

The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

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Summer Romance Still Strong

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George, my husband, has not fully retired, but I have. We met at our diocesan camp, Camp Weed (named for a bishop not the plant), near Carrabelle, FL. Carrabelle is southwest of Tallahassee on the Gulf Coast near Panacea. It was 1949. He had just graduated from the University of the South at Sewanee, TN, and I was a senior in high school in Jacksonville. My mother said it was just a summer romance but we knew better. We were married three years later, after his graduation from General Theological Seminary in New York City and mine from Jacksonville Junior College.

His first assignment was as vicar of St. James, Perry, FL, where we moved after our marriage in June 1952. We were there for three happy years until he was called to be the first rector in the twentieth century of the Church of Our Saviour in Mandarin, FL. It is now a bedroom community of Jacksonville, but was made famous by Harriet Beecher Stowe, who founded the church in the late 1800s. Our Saviour had been a parish, but reverted to mission status after the disastrous freeze of 1895 that killed all the citrus trees (the Mandarin oranges) and bankrupted all the grove owners.

We moved there in 1955 and stayed until 1973. This is where our five children grew up. It was a charming small community with all the advantages of being in the same county as Jacksonville, where I was born.

We moved “up the road” in 1973, when George went to work for Episcopal High School of Jacksonville. He was a founder of the school and then served as a chaplain and chairman of the Department of Religion. My life changed that year. I went from being “the rector’s wife” to being a communicant of the Cathedral where all the faculty were members, since St. John’s Cathedral was the owner of the school.

I joined the fabulous choir there and loved every minute of it. The choir went to the National Cathedral in Washington, DC in July of the Bicentennial year of 1976 as the representative of the state of Florida. We also sang with Dave Brubeck at the Cathedral as he conducted his oratorio, “Light in the Wilderness.” That was a thrill, and also the hardest music to sing. It changed tempo almost every measure! That was my fifteen minutes of fame. We also sang for the main service on Sunday morning. I thought I was going to levitate when we processed up that long aisle — either levitate or faint with joy.

During the Cathedral years, we formed a group of priests and their spouses called “The Secret Southside Clericus.” We took turns meeting at each others’ houses several times a year as we were moved, to eat, drink and be merry together. We talked about anything and everything, especially about wicked wardens and vicious vestry persons. It was an excellent therapy group —

no holds barred, but always confidential. Our group petered out when Bob McCloskey, a founder, moved to south Florida.

My retirement started in 1995. I had worked for seventeen years as office manager for a dentist. It was my first job, at forty-six! We had three children in college when I began, and it was necessary for me to contribute financially. I loved the job, and my boss, and most of our patients were wonderful.

George had retired from the high school in 1990, and he had five years without me hovering over his adjustment to retirement. He slid right into his own routine, doing what he wanted to do. He is a man of many talents and a voracious reader. He also started “helping out” at a parish in the neighborhood at the request of the rector. He’s still on the staff today. As he says, “I’d be going to church anyway, so I might as well get paid for it.”

When George retired, he bought a computer, taught himself how to use it and now plays with it every day. When I retired, I bought a new sewing machine. We converted two bedrooms: one into his study and one into my sewing room. I am a longtime lover of beautiful clothes and fine fabrics, and have honed my skills with much practice. We each get much pleasure from our toys.

We raised five children and have ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Our older son, also a priest, lives in Fernandina Beach about forty-five minutes away. Our other children live in Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia. This gives us a good excuse to travel, and we enjoy watching their trials as parents.

Our life continues to be good. We celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary with a large reception in the parish hall of All Saints Church, our parish for twenty-two years. Our whole family was here with the exception of one grandson who was living and working in Paris. Lots of people said lots of encouraging words.

The crowning event of 2002 was the celebration, on December seventeenth, of the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination to priesthood of my husband and two others, the Rev. Harry B. Douglas, Jr. and the Rev. Robert S. Snell. Together with the Rev. J. William Anderson and the Rev. Lavan B. Davis, who have died, these priests were ordained together and known as the Fabulous Five. They were all Florida boys, Bishop Juhan’s boys, but that’s another story. The anniversary service and party were glorious and I was one proud woman. My whole family is proud of this man who has served God with distinction for fifty years.

Life is good and, as James Taylor sings in one of my favorites, “the secret of life is enjoying the passage of time.”



Peggy, retired in 1995, is an active member and volunteer for All Saints Episcopal Church, Jacksonville, and a board member for eight years of Riverside Fine Arts Association, a group that presents six concerts each year under the auspices of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Jacksonville. She is an active member of the American Sewing Guild.