

Our Stories--Pat and Carolyn Gilligan

Pat and Carolyn Gilligan are passionate about many things. And, though they have been retired for eighteen years, they are showing no signs of slowing down in the pursuit of those passions. They share a love for nature and physical activity, particularly hiking and biking. They cycle even in the winter if it is over 40° and sunny and they have logged almost 3,000 miles for 2020!

Carolyn and Pat both grew up in Pennsylvania. They met at Penn State, were married in 1968 and settled in Binghamton, NY when Pat was offered a job as a plant engineer at GE. They raised their four children (two adopted and two birth) there. Carolyn had majored in Elementary Education with a minor in art. After staying at home for several years with their young children, she spent twenty years as a kindergarten teacher—a job she absolutely loved. After 25 years at GE Pat took a job at Ametek continuing to work in the aircraft industry. His advice to those beginning their careers: Be sure that your job is fun!

Pat and Carolyn love to get together with family. About twenty years ago they became smitten with lakeside living and bought two tiny cottages on the shore of Highland Lake in the Endless Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. This has become their treasured summer home. Carolyn's twin sister lives on the lake also and it is a family gathering spot with children, grandchildren and extended family visiting throughout the summer months.

Spirituality has always been important in their lives. Pat was raised as a Catholic and Carolyn as a Presbyterian. In Binghamton they attended first a Lutheran Church and then settled on the Unity Church. But it was perhaps the reading and studying of *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM) which has had the most profound effect on them, opening their lives to an even deeper spiritual practice. They belong to ACIM study groups in both Binghamton and here in Rhode Island and have continued during the Pandemic to meet with these groups via Zoom. When they moved to Peace Dale they were looking for a church and first tried out a Congregational church but found it not the right fit. That very same day they walked over to UUCSC and were instantly warmed by the UU perspective and acceptance of all. They soon became members.

Since retiring from teaching, Carolyn has been able to return to her passion for painting. Her work features impressionistic scenes of the natural world. Water is a big influence—not only is watercolor her preferred medium but water and its movement is a major inspiration. Water was, in fact, the theme of her latest (very successful) show held at the Cooperative Gallery 213 in Binghamton this past summer. As her work evolves in a more abstract direction, Carolyn is particularly fascinated with the movement of paint on Yupo paper. Yupo paper does not absorb the paint but allows it to move more freely across the page. Being watchful for the magic of flowing color is as important as the skill to control the paint.

To see her work on her [website](#) and in a short video [Carolyn Gilligan: On Water](#).

Five years ago their daughter suggested that they look at a small cottage in Peace Dale that she had spotted while looking at real estate herself. Without any intention of moving, they were nonetheless quite taken with the house and location and they put in an offer. They downsized the house in Binghamton to a small condo in nearby Vestal, NY and began spending winters in Rhode Island, delighted to be close to grandchildren living in Narragansett. Though Carolyn has had a good deal of

success as an artist her work is often created at the kitchen table. An addition to the cottage is planned, designed to give Carolyn her first studio. Their children all live in New England. A second daughter lives in Framingham, MA, and a son is on Martha's Vineyard. They lost one son in 1988.

A story about Carolyn and Pat isn't complete without a mention of their shared love of travel encompassing more than thirty countries—one favorite trip was biking the Canadian Rockies from Banff to Jasper—and their interest in volunteering, notably with Heifer International. Pat currently serves on the UUCSC Finance Committee and Carolyn is a member of the Health and Wellness Committee.

Life is very full for Pat and Carolyn and they intend to embrace every minute of it!

Elizabeth Donovan, November 2020