

## **Our Stories—Aline Couture and Jean Burke**

I first met this dynamic duo in 2007 and was soon amazed by their energy and dedication. Who were they? Where did they come from? How had I not met them before? This was when UUCSC's search for a "Home of Our Own" was really heating up. Many, many people really stepped up and shared their time and talents during this exciting time as the purchase and renovation of Lily Pads became a reality. Before long Aline was the Chair of the Finance Committee and Jean was a member of the Home Team. Today they are still serving the congregation and I am still impressed with how capable they are, how they can get a job done quietly and without fanfare.

Aline Couture and Jean Burke were first introduced by some very dear friends who invited them both to a birthday party with matchmaking in mind. Though Jean commented to the friend the next day that Aline was nice but "not my type," two years later in 1994 they affirmed their love for each other at a Commitment Ceremony held in their back yard in the rain with 100 friends and family present. They were married just over 10 years later in Toronto when same sex marriage became legal in Canada. In a testament to their efficiency and determination they planned the entire wedding the month before the big event. Ask them if you'd like advice about avoiding the years-long planning that often precedes a wedding.

Both Aline and Jean underwent big changes midway through their working lives. As a nun in a teaching community, Aline spent two decades in elementary education, first teaching and then serving as a principal on Manhattan's Lower East Side. When she left the convent and teaching she moved into a completely different career—financial investment. She became a money market manager making short term investments for a small insurance company based in New York City. As Jean says, Aline likes to shop and she makes quick decisions—the job was a perfect fit.

Jean had graduated from college with a Masters in Social Work Administration working first in an outpatient mental health clinic, then as the director of a shelter for victims of domestic violence before deciding to attend law school. She worked for two different law firms in New York City in commercial litigation and became partner in the second one.

Having both earlier left the Catholic Church, Jean and Aline were looking for a spiritual home and a bit of serendipity led them to the UU faith. Both independently happened to listen to a radio broadcast of a Sunday sermon being given by Forrest Church of All Soul's Manhattan. (You might recognize his name; he is the coauthor of "A Chosen Faith, an Introduction to Unitarian Universalism") His powerful message resonated with them both and they began exploring UU churches, finally joining one in White Plains, NY and becoming very active in the congregation there.

Looking for a possible retirement home by the water they landed in Rhode Island. Coming to RI from Manhattan felt like stepping back into the 1950's says Aline. South County met their criteria for being near the water and having a good feel. They bought their first house in

Narragansett, again demonstrating their efficiency and making the purchase the same weekend they first saw the house! Ask them if you need advice about buying a home.

While commuting from New York from time to time, they began attending UUCSC when it was meeting at the American Legion Hall. Attending their first service there they heard a talk by Rick Medeiros on the Gnostic Gospels. They were impressed with the congregation, the openness to inquiry, and the warmth of the members They knew they had found their Rhode Island spiritual home at UUCSC. They moved to the Ocean State full time in 2006.

Two houses and fourteen years later Jean and Aline are enjoying retirement though it may not look like retirement to an outsider. They continue to spend time out on the water—kayaking and sailing. They belong to two book groups. Jean is on their condo board. Aline is still on the Finance Committee, currently serving as Interim Chair and Jean is on the Facilities and Personnel Committees. They stay in close touch with their families—Aline’s family is close enough for a day trip; Jean’s family lives throughout the United States and in Toronto. Things are a little quieter for them during these Pandemic times (fewer summer visitors) but a new routine has been added—on Thursday mornings they walk to the building at Lily Pads to perform the weekly flushing of the boiler. The dynamic duo is still on the job.

*Elizabeth Donovan, August 2020*