

This month, one of our members writes his own fascinating profile. Meet Joe Lechowicz. He's all about adventure.

After twenty-nine years I retired from Hofstra University in 2006, where I was blessed to lead a program for training vocational rehabilitation counselors in their craft of assisting people with disabilities in achieving independence and self-sufficiency, mainly through employment. In addition, this position included writing and obtaining perhaps twenty-five to thirty federal grants for scholarship monies for eligible scholars in the area of rehabilitation counseling.

I grew up in Ohio, in a steel town on the shores of Lake Erie. My dad owned a bar and I remember helping in various jobs such as serving tables and cleaning up. My school years were all filled with various summer positions, all different. With the help of a scholarship I went to and graduated from a small liberal arts college in Minnesota, which prepared me for teaching physics and especially math.

After teaching in Ohio for several years I was enticed by a scholarship to come to Fordham for a master's degree in education, where I met my future wife, Marion, and the rest, as they say, is history! We settled in Fleetwood and we continued to teach, I in Westchester and she in NYC. Somewhere along the way Marion instigated me/us into a Grand Adventure, the pursuit of graduate studies at the University of Georgia in my new-found avocation, group work. So off we went in our U-Haul with our one-year-old daughter to Athens, Georgia.

After a magical tenure at UGA, we needed to return to the NYC area because of Marion's job. With more good fortune, I began my university teaching career at St. John's University in Queens. This was my dream job, the place where I wanted to stay forever: until it wasn't due to downsizing via a new dean. This position gave me the opportunity to branch out, developing inmate counseling programs at the Queens House of Detention, as a psychological evaluator in a local hospital, and as a "shrink" in a New Jersey jail and penitentiary. All these experiences were building blocks for obtaining my graduate position at Hofstra, where, over the years, I became known as an institution in my specialized field. Hofstra gave me the opportunity to develop programs in mental health counseling, cardiac and stroke rehabilitation, and rehabilitation administration—as well as the grant writing.

It was a difficult and scary proposition to retire, but I finally aged out! But Marion saw to my being active. We continued our travels to Sanibel, Florida, each winter for my fishing and her shelling. Other travels included Australia, Ireland, Peru, the Danube and Poland, the Baltic, Greece and its islands, the Panama Canal and the Caribbean, and Bermuda. She introduced me to the Bronxville Seniors for bridge and Tai Chi, which I have enjoyed immensely. At my church I have continued to

as a minister for communion. For the diocese I was a certified trainer of employees and volunteers in the "Protecting All God's Children" Program.

In addition, my children were concerned about my retirement and so enrolled me in the Seniors program out of IONA College, where I took to the art program quite enthusiastically. There I am known for my copying of Norman Rockwell illustrations. With some pride, I have graduated from drawing and coloring to painting in watercolor.

With Marion's passing away, another Grand Adventure has arisen for me. A whole new scary life is unfolding without my anchor, my honey! The Lord has continued to bless me in so many positive ways—with three children, all far away, who check on me almost daily and new and dear friends "holding me up." My baby sister has helped me to continue the travels on my bucket list. We have partnered on two pilgrimages, one to the Holy Land and another to holy shrines in Portugal and France. Our most recent travel to Hawaii found us at the Kilauea Volcano as it percolated before blowing its top a week later. All throughout, the two senior groups have been a solid base for me, not only with activities but with comradeship and good cheer as well. My bereavement group, too, has offered me Christian fellowship and mental strength that I have found most heartening.

Finally, through the last twenty or so years my spare moments have been taken up with fishing, mostly off the shore. When available, especially from our vacation home on eastern Long Island, you can find me most mornings before dawn and in the evening casting for fluke or striped bass or blue fish in a catch-and-release mode. Once in a while I will venture out into protected waters with my kayak.

So many of these experiences are conducive to reflection and meditation. So the Lord continues to hold me "in the palm of his/her hand," and I can only be grateful for so many blessings!

