

LINDA BEFORT
A Modest Woman Who Likes To Get Things Done
by
Joyce Tepley

When I called Linda asking if she would allow me to interview her, she was reluctant.

“I’m not sure I have enough that’s of interest to talk about in my life,” she said.

That was the Kansas-born-and-bred modesty speaking, or heart-of-America, but we-don’t-make-a- big-deal-about it humility. Linda prefers to work in the background, in a support position, and in her own words, “when I set my mind to something, it gets done.” Contrary to what she claims, she’s done a lot in her life.

She was born in the geographic center of the forty-eight states in the United States of America – Lebonon, Kansas. Her father owned cattle trucks and hauled cattle to local markets or to Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri. She has one younger sister and brother-in-law who live in Lincoln, Nebraska, along with their daughters and families. Their father died in 1987 and their mother in 2003, but they still keep up the family home.

As we talked about her background it soon became clear that family is primary in Linda’s life. She and her husband, Art, have known each other since seventh grade. Growing up on a wheat farm, Art was the middle child in a family of three brothers and one sister. Linda’s aunts and uncles are still wheat farmers in Kansas, and between she and Art there are enough relatives to fill a park at their family reunions.

Linda was delighted to tell me that “seven of us girls,” her cousins, take trips together every summer. The oldest is seventy-two and the youngest is fifty. Five of the cousins were in high school at the same time. This year they plan to go to a lake house in west Texas owned by one of their relatives. Two of the games they play during their time together are in honor of her Granddad.

“He loved to play Pitch and Dominoes and he played to win when he took us on,” she said, with a chuckle in her voice.

Honoring her mother’s memory is also important to Linda.

With a wistful tone in her voice she went on to say, “Ever since my Mom died we make sure to go to Kansas for Memorial Day to put flowers on her grave.” Quickly lightening the mood, she followed with, “Then who ever is around, we have a picnic.”

Linda started her business career at the ripe old age of thirteen. She worked as a waitress making fifty cents an hour at the hotel restaurant that was near the monument of the forty-eight states center. She drove herself to work and back every day in her Granddad's '52 Ford, but only on the dirt roads. Her mother wouldn't let her drive on the highway being only thirteen years old!

She spent one year at Fort Hayes State College taking business courses but decided to get a job instead of a degree. At nineteen she worked in the business office at a hospital in Hastings, Nebraska. She liked her job and said her manager was a "great boss." He teased her saying she had "Arthritis," referring to her growing relationship with Art.

After she and Art married she became an Air Force wife. His first tour of duty was Wichita, Kansas, and then he was sent overseas to Thailand from 1969 to 1970 during the Vietnam War. She remembers that time filled with the support of Air Force friends and military community life. One of Arts brothers was stationed in Vietnam during that time so she and his wife lived together. After Art was discharged from the Air Force in 1972 he went to aviation maintenance school and they started their own family.

She speaks proudly of their children. Their son, Jeff, was born in 1973. He's a litigation attorney in Houston, and he and his wife presented Linda and Art with their first grand child, Leo, seventeen months ago. They are currently expecting their second child.

Christie, their daughter, was born in 1974 and does preventive medicine research, specializing in obesity at the University of Kansas Medical Center and is also an assistant professor of psychology at the Center. She and her husband have an eleven month old son and another child on the way.

Their third child, Cherie, was born in 1975 and works for the US Government Farm Services in Kansas as a Program Technician. She and her husband have an nine month old daughter.

The whole family was here in Dallas last Christmas and Linda remarked of that time and now, "We are overjoyed with babies."

After the military they lived in Nebraska, Kentucky and Tennessee transferring with Art's work. They moved to Highland Village in 1987 and while raising their children, Art continued flying out of Love Field as a corporate pilot. In 2002 they moved to Dallas into our neighborhood so he could be closer to Love Field and they were downsizing after the kids were all grown. Linda was working for Citigroup in marketing but after eighteen years there, they closed her programs and laid her off. That was February of 2009.

Did she feel badly about losing her job? Not Linda. "God was looking after me. The timing couldn't have been more perfect," she said. "I can devote more time now to our grandchildren."

With being able to start her pension and Social Security benefits, she has the freedom to explore a part-time business. Before her job at Citigroup she had her own coffee business, setting up machines in companies and maintaining them. She's looking into various possibilities, maybe something in Internet marketing. From her experience at Citigroup she obtained a good feel for what people might want.

When they moved into this neighborhood they knew no one. It was just the two of them again, starting fresh. They were attracted to the trees, the established neighborhood of older homes that were passed on to the next generation, and they soon became as active in community life as they were in Highland Village.

In Highland Village much of their volunteer work revolved around their children's lives with activities involving school, sports, booster clubs, and church. They held positions of leadership in many groups, so it is no surprise that Linda is Treasurer of the Walnut Hill Homeowner's Association and Crime Watch, and a Block Captain for Crime Watch. Last year she assisted Ross Coulter, the Homeowner's President, with the creation of the Enhanced Neighborhood Patrol using off-duty police officers. The new program helped reduce non-violent crime here by 20% and violent crime by 50% from the year before. She's also Eucharistic Minister at St. Monica's Catholic Church and facilitator of two Bible study groups. Of course, she and Art have also been regular patrollers in our Volunteers In Patrol.

"I've always been involved with community activities. I just like making a contribution," she said. "It stems from my upbringing. Everyone I grew up with was involved helping neighbors, so it's not just a wish, it's an obligation."

What does she do for fun besides enjoying her grandchildren? She loves gardening. She and Art have worked many hours re-landscaping their backyard. She plays Bunco with her former Highland Village neighbors and Spades once a month with long-term friends.

Linda has a vision for our neighborhood. She would like to see more community activities organized to help neighbors get to know each other better. A welcoming committee should be created to invite people who just moved into the neighborhood become more involved. Quarterly Homeowner's meetings should be organized around topics of special interest for the neighborhood.

She feels that being an active member of the Walnut Hill Volunteers In Patrol is one of the best ways to help our community. "It gives me a good feeling

to know I am helping to make my neighborhood safer. I've gotten to know my neighbors, and I've even become a better person for it."