

# “Member Profile”

This week's feature: *Jon and Teresa Peter*



What a wonderful interview I had with Jon and Teresa Peter. Teresa was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, in the Raleigh area on the northeast side of town. However, her family drove to midtown each Sunday to the Lutheran “mother church” where her father had grown up. The St. Teresa “Little Flower” Catholic Church they passed on the way was the inspiration for her name. Teresa’s love of music and dance began early, as her mother (who had been in a high school class with the then-shy Elvis Presley) enrolled her in tap and ballet classes at the age of 18 months! Teresa also loved school but was shocked to learn that many of her young schoolmates in the Bible Belt didn’t even know what a Lutheran was! She attended Christian Brothers University, a private university associated with the Roman Catholic Church, and earned a degree in math with an emphasis in computer hardware and software. She began her career in IT as a programmer/analyst for a small computer firm. She later worked for Motorola and then for Cummins Engine Company as a Business Systems Analyst in their IT department, traveling domestically and internationally.

Jon was born in Ohio and grew up in Elyria. His love of sailing started early, as his family had a sailboat on Lake Erie. Jon attended Lutheran West High School, then Case Western University, where he sang in the Glee Club and earned a degree in chemistry. He began his career with The Sherwin Williams Company in the Cleveland lab, working in a group focusing on the development and testing of exterior house paints. He was later transferred to Baltimore, Maryland to be a chemist in the Highway Coatings Group; he worked his way up to Technical Director and eventually became the Business Manager. After Sherwin Williams purchased a paint plant in Memphis, Jon moved there to run the plant and to convert it to a Highway Coatings plant.

It was in Memphis that Jon and Teresa met while both were in a Lutheran church choir. Teresa taught Jon to polka and waltz, and when they married in 2001, the church’s oompah band played at their reception! Then, while vacationing in the Cayman Islands, Jon decided to introduce Teresa to

sailing (though he had not sailed in years). They rented a tiny sailboat and promptly capsized it — oops! After a second try, they were both hooked; soon after returning home, they bought their first sailboat and moved into a lakefront home where they could sail year round!

Meanwhile, Jon's leadership and innovation resulted in the Memphis plant winning the Sherwin Williams' prestigious Plant of the Year award. This led to Jon's promotion to Director of Asset Reliability, and he traveled domestically and internationally to all the manufacturing plants, implementing new systems and practices to "bring the maintenance departments into the 21st century." In 2009, Jon was transferred back to Corporate. Later, he decided to re-enter the field, and he ran the Bedford Plant for a few years before retiring.

Jon decided to retire early, at age 54 1/2 (with no regrets!), to pursue his lifelong dream of living on a sailboat (at least for a couple years) while still able! So, he and Teresa and their then-13-year-old female rescue dog, Sammie Jo, who loves to go boating with them, began a two-year trip through the Erie Canal, down the Hudson, around New York and New Jersey, down the east coast to Florida, over to the Bahamas and back — glorious! Along with sailing, they were able to pursue other interests along the way. They attended several Contra dances (a form of folk dancing with similarities to English Country Dancing and Square Dancing), visited numerous waterfalls, and found a Lutheran church choir to sing with while in Florida. Sammie Jo enjoyed meeting other boat dogs and getting to investigate new smells every few days. She is now 16, and they are living in North Ridgeville in an active adult community.

When Jon and Teresa moved up from Memphis (originally to North Olmsted), they looked for a Lutheran Church where they could feel at home and be active in the choir. Prince of Peace won out in this search, and I am glad it did. They actually joined the choir before they officially joined the church! Both continue to sing in the choir at the second service, and Teresa also enjoys playing handbells and being Assistant Minister.

Jon recently earned his Captain's license and certification to teach sailing and has been busy doing that this summer. Additionally, he and Teresa supported youth sailing events (Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Spirit of America) as well as First Sail for adults. Teresa, who is a former president of the New Westsiders Club, has also been busy with activities of that group, which welcomes new residents and helps them acclimate to life in Cleveland.

When asked what was something no one at Prince of a Peace would know about them, they said that they were both Valedictorians of their High School classes and that they once sang in a group that performed at Carnegie Hall. Jon and Teresa are two wonderful and active people.

*By Dick Hardy, Profile Reporter*