

# Kawalecs traded bad weather for Florida 47 years ago

When the Blizzard of '66 struck the northeast with an icy vengeance, John and Theresa Kawalec were happy to leave it behind for some famous Florida sunshine.

They moved here on the recommendation of Theresa's sister, who assured them that there are no hurricanes in Florida.

That same year, their new home state was clobbered by several powerful electrical storms and Hurricane Alma, a rare June hurricane, that caused \$10 million in damage and took six lives.

Theresa and John have been married for 55 years. Together they raised six active and successful children and can boast nine cherished grandchildren.

They met at the Venetian Ballroom in Garfield, N. J., where she was mesmerized by the nice-looking guy with the stunning baby blues.

John, on the other hand, was struck by the beautiful, dark-haired Theresa.

Theresa is originally a New Jersey girl and was an arts major in high school. Ironically, she won a Science Award in her fourth year and went on to acquire her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry, of all things.

After graduation, Theresa worked for four years in the field of serology, followed by five years in virology. She loved her job, but moved up to a much more important job as a stay-at-home-mom when she and John started their family.

Unlike the studious Theresa, John was a self-proclaimed goof off in high school. He took the Navy's Eddie Test to, in his own words, "confirm that I wasn't a complete idiot."

He passed the test and a week later was bound for the Great Lakes Naval Training Academy for two months, where he began his training in naval



*John and Theresa Kawalec*

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by John Koning

aviation electronics.

From there, John served his country in the reserves and in active duty

in Korea.

These days, in order to spend quality time with their family, Theresa and

John hit the road every summer for a few weeks and crisscross this great land. It can be an arduous yearly pilgrimage, but the benefits are worth the cost for these two travelers. Some years they luck out when their children and grandchildren pop in for some visitation and a dose of Florida sunshine.

Retirement here at On Top of the World means different things to Theresa and John. They play pinochle together at home and they play bridge with Betty and Al McKay. On his own, John loves to ride his bike, do crosswords and cryptic quotes. He has been playing eight-ball with his pals now for 18 years.

Theresa puts her faith into action when she hosts the Father Gobi Rosary Prayer Group on Monday mornings in her home. On Thursday evenings she attends the Divine Will Prayer Meeting at Light of Christ Catholic Church.

When she's not praying for the sick and needy, Theresa proof reads and writes for the On Top of the World newspaper. She is the building reporter for the Chetnik building, nestled remotely at the north end of picturesque Netherlands drive.

Were it not for her writing, much of OTOW might not even be aware of Building 61's existence, let alone the activities that take place there.

Theresa has pumped out roughly 130 pieces of journalism and has interviewed dozens of neighbors. If that's not enough, for six years she also served as the secretary for the OTOW Press Association.

CBS News Anchor Bob Schieffer wrote, "I think journalism is a great way to do public service, to have an impact on your community."

I guess that makes Theresa an OTOW public servant. She wouldn't have it any other way.

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