**Betty is Back!**

*by Kathleen Jamison*

Betty Dethmers joined Friendship Force Florida Suncoast in 2007, but, what with one thing and another, eventually drifted away. "I really loved the club, and I loved the trip to Japan, the most exotic place I've visited. I stayed in two homes and our hosts were most welcoming. I was still working though, so taking part in club activities wasn't always easy."

Happily, FFFS was always in the back of her mind. When visiting the Friendship Force International website several months ago, she spotted the notice of the upcoming Festival at Sea cruise, said to herself "I want to go" and just like that she reactivated her membership and sailed away. Barely back from the sometimes-challenging cruise, she home hosted the president and treasurer of the Vancouver club at our recent inbound and hasn't slowed down since.

Overall, the Festival at Sea was a wonderful experience, with just a few glitches, Betty says. Boarding the ship in Amsterdam had to be changed to Rotterdam because the water level was too low for the ship to dock. She missed Scotland because she contracted Covid, thankfully a mild version. The stop at the Shetland Islands was canceled because of weather. Heading home from the Amsterdam airport was a traveler's nightmare. "Lines for hours. It was even on the news." In spite of all that, she gives the trip high marks. "We saw a lot, did a lot, met interesting people, including Jeremi Snook, the FFI CEO, and even had a lesson in writing poetry."

Betty was born in Windsor, Ontario, moved to Detroit when she was 20, got married, spent the next 33 years in Milwaukee, then moved to Florida. Her parents had escaped Canadian winters at Top of the World in Clearwater, which is where she now lives most of the year, while summering at the family home in Colorado. She has two daughters, one in Colorado Springs and one in Madison, Wisconsin, and four grandchildren.

An accomplished pianist and organist, she made her career accompanying school and church choirs. One of the highlights was accompanying the Bel Canto church choir twice when they sang at the Vatican. Her husband, whom she lost in 1995, sang in that choir. She retired in 2006, went back to work in 2013, retired again during Covid, but still subs occasionally.

A trip to Israel, Jordan and Egypt next March is in the planning stages.

Welcome back, Betty.