

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE COOL KIND

Connect with: Nancy Phelps

Pilot Club has expanded very rapidly of recent making it hard to even know a member's name, much less all about them! But we want to know all about them....us.... each & everyone. This is number one of what will be a recurring column to get to know a particular member.

I called Nancy (after making a phone appointment) & began by telling her I had written down a few questions. She began by saying, "Oh my, I hope I am not a disappointment. I'm not very interesting." As well as obviously humble, she is very interesting.

She was born in Mary Lawson Hospital, a third child & first girl in the family. The hospital was located across from the now Dairy Queen where one can, today, admire a mural of Mary Lawson. She attended Palatka High School, well, what was then Palatka High School, so is thus "born & bred" in Palatka. Once she was of working age, she became a "cord board operator" for Southern Bell phone company. Do you remember, right, the human voice on the other end of the phone that said, "number please"? In fact, when she covered the Del Ray area of Florida (along with 100 other operators), she was considered to have an accent & was sometimes identified as Nancy & then greeted because of the "Palatka accent". She loved the job. She clued me in to its importance when she said, "We were 911! Any emergency came through me." Once she said, someone called for the fire dept & due to the emergency, caller then left the phone off the hook to get out of the house. Nancy heard the house burn down... "one crackle & crash after the other".

She married twice, but sweetly adds, "Michael is the real marriage". They have been married for 43 years & have raised his two children & her two children together, which in my opinion, is a character-building adventure. Knowing they succeeded at this, I asked what she believes makes a marriage work. She very emphatically replied, "You have to be in love."

Speaking of love, she loves Palatka. She loves the Ravines State Park. She loves the bicycle trails. She loves all the Pilot Club has done for E.H. Miller & Melon Learning Center, as she has a grandson, Callum that is a student there. When asked why she joined Pilot, she said just that – because of what the club has done in that area. She was ready to join &

ready to help in that mission. I'm certain this is music to Jane's ears as being president has pulled her away from that passion. Nancy quickly joined the Melon committee which already has shown the love by providing a Valentine's Day reception for the staff there. But Nancy is not restricting her community service efforts. She has found a way to combine her passion of riding her bike on the Rails to Trails path with beautifying the environment. On her weekly rides, she enjoys the serenity, the smells, the sun & the change of seasons. But she also notices the opportunity to give back. During the "ride out", she "spots the trash". And then on the way back collects it all! She puts out trash receptacles where there are none & will call Michael to bring the truck if the load happens to be heavy. She says there is a fellow that rides his bike & drinks beer, tossing the cans. He has noticed her & her mission. Now he hangs onto his cans until he sees her & hands them to her!

I asked of what she is most proud & she boasted that all their children are well, have homes & jobs & are basically self-sufficient. Her subsequent continual goal is to try to maintain her health so as never to be a burden on them or anyone else. Her immediate goal (when asked "what do you still hope to do in life") is to see the total solar eclipse on April 6 this year! They have reservations & are headed to Gillum, Arkansas.

When one reads about health, both physical & mental, two key components include: regularly do what makes you happy & find a mission in life. Nancy has easily found a way to combine them in her self-appointed position as Trail Trash Fairy. She is out there Caring More, Doing More, Being More... for the benefit of many. Welcome to Pilot Club, Nancy. It is a pleasure having you.

By Susan Grandgeorge