

OTOW travel partners find friendship on the road

The single traveler in today's world must pay a premium for his or her solitary status. It's a harsh reality that compels single tourists to seek out companions to share the cost.

For many, the monetary savings are the sole benefit of sharing accommodation, but for Lillian Ginn and Sandy Sanborn, the rewards they received are much more than a few bucks saved.

Lil and Sandy were casually acquainted as members of the On Top of the World Bowling League, but that relationship changed when they signed up for a bus trip to Biloxi, Miss., a few years back.

Since both were recently widowed, they decided to share an accommodation on the trip. As fate would have it, these two independent and strong-minded individuals, discovered that they were more than companions of financial convenience. They were highly compatible travel partners.

Following the success of the Biloxi experiment, Lil and Sandy traveled to a wide assortment of destinations. Before long they were, "joined at the hip," as Sandy likes to say. Their most notable adventure was a recent 19-day odyssey to San Francisco and the Hawaiian Islands aboard the Grand Princess cruise ship. The trip was not without hiccups, but the challenges only confirmed their travel compatibility.

During the interview for this article, Sandy and Lil seemed to be on the same page until I asked them exactly how many adventures they have shared. They looked thoughtfully at each other and answered, in unison, "25/75."

Wait a second! Lil estimated their excursions at 25 and Sandy suggested 75!

Perhaps Lil only counted large trips while Sandy included their regular outings to Ed Fletcher's early Bird Dinner Theater.

When a disagreement such as this happens, they look at each other and, with remarkable ease, shrug shoulders and agree to disagree.

Clearly, it is a key component of their success as travel partners.

Now that Lil and Sandy have discovered their mutual travel rapport, they also share meals together five days a week. Since neither one enjoys cooking, they go out for a meal and take away enough extra for another one. It is a highly refined science of pushing away from the plate that many of us could learn from.

Weekends are solo times for the travel buddies. Saturday and Sunday



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On Top of the World community

by John Koning

are reserved for errands, church, laundry and other things they are too busy for during the week.

Each of these ladies is a force to be reckoned with and together they are a double dynamo. They are the driving force behind the "Merry Widows," as they call themselves – a group of eight single ladies who meet for dinner every Friday evening.

After dinner, it's off to the home of the person who chose the restaurant for a few more hours of refreshments and girl fun. Lil Ginn says it best when she remarks, "we just sit around and tell each other lies."

That might be an example right there.

On Saturday the "Merry Widows" are back at that same host's place for cards. It's a rotating schedule that is arranged as much as six months in advance.

Did I mention that organization is another trait shared by Lil and Sandy?

With all of this energy, wit and wisdom, it shouldn't surprise anyone

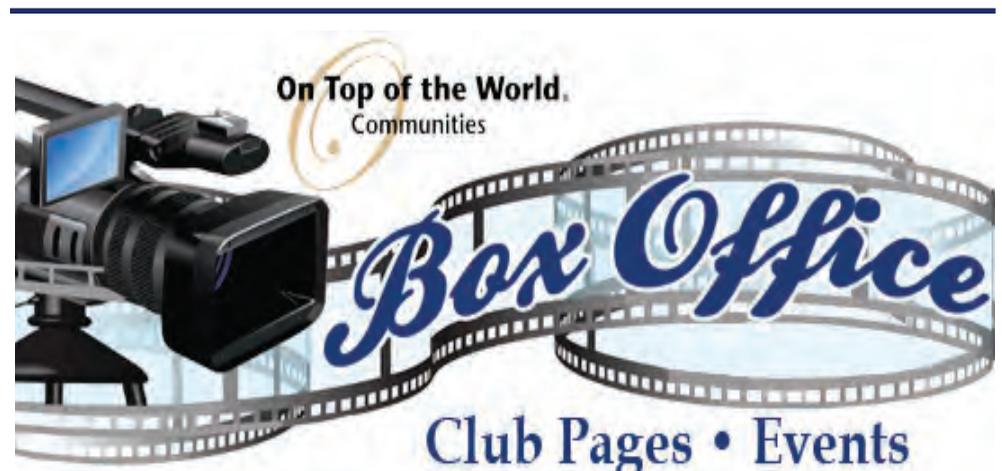
that Lil and Sandy are the backbone of the summer Snowbirds, or Sunbirds, as they call themselves.

Alongside club Vice President Dean Darby, they shoulder the day-to-day affairs of the Snowbirds Club while the rest of the Snowbirds leadership is lollygagging around up north.

Sandy and Lil have also developed an unofficial and strictly confidential

Pictured above, aboard the Grand Princess, in the front row, from left to right, are Audrey Decker, James Mease and Isabel Houston. In the back row are Sue Fleming, Arla Gossiaux, Peg Devany, Lillian Ginn, Sandy Sanborn, Bette Byrnes, Carol Gossiaux and David Gossiaux.

network to assist single travelers who are looking for non-romantic, compatible travel partners. Who knows? It might work out for others as well as it has for Sandy and Lil.



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