

On August 16, Patrick and I enjoyed lunch at Emily's in downtown Clearwater. Over delicious grilled cheese and chicken-salad sandwiches, we caught up and covered some of Patrick's history here in Clearwater. He was happy to impart his wisdom and observations.

Are you a Clearwater native or do you hail from other shores?

I came to Clearwater in 1979 with a new job from Charleston, South Carolina and chose never to leave.

What was your new job?

I actually ended up working for a company called Concept Medical. They made me an offer and brought me down for a visit. I fell in love with the area. And I thought, 'I will continue my career here in Clearwater and let's see where it will take me.'

Did you raise your family here?

Yes. I met my wife here, married here, and we raised our daughter here. And I've been here for 44 years.

Fantastic!

Tell me about your career path.

Basically, I graduated from The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina in 1969. Due to physical limitations, I was unable to enter a military career as we were all destined for Vietnam at that time, and I elected to go into a business career in manufacturing.

I worked for a Uniroyal in Illinois, New Jersey, Connecticut, and South Carolina. I retired from my first employer after only 10 years in order to take the job here in Clearwater. And I came down to Clearwater and began working in 1979. After that, every time I was changing jobs it was for a manufacturer in the Clearwater area, because I really did not want to leave.

I finished my career in manufacturing with Jabil Circuit who is now Jabil, after 17 years. I retired in 2016. I then went to work under contracts until 2019 when I finally officially retired.

Retirement allowed me to then take up my interest in city politics and city operations.

Can you share some of the ways you volunteer in our community?

Well, when I retired, I was able to spend the time to learn about issues and then to become involved in issues. My first activity, quite frankly, was to participate in the Clearwater Citizens Academy. This is where I was exposed to all of the different operations that the city staff maintains, some of which I knew about, and many I did not. I was impressed by the dedication of these employees of the city to provide us residents with the services that we need and realized that we may not fully appreciate how much work and effort they put into it. So that piqued my interest in saying, 'You know what? I need to also give back to the city.' After that I got interested in things like the Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition, and the Neighborhood Council for the 2020 census committee that I worked with on behalf of Pinellas County.

I joined the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in 2019 and became chairman in 2023. I also was part of the Forest Run HOA in the 90s. We were successful in establishing a neighborhood park. Right now, I'm a resident of Clubhouse Estates and that homeowner's association. I'm also part of the welcoming committee for our neighborhood. So, the bottom line is, everybody can contribute something based upon their time and capabilities. You can do something if you have the time and enthusiasm to do it – and I am happy I have both.

Were you raised in a family that modeled civic engagement and/or volunteering?

To a certain extent I would say yes. I'm what was referred to as an "Army Brat." My father was an Army military officer. He was commanding officer of a number of bases in the United States and overseas. While he never made as much money as his civilian counterparts, he was dedicated to the nation and to the community where the Army had a post. He was part of the community he made us part of the community. In fact, when we were transferred overseas, as children of an Army officer commanding a post, we had to learn the language of the community we lived in. I learned how to speak German like a native.

Were you in Stuttgart?

I was in Heidelberg, Germany and Weinheim, Germany. We learned how to speak German, and we learned the culture, and we learned about the nation because we were visitors there. We had to blend in with them as best we could. And from that, I gathered from my father that it is not necessarily the money you make, or the job you have, but it's how you go about doing things within the community that you live. And in the military, there was always an incentive to become part of the community, and I think that was a real positive thing.

Do you have a favorite committee or organization that you participate in?

I must say serving on Clearwater's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board is my favorite. Now, when I was first appointed in 2019, I thought this would be kind of interesting to see what they

do to provide recreation for the residents of Clearwater. The police protect us, the fire department will save us, and Parks and Recreation allows us to enjoy the recreation in this area for ourselves and our families when we're not working.

Serving in this role, I have begun to increase my respect and admiration for what the Parks and Recreation Department does on behalf of the residents. And it is now my favorite committee of which I am the chairman.

What did you learn in business that you think can be applied to best practices and running the city?

This is an excellent question! One of the things is cost management of contracts, purchase orders, adherence to the budget, reviewing our adherence to the budget on either a monthly or quarterly basis within the various departments of the city so that they can understand whether they do a good job of budgeting. The question is, where are they going over budgeting? These are all examples of important oversight and best practices.

Certainly, there's going to be unexpected things that happen, but you just need to understand those. The most important thing is to realize that you are spending monies from your taxpayer residents. You're not a profit/loss organization, but you certainly are spending money that is given to you by your taxpayers and you need to manage it appropriately.

The other thing I think we should try to follow is accountability for various departments by establishing performance metrics. Not that we don't think they're doing a good job, but in fact, measure how good a job they are doing delivering services to our residents, as well as continuous improvement of those services. Because at the end of the quarter, the end of the year, there's no such thing as a profit and loss statement. For city operations, it's how satisfied are your residents with what you're providing to them. So therefore, accountability to performance should be a key part of any city operation.

What do you enjoy most about Clearwater?

I still think the best thing is Clearwater Beach and the climate that we get to enjoy. Not so much in the summertime, but boy, when it gets nice and cool out and the humidity drops, wow! I don't care if you're celebrating Christmas in shorts and a T-shirt. The weather is gorgeous during that time of year.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I actually enjoy, even at my age, working out regularly at the recreation center in Countryside. I enjoy doing landscaping and maintenance around the house because I really like to keep the yard looking nice. I take a great deal of pride in that; it's something my wife and I do together.

I also spend quite a bit of time reading, which I didn't have the time to do when I was working. Most of my reading is to educate myself on subjects I'm not that familiar with or do not know all of the background information. Reading has been a wonderful experience since my retirement.

Do you have a favorite sports team?

My favorite sports team is the Tampa Bay Rays. I went to their opening game in 1998. I followed the various discussions and negotiations about bringing a team here, and when we finally got one, I have supported them from day one. And they certainly have done quite well! And although their attendance can be improved, they still put a very good product on the field for all of us to enjoy.

Favorite restaurant?

Now here I hesitate a bit, because I want to select a posh place, but I don't go there that often. But the Cheesecake Factory and the Olive Garden are two of our routine favorites. So I picked a couple that are somewhat routine favorites.

What's something people would be surprised to learn about you?

I became involved in politics and city operations as a result of the Watergate fiasco in 1973. And at that time, there was an organization called Common Cause created by John Gardner. I took it upon myself to organize the Common Cause of Connecticut in 1973. I became the president of Common Cause of Connecticut in 1973, at the age of 26. And that's when I first realized that we can complain too much about what happens in our federal government. We must take the opportunity to try to make things better and try to hold elected officials accountable for what they do on behalf of US citizens.

Is there a quote or motto you like or live by? This one was instilled in me as a young lad by my father and it's, 'Work hard as nothing will be given to you in life. The harder you work, the greater the rewards.' And, 'Whatever job you accept, however menial, always do the best job that you can.'" I've carried those two messages with me for my entire life. Even as a 16-year-old working in a motel cleaning bathrooms, I reminded myself of that. And as a 76-year-old married man, I still clean bathrooms on the weekend.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I would say at some point we all need to give back to our community in volunteering and participating in city affairs. Be informed on issues and involved in issues you care about. And with respect to Clearwater, in particular, I would recommend attending Citizens Academy so that you can learn all the various services that are provided by the city staff on our behalf.

Patrick – thank you so much for all you do for Clearwater and for sharing your story with my newsletter readers. Clearwater is lucky to have you as a resident who is engaged and has a “seat at the table.” Congratulations on your Mr. Countryside title for 2023-2024. Well deserved!