

Our Stories – Betty Bogutt

Looking back at my life, I noticed how many times the Universe has intervened to lead me in a direction I never would have foreseen. This was certainly the case when, as a student at URI, I attended a dance at The Viking Hotel where I met my husband-to-be, a Navy man stationed in Newport. There was a catch: he was not in the American Navy but rather in the German Navy, having been accepted into a special overseas program. Love was apparently in the air and we married one year later, then moved to Germany so he could complete his service time. This was quite an adventure for a 22-year-old who had barely been out of New England and who spoke not one word of German!

After three years we returned to the States, to Baltimore, another new place where at least I had no trouble communicating. We lived in Owings Mills for six years and our son and daughter were born there. After my father's death we moved back to New England, to Massachusetts where, through a strange twist of fate, I took a job in human services. Realizing quickly that I needed more education, I enrolled in graduate school at UMass Boston where I earned a degree in mental health counseling. I knew I had found my niche. My internship was in a state-run psychiatric hospital where I interviewed men and women who were being evaluated for competency to stand trial. This was fascinating work – a combination of mental health and law and I loved every minute of it. My degree led to my career job – sixteen years working with families in crisis who had children with disabilities. Every day was different. Working primarily in an inner-city environment, I learned so much about the lives of those who are often unseen. I also learned a lot about myself.

And so life went on, leading eventually to the day of reckoning - retirement. My family and I had been going to Narragansett every summer for so many years I lost count. Every year I almost cried on having to leave, so when we came upon the Village at Worden's Pond in Wakefield during one of our summer stays, it looked like home and we decided we would move to South County. I knew what I wanted going forward; I wanted to live in a community setting with folks in our age range. I wanted to get involved in activities, to meet interesting people, to live a creative, fulfilling lifestyle. And guess what? That Universe came through again and all my wishes were granted. We met many nice people in the Village and we got involved in some clubhouse activities. I went to URI and signed up for an OLLI course which led to many more and eventually to me teaching a couple of courses myself (this was a leap of faith but thankfully it worked out pretty well). I joined a writer's group at the Neighborhood Guild and from that day forward Thursday mornings have been my favorite time of the week. That large group led to several smaller groups and the writing expanded until it became my creative outlet, my joy and sometimes my agony!

I joined the YMCA and found some fun exercise classes there. I went to an Art History class at the Senior Center – a subject I had always wanted to learn about, and suddenly there it was, filled with knowledgeable people and a wonderful instructor. Eventually I started a poetry group at the Center. We meet twice a month and we explore poems, pulling forth insights we didn't realize we had. And of course I found my church, after so

many years of seeking, I found my church and all of you. Volunteering to be a greeter, I suddenly was on the membership committee and then not long after, I was co-chair of the membership committee. The Universe moves quickly at UUCSC.

I feel as though I have had a perfect life – a husband with whom I just celebrated 50 years of marriage, two children both in RI and two grandchildren who make it all worthwhile, great friends and fulfilling activities. My calendar has looked fairly empty since Covid made its appearance but I'm hopeful that most of my wonderful interests will be able to return, that doors will be open again. I have so much to be thankful for, seeing it in print brings it all home.

Betty Bogutt
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