

Getting to Know You

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

by
John Koning



Barbara Hogan shows the infectious smile that won her a game show appearance

Barbara Hogan's amazing prime-time game show winning streak 52 years ago

By John Koning

In 1964, On Top of the World resident Barbara Hogan, her husband and two friends were enjoying a weekend in Manhattan, NY.

They got audience tickets for the game show "Say When," hosted by Art James. During the show, a simple twist of fate launched Barbara on a winning streak of legendary proportion.

But now, as they say in show business, let's get to know contestant No. 1.

Barbara Hogan was born in Providence, RI. She met, fell in love with and married her neighborhood sweetheart Jack.

Together they raised seven children, all of whom still live very close to where they grew up. Barbara Hogan counts herself a very lucky woman.

Back in Manhattan, before an afternoon taping of "Say When," Barbara and another contestant were called out of the audience to play a warm-up version of the game. Their job was to guess the value of a showcased item. When Barbara nailed the price down to the penny, a few eyebrows did a hiccup in the producer's booth.

Barbara was asked if she would audition for the show. This was done to ensure that prospective contestants were capable of playing the game and to ensure that Barbara's guess wasn't just a flash in the pan.

The producers were also looking for entertaining contestants. Barbara was a shoo-in.

The next day, Jack went home alone to mind

their kids and Barbara stayed on ... and on ... in Manhattan.

On her first day, Barbara won a new car! She was very excited, but had no one to share the news with, so she sat on a bench in Rockefeller Center and basked in the euphoria.

While she was there, an 80 year-old man sidled up beside her on the bench and propositioned her. So much for good luck!

On day two, Barbara won another car! Could this all be a dream? No it wasn't. It was a pattern that would continue for five full days.

Art James took Barbara aside to tell her that she was one of his favorite contestants. Barbara describes her game show demeanor a little more succinctly, "I was a nut case!"

When all was said and done, Barbara walked away with two cars, a fur coat, a man's gold watch, a dining room set, a bedroom set, a washing machine, a sewing machine, a stereo console TV, a 7-foot long hutch, 50 cases of Gerber baby food, 30 cases of frozen veal cutlets and 20 cases of Spam.

Oh yes, she also won a week-long trip to Palm Springs, complete with a rental car, and the necklace she won on her very first guess during the warm up.

Cha-ching!

During her time in Manhattan, Barbara was a quasi celebrity in nearby Hurley's Bar where they aired "Say When" nightly. Back home in Rhode Island, Barbara's pediatrician put the show on the hospital TV so his patients could cheer Barbara on.

While she was shopping at a local grocery store, a child raced up to Barbara and asked, "Are you the lady from on TV?"

Upon her return home, every day was like Christmas for about a week. There was a steady stream of delivery vehicles traveling to and from her home. Gerber Baby Foods spared Barbara the agony of dispersing 50 cases of baby food and handed her a check for their value instead. Barbara rented a freezer to keep the veal cutlets frozen until they could consume it or give it away.

Of course, Uncle Sam was there at the front of the line with his hand out. Barbara was forced to sell one of the new cars to pay New York State and federal taxes. Jack drove the other sports car into the ground.

The gold watch still adorns the wrist of her son and Barbara's daughter took the bedroom set when she down-sized. The sewing machine came along with Barbara to her Australia Way condo as a practical reminder of her amazing streak.

Barbara is not winning cars these days, but she still considers herself a very lucky woman. She can boast seven children, 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, all of whom bring joy to her life and to the lives of others.

Winning doesn't necessarily mean avoiding tragedy. Barbara has faced her share. Winning means getting back up after being knocked down. In that way and others, Barbara Hogan is an OTOW gold medal winner!