

8/30/05

Paradise Found

by

Tom Holbrook

When my three sons were in town a few weeks ago they said they could now understand why I continually gush in my phone calls, letters and e-mails about the wonder of The Villages and the lifestyle its residents enjoy. Each day Judy and I bring up one or more reinforcement as to why this is the (almost) perfect place to live. Have you noticed the crews that are at work endlessly doing nothing but making sure the flowers and shrubs along our highways are kept seasonal and weed free?

Have you noticed when high winds come from time to time and trees topple, as trees are wont to do, they are righted or replaced within a 24 – 48 hour period? Have you ever compared the philosophy of The Villages developers to that of other retirement communities? With those at the helm here, first goes in the infrastructure (drains, sprinkler systems, paved streets, basic tree packages, street lighting, mail facilities, swimming pools, recreational areas,) and then the homes begin to take shape. Other communities I have visited build the homes first with only a promise of other facilities and amenities to follow. Some never come through on those promises. The Villages thinks of our residents first and foremost.

I do gush about the wonder of it all here at The Villages in the same way I gush after I've eaten at a great restaurant or see an exciting movie and encourage others to partake. When one finds paradise there is an immediate bout with mixed emotions... Does one tell others and encourage them to come and join or does one keep it a secret out of fear that others will spoil the paradise with their coming? I tell everyone I know that this is the place to retire. As I see it, the influx of the different sizes, shapes, ages, geographical backgrounds, experiences and talents of the people, together with the management philosophy of the developers, is what makes The Villages the unique hometown it is.

Judy and I were driving through Lake Sumter Landing yesterday and saw many people walking the streets, with a sales packet in their hands, looking in wonder at the different shops, the ever present music emanating from a lamp post or bush and all the multi-colored and designed golf carts. She commented on how excited she gets seeing these new faces beginning their journey on becoming a Villages resident. We would like to stop our car and corner them to explain just what awaits them if they decide on this place as their next home.

The Villages offers so many entertainment opportunities and outlets I haven't even scratched the surface in discovering them all, but one of the best entertainment venues I was privileged to experience this past Sunday was at Palmer's Legends at the Arnold Palmer Country Club on Buena

**Vista. Every Sunday, 4 pm – 8 pm, if you can find a seat on the veranda, you will be treated to some of the best Jazz I've heard in a long time.**

**The Valerie Gillespie Quartet, although we heard only a trio this day, with Rick Steuart on keyboard, Tim Belenger on drums, and Valerie Gillespie headlining the group, mesmerized us with their talent and took us back in time for the 2 ½ hours we were able to stay. Valerie is a diminutive dynamo with expertise on the Alto Sax, Soprano Sax, Clarinet and Flute and scatting in the manner of Queen Ella herself. Their rendition of Gene Krupa's "Sing, Sing, Sing" had our feet tapping and minds wandering back to the 40's and 50's. Valerie's talents are second only to the best Jazz man I have ever known up close and personal, my former music professor and long time friend Dr. Charles (Charlie) Martyn whose license plate on his vehicle read Dr. Jazz. Charlie is retired now in the San Diego, CA area but Valerie is here in The Villages at Palmer's Legends every Sunday through September. All you jazz aficionados out there give Palmer's Legends a try for an afternoon of smooth food and drinks and smoother jazz. Word of advice...arrive early to get a good seat.**

**#**