

Reveling in Retirement

These Bellevue Club members put down their No. 2 pencils after more than 30 years and are enjoying their time together.

By Stacy Booth



Charter members Lynn and Patty Caldwell are enjoying retirement. “I was ready to retire and I don’t miss it at all, not one bit,” says Lynn. Not that they didn’t enjoy their time in education—Lynn was the principal at Eckstein Middle School in Seattle and Patty taught home economics, health and more at Odle Middle School in Bellevue—both say they loved the kids, but not living by a clock and getting to travel in months other than June, July and August has been wonderful.

The pair, who have been married just shy of 39 years, retired in June 2003, but Lynn and Patty didn’t know there would be one last, unexpected job before they were done:

“Patty had a sister school in Biwa, a suburb of Nagahama, Japan, and I had one in Kanazawa. We felt that we were through with our jobs, basically, but Patty got a call about two weeks after we retired ...”

“I got a call from the vice principal saying, ‘The Biwa Exchange coordinator who took your place is ill. Her doctors ordered her not

to travel. Can you go?’ I said, ‘I don’t know, I’ll check. I’ll look at the airfare.’

“It was too much, (so) I called her back and said, ‘I can’t do it.’

“Then she calls back and says, ‘We can exchange tickets with the leader and her son. It can be your husband and you.’ She told me the price and it was right.

“Lynn was in the shower and I go in—knock, knock, knock—‘Hey, do you want to go to Japan?’ And he says, ‘yes.’” Patty inadvertently failed to mention *when*. Thirty-three hours later the couple was sitting on a plane with 10 students and two teachers, bound for Kansai Airport in Osaka, Japan,



and an unexpected week in the Biwa-Nagahama area.

Patty says the trip was very fun, and they were glad to be able to go. In addition that summer, Lynn and Patty spent time in Australia. They always travel together, and really enjoy each other's company. "Talk about the impact of retirement," says Patty, "We do everything together, we go everywhere together, except maybe the occasional trip to the hardware store."

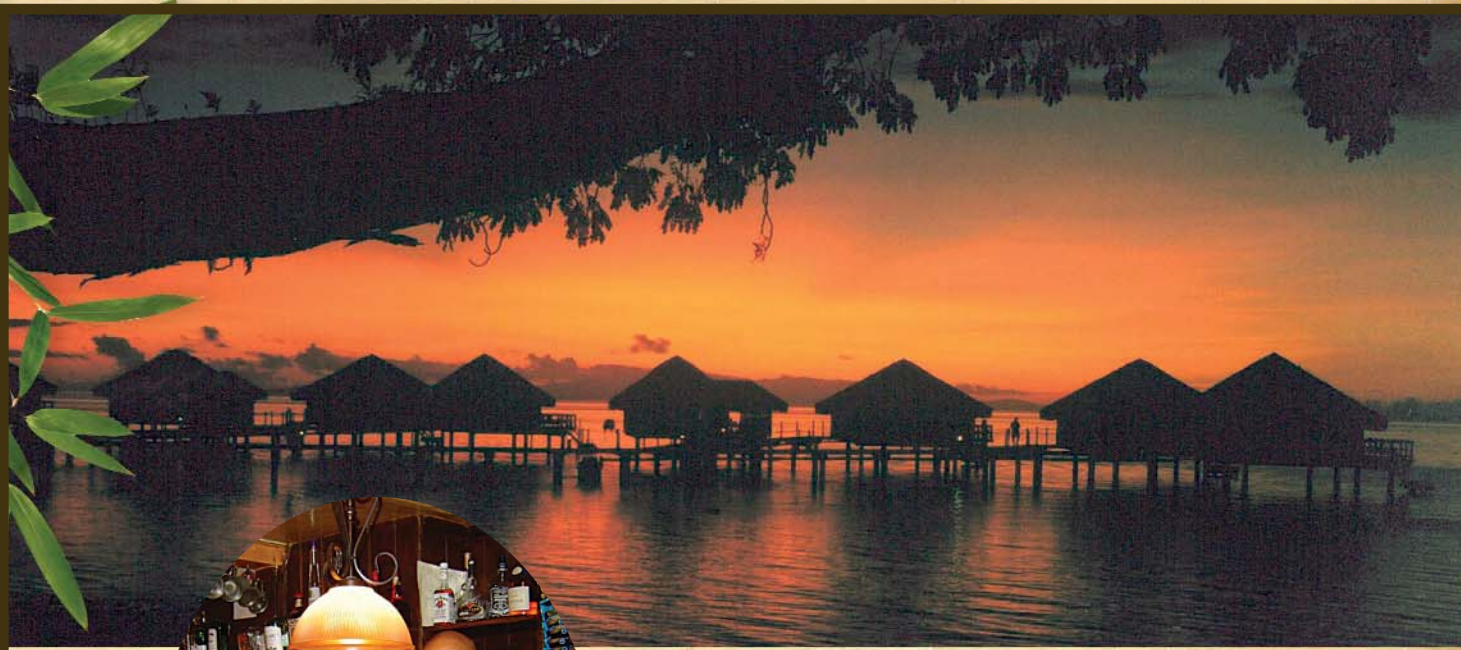
When they aren't traveling, Lynn and Patty enjoy their daily routine of exercise, picnicking and movies. While their former routine brought them to the Club about four times a week in the evenings, now they enjoy daily workouts, participating in indoor cycling and Pilates mat classes, as well as using the cardio equipment and weights on their own. "(The Club) is a very important part of our life, both before we retired plus after we retired," says Lynn.

