

“A Senior Perspective”

By

Tom Holbrook

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Just got back from the Oktoberfest festivities at Sumter Landing and thought I should write this while the memories were fresh in my mind... you know how fast they slip away these days. It's gushing time again so bear with me. For those of you outside of Florida and not familiar with The Villages, Sumter Landing is the second Town Square created by The Villages for us, its residents. I say created because our Town Squares are not just a bunch of buildings built with sticks and block. Every Town Square, and every building in them has a history which has lain dormant for many years in the minds of the developers here and comes to life with each sawing of a board and hammering of a nail.

At Sumter Landing there are train rails imbedded in concrete going nowhere on which imagined trains once traveled, carrying cargo and passengers. There are life size locks painstakingly constructed in a lake that never was until last year, through which boats of unknown origin or destination sailed to and fro on a regular basis. There is a large lighthouse on the edge of the lake shining brightly to keep ghost ships from floundering on the rocky shores. Each building has a plaque predominantly displayed giving the names of its “former occupants and original construction date.” Well worn bricks on the streets still rumble as modern vehicles traverse over them giving a hint as to what it might have sounded like when the iron rimmed wheels of freight wagons and surreys rolled over the same bricks a hundred years earlier.

This night, as most others at Sumter Landing, couples meander down the middle of the street hand in hand, oblivious to the traffic because they know the understood rule at The Villages is that the pedestrian has the right of way at all times. Smiles line the faces of these people because they've awakened and found themselves in a wonderland of which they've only dreamed all their lives. Music assails the ears from all sides because tonight is a hurricane delayed celebration of Oktoberfest and German bands are on every corner and in the central bandstand, oom-pah-pahing while lederhosen clad gentlemen dance the polka with their colorfully frocked frau. *(Try saying that 5 times real fast.)*

You don't know if the couple next to you is a resident or a visitor looking us over before purchasing their new home in this impossible to imagine community, but Judy and I talk about those who are visiting wondering how anyone could not be impressed with the smiles on everyone's face, the gaily painted buildings, and the lights outlining the roof of each town building in the evening. Judy and I wandered around with our neighbor Lacey, sampling the beer, German bratwurst w/kraut and sausage w/peppers served up by Dominic's Ristorante on the Square. In a word... Delicious! A typical Florida rain shower came down just as the parade was getting under way but was gone a few minutes later so spirits weren't dampened at all.

We sat with a couple of friends, Ed and Ginny, and were soon joined by another couple who introduced themselves as Plain Jane and Denny of New Jersey. They seem to be a great couple who've been here several months more than we have and have great plans to enjoy themselves while they're here. Jane indicated she reads this column every now and then and gave such raving reviews I promised I would mention her in it. Isn't it amazing how much loyalty can be had by promising notoriety? They were a lot of fun and we hope to see them again soon.

I know it's hard for many of you to believe all that I write about this place in which we live, but I'm not the only one who gushes to his friends and family. We observed a dad with wife and visiting children in tow, giving the nickel tour and the dad was extolling the virtues of The Villages. His excitement and obvious love for this place was in his voice and it was electric to those listening. The children were duly impressed and I'm sure they will leave after their visit with mixed emotions. Very pleased with the knowledge that Mom and Dad are happy with their new digs but also saddened with the realization that Mom and Dad are so happy they won't be coming back up North as much as the kids might have hoped.

Well, the festivities were great, the people greater and time for Judy and I to go home. We walk to where we've parked our golf cart and as we enjoy the balmy ride home we remark just how blessed we are with all the new friends we've made and to have just experienced another "beautiful day in The Villages."

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