recreation Centers. Current figures indicate that new court construction is about 10% of what it was at its peak. \*\***

**The National Governing Body (USA Racquetball) must have a pulse into the reasons for the decline of courts and do everything within its power to withstand this movement. It can be the force behind a change in mindset. Over a decade ago it abandoned support of the annual IHRSA Convention, an industry wide gathering of leaders. At the same time it started to promote the game as ‘Fast & Furious.’ While this stance may be true for the highest tier of players, it poses a threat to the majority of those interested in a more strategic, enjoyable, and lifetime fitness activity. Arguably, one of the reasons for decreasing numbers over the past thirty years is that the game has become *too fast*!**

**In areas where there is a strong promotional emphasis, racquetball continues to sustain its playing base, attracts entry level participants, and works together with other disciplines that share the real estate; including handball, paddleball, and squash. This must be the wave of the future in order to build success; in available courts, player numbers, and dollars generated. There is opportunity if we understand how to manage industry trends as well as the recreational pursuits of the population.**

**\*\* Shared by Kent Taylor (Sports Unlimited, Stillwater, OK) 25 courts constructed in 2018**

**Gary Mazaroff *Globalracquetball.com***

***QUOTE OF THE MONTH***

**‘I am having a Vow Movement’ John McMannamon—during his wedding service**