After their mornings at the Club, Lynn and Patty always have a picnic, rain or shine, in a local park. On warm days they eat outside, and during rainy, cold or snowy days the pair picnic in the car. Patty says their picnics are very healthy, as they try to watch their diet. A favorite picnic staple is homemade soup, which Patty makes in advance and freezes. "No one is going to make me eat something that is going to be wrong for my body," she says. "It's kind of fun, it's kind of a challenge."

Evenings find them using their home theater. "It's a very simple life, but we enjoy doing it," says Lynn.

LEFT *The Cawdwells frequently visited Japan during their careers, as both worked at schools with sister schools in Japan. The pair ended up taking an unplanned trip to the country soon after they retired.*

ABOVE *Lynn and Patty in Huabine, French Polynesia.*



TOP While visiting Huahine, French Polynesia, the Caldwells took a catamaran tour of the island, which included a chance to view black-tip reef sharks up close.

ABOVE Lynn gets behind the bar in an English pub.

FAR RIGHT During their trip to China, the Caldwells visited the Great Wall. Although Lynn wanted to jog the structure, he says his fear of heights kept him near to the ground.

CENTER Patty and Lynn also saw parts of the English countryside (and English horses) during their travels.

The Caldwells plan two big trips a year, with mini-vacations to California to visit their son and to Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition to Japan and Australia, they have visited parts of Europe, Malaysia, French Polynesia, Thailand and China. “There are so many places out there which I’d like for us to be able to share and go, but we are at this stage where as long as we can swim, we’d like to go to places where you can walk out into the water and there are the fish,” says Lynn.

While their preference is for trips that include snorkeling, each has specific favorites—Lynn named Shanghai and Paris as favorite city destinations and Malaysia and Huahine (French Polynesia) as favorite beach spots; Patty chose Huahine and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia—overall, says Patty, “We’ve never been disappointed by any place that we’ve gone.”

Patty says they find vacation spots by watching both the Fine Living TV Network and the Travel Channel. “We tend to see things and think, ‘Wouldn’t that be fun?’

“It’s really funny because one morning I came downstairs and (Lynn) says, ‘You’ve got to see this, I want to book this.’ It’s an apartment you can stay in, cheaper than any of the hotels in Paris, with a view of the Eiffel Tower. It’s a really gorgeous place to stay. Before I could say sure, he’s making the reservations.”

