

Paula Lewis and Joanie McCarthy

Long ago and far, far away (Nebraska), my Grandfather Dolph purchased a funeral home in Omaha and promptly sent his three youngest sons off to school to become morticians. Thus I was born in Berkeley, California while my father, James, was attending the School of Mortuary Science in San Francisco after WWII. Upon his graduation, with my Mom, we returned to Nebraska to join the family business. Don't get me started on tales from the crypt!

Growing up in Nebraska can have it's moments - occasional excitement when a rogue cow escaped to terrorize the town folk, for example. Back to my story, since undertakers meet lots of local residents under trying circumstances, Pop made influential contacts and ran for political office. He eventually became the city's Mayor. The deceptions, treachery and trials of this career gave me an abiding distaste for all things political.

I have an oddly diverse life history. I was a Roman Catholic nun. I can often be quiet, introspective and contemplative. Joanie, my partner/wife of 45 years, can testify to my "Grand Silences!" On the other hand, I was a Human Resources Manager and for years Head of Employee Labor Relation at a Navy Base that had 10,000 employees. This meant negotiating Union contracts and court appearances or representing the Government's case in severe disciplinary actions. I was never totally comfortable in either role but I did a whole lot better in my Navy career than I did being a nun!

Longing for adventure, I moved west back to California after the nunnery. I completed my undergraduate degree and went to work for the Navy. I meandered my way through the civilian personnel system and retired when the base closed 27 years later.

What does one do after a long work career? As a meaningful diversion after retirement, Joanie and I worked for Olivia, a lesbian company, that chartered cruise ships several times a year. We loved and appreciated the ability to provide an entertaining atmosphere for travelers to gather and share. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to experience the world.

Many cruises later, we decided to take to the road. We sold our long-time home in the San Francisco Bay Area and moved into our fifth-wheel trailer. We took jobs as camp hosts and bus drivers for a wilderness, whitewater rafting company near Placerville on the American River. We lived in camp without electricity (did I mention our RV's generator?), ran the camp store and greeted rafters. Throughout the day we drove camp buses filled with exuberant water nymphs pulling large trailers loaded with huge rubber rafts to and from the river. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, we were on the rafts paddling through the rapids for all we were worth!! Between river stints, we traveled the USA and Canada extensively in our coach. We are National Park enthusiasts and visit as many as we can find. We even worked in Disney World in Florida two winter seasons. It was a mouse-eared hoot!

Joanie and I moved to the Sequim area in 2006 and soon discovered the Senior Center needed our Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) to pilot their bus on their many exciting tours. You could often meet one of us behind the wheel if you joined one of those adventures.

On pleasant days you'll periodically find us exploring the byways on our GoldWing triked motorcycle with our chihuahuas in a backpack, riding the Discovery Bay trail on three-wheeled sport bikes or four-wheeling in our classic Jeep CJ truck. Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming WOO HOO - What a ride!