

Frances FitzPatrick grew up hating Florida, now she is a fixture at On Top of the World

Getting to Know You

A monthly feature about the people in your On Top of the World community.

by John Koning

I want to tell you a true story that took place a couple of years ago.

It's a story about a boy and a girl from different countries and diverse racial roots.

His folks came from the land of klompen and her ancestors hailed from the Emerald Isle.

These two first met on the Internet. She had something he desperately wanted and she did everything in her power to make sure he got it.

It is the story of how this reporter first met Frances FitzPatrick. You didn't think it was about something else, did you?

Fran was selling tickets for the New Years Bash at the East Activity Center and I was north of the 49th parallel with no way to pay for tickets that were disappearing fast.

Without knowing me, Fran took me at my word and slipped a couple of tickets aside with no more than a promise to pay for them at some point before the party.

I learned something that day about Fran and I learned about selling tickets "old school."

How Fran came to On Top of the World from the Bronx, N.Y., is one of her many entertaining stories. You see, she hated Florida, or at least she thought she did, until she agreed to visit her sister in Tarpon Springs, and then, only if her sister would wait on her hand and foot.

Since Fran had already come all this way, she decided to go a bit fur-

ther south and pay a visit to "Junior" in Clearwater. To the uninitiated, "Junior" is her first cousin, OTOW News reporter Tom Brennan, who was living here and is still here.

To make a short story shorter, before the sun had set on that fateful November evening, Fran was the proud owner of an apartment in OTOW. A few weeks later, on Dec. 22 of that year, she flew back down from up north for an interview.

"Can you believe it?" Fran says with mock disbelief. "It cost me a fortune to fly all the way back here so I could pay \$50 bucks and they could make sure I wasn't wacko!"

If you're of the impression that Fran uses colorful language and loves to tell stories, you can trust your instincts. Story telling is one of Fran's many gifts.

Another of Fran's talents is getting things done. Evelyn Flam was quick to pick up on that strength and enlisted Fran eight years ago as she walked across the EAC floor one morning.

"That was the end of my former life as I knew it," states Fran with a hint of pride.

Since that day, she has worked tirelessly for the Entertainment Committee and forged a strong friendship with the Flams. She is clearly impressed by their "git 'er done" attitude.

"People complain about them," Fran says cleverly. "Marvin is kinda bossy," she pauses, "and Evelyn is



Hazel Kelly and Frances FitzPatrick

even worse," Fran states with a mischievous grin.

Together, Fran and the Flams have impacted our community like few others. From Good Neighbors to The Blue Book to the Jesters, Fran, and those who work with her, are a force to be reckoned with.

To anyone who has heard Fran's life story, this shouldn't come as a surprise. This mother of three successful children has done it all, from transcending an oppressive educational system to raising a family on her own to flourishing as a career woman in a man's world.

All this can be attributed to the fact that Fran never backs down in the

face of adversity.

When I asked her if there was anything she misses about the past, Fran gave me her modus operandi for life, "I don't miss anything. I don't regret anything. I don't live in the past."

Wise words.

Now that she faces some health issues, Fran is trying to learn to slow down, but she remains in the thick of things through, you guessed it, the Internet. When it comes to Fran FitzPatrick, WYSIWYG.

Do you know someone in our community whom we should get to know? Send your suggestions to jck@johnkoning.com

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