On the list for possible places to visit are Ethiopia, Turkey, Russia and Italy. But, says Lynn, “Life is simple. (It’s the) same old routine every day with a couple of trips in the year. The main thing is that we just enjoy every day together.”

On their next trip they’ll visit Malaysia and Vietnam. Patty says they gravitate toward locations that require a lot of travel to get there, which is hard. Lynn added that after all the traveling, “I don’t want to see an airplane for about two months. Then I get excited again.”

It seems no matter where they go Lynn and Patty have fun. They enjoy learning local phrases to help them get around, trying the popular dishes of the country and always finding new activities to try. For example, in Huahine they took a catamaran tour of the island, which ended with a feeding of black-tip reef sharks. The tour guide allowed the group to get in the water while he fed

the sharks, but they were supposed to stay behind a rope. Says Lynn, "This young guy, must have been about 25 years old, he went under the rope right by the (guide), and instinctually I said, 'Patty, let's go!' So we went underneath the rope." They were standing just a foot or two from the sharks.

Lynn and Patty also tried sea-cave kayaking in Thailand: "They take you out in the Andaman Sea, and you get in these inflatable kayaks," says Patty. "There's a pilot, and he's with you in the back. You can't drive and maneuver these boats at all—they do it all. They time it so that you go underneath, into these caves, and when you come out you're in this landlocked lagoon. The beauty of the calm water, foliage, rock formations and wildlife is stunning."

Because the tides come and go, Patty says the pilots are constantly monitoring water levels and consulting charts. She says when they were on their way out of the lagoon, back through the caves, "it was so close at one point they told us we had to lie down, and they said to Lynn, 'Sir, would you please lower your toes.' It was really scary. They got us back safely. The guys (pilots) have a lot of scratches on their hands." Patty adds that they will even deflate the kayak a bit to make sure it will fit between the water and the roof of the cave.

Not all their experiences include water. While in China, Lynn says they were amazed by the Great Wall. "That was really an awe-inspiring experience to see this man-made structure go as far as you could see." Unfortunately he didn't get one experience he had planned: "I had this image before we went that we were going to jog the Great Wall. I got on the Great Wall, and I have a problem with heights."

Says Patty, "Everywhere we go there is always something funny or fun that happens. There's just so much." The Caldwell's aren't afraid to laugh at themselves, either.

In London: "We were in London and we were trying to find this Indian restaurant," says Lynn. "We couldn't find it and we were running late, so I went down this side street and Patty was right there beside me. I walked by this office building and I saw this person behind the desk. I thought I'd run in there and ask the person for help, so I ran toward them and (clap!) bounced off the window, like a sparrow—boom! It was one of those

plate-glass windows that came all the way to the floor, and I thought it was a big open space."

"That was a wonderful moment," says Patty. And in Malaysia:

"We were in this souvenir clothing shop and they had these mannequins with the clothes on ... and I turned around, I could have sworn it was a lady!" says Lynn.

"He's carrying on conversations with mannequins ... We have fun," says Patty. "We probably left a lot of people in hilarity wherever we've gone."

Back home in Bellevue, however, the Caldwell's continue to enjoy each other's company.

"There isn't a day that we don't enjoy doing whatever we're doing, whether it's barbecuing or doing nothing," says Lynn.

"I think we're fortunate that we do get along so well," says Patty. "We're only children, so maybe that's it. I don't know."

"There isn't anything that important to get into big arguments about. When people say, 'Don't you get bored?' No. 'How can you stand to be around each other for 24 hours a day?' It's not a problem."

"Do you want to go back to work ever?" Patty asks Lynn.

"No, never. I enjoyed my job when I was doing it, but that was another phase, and I have no desire. Do you want to go back to work?"

"No, no thank you! It was wonderful, and my heart will always be there to do what you can for kids, but I'm fine. It's just a whole other phase of your life. It seems hectic some days, but we just say to ourselves ... we don't have to hurry, we're retired."

