

## Our Stories—Ellen Perkins and Nancy Rose

By the time Ellen and Nancy met in 1998 they had each had several relationships and they knew what did and didn't work for them—and what red flags to watch out for. On about the third or fourth date they had “the interview.” Do you get along with your family? What is most important to you in life? What is challenging for you? Do you have friends with whom you have a deep connection? They both passed the test and they graduated to the next step. Do we enjoy spending time together? On a weekend that Ellen was going on vacation with her family Nancy offered to house and dog sit. She fell in love with Ellen's dog, Sugarbaby. Check, she passed that test. They DID enjoy spending time together and they evidently passed all future tests because on November 11, 2011 they were married in Cohasset, MA with Rev. Betty Kornitzer officiating and Mike Galib providing the music.

Nancy grew up in California and was required to attend the Lutheran church with her mother and older brother. She enjoyed singing in the choir. Her father was not a church goer. It wasn't until she was in her late teens that Nancy began questioning her spiritual and religious beliefs. When she moved to very forward thinking Palo Alto to attend college and went to the UU church there, she was relieved to be affirmed in her belief that you could be a good and moral person without ascribing to theism. She found the UU Church a comforting place to be able to gather in community with people who were not dogmatic in their beliefs but were passionate about trying to live a good and ethical life.

She next moved to Boulder, CO, by now well trained in a career that proved to be her life's passion—the Montessori approach to early childhood education. Jobs and relationships kept pulling her to the east coast, first to Boston, then Salem, then to Providence. She kept building on her expertise in Montessori schooling. She became the Executive Director of the New England Early Childhood Associates. She ran her own schools. She was on the board of the American Montessori Society. And she always found a UU church to attend. It was the place where she went, usually by herself, to recharge, to listen to the music. But UUCSC (where she LOVES the music and Rev. DL) was the first church that she actually joined. Nancy has been very active at UUCSC, serving as President and for many years running the Dining for Dollars Fundraiser.

Ellen grew up in Braintree, MA. Her family religion was Catholicism and she went to parochial school for 12 years. Unlike Nancy, who went to school to read and learn as much as she could about the world, Ellen said the two questions she wanted answered in school were “What's for lunch?” and “When is recess?” Perhaps not surprisingly, Ellen was not as clear about what to do after secondary school as Nancy had been. She tried on various careers briefly—banking and teaching at a preschool in Dorchester Mass.—none of them felt right. Her parents, noticing that she always gravitated back to her job at the pizza parlor, suggested that she attend Johnson and Wales. It was there that she excelled in her studies and found *her* passion in life.

Ellen went on to own and run a bakery in Charlestown for 10 years and then had a 21 year stint as the Executive Chef at the Point Judith Country Club, a job that she truly loved and a place where she also got to play golf for free! When she retired five years ago she continued to do occasional catering jobs until just recently. She plays golf now at a small course in North Kingstown. She continues to love to

cook and to teach others her culinary skills, skills much appreciated by Nancy and all their lucky friends. When Ellen was able to stop working on Sundays she began to attend UUCSC. She very much enjoys the people and the services and she volunteers when she can but she finds her most important spiritual connection with another fellowship which she has been a member of for many years, having recently celebrated 25 years in recovery a day at a time.

Nancy continued to work until quite recently. A class she was teaching to educators had to be finished online due to Covid-19. Nancy suffers from macular degeneration and is slowly losing her eyesight. It has become more and more difficult for her to read and trying to interact with students through a computer screen was simply too difficult. She is grappling with accepting her post-work identity in addition to the sadness of the change in her abilities. But she is a fighter and a doer. She exercises six days a week at the local YMCA, and, yes, she does feel very safe with the Covid-19 accommodations they have made. She has transitioned to reading by listening to audio books and finds that she can read more than ever. Now she can walk around plugged in to her book and doesn't even have to be sitting down.

Nancy and Ellen love to travel. One of their favorite trips was their latest, taken with four close friends, a Viking Cruise from Venice to Barcelona bookended on both sides by five night stays in Barcelona and Venice. Ellen, Nancy and J & A were able to take a cooking class in Venice. And they got to see *Madame Butterfly* at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. For several years they spent a month in the Mexican city of San Miguel de Allende every winter. Now they travel to the west coast of Florida for a winter rejuvenation.

They both miss church, they miss seeing all of their friends and the church community, but life is good—exercising, staying in touch with family, cooking and eating and reading, reading, reading.

*Elizabeth Donovan, September 2020*