

MARCIA THE MARVELOUS

Connect with: Marcia Laibl Hall

I must admit I was annoying. I emailed first, then again, then again, then I texted. Texted again & then, heaven love her, Marcia gave me an appointment & said, “Thanks for not giving up on me” (*rather than, “would you just leave me alone?”*)! Keep in mind, which is how I began our conversation, I knew nothing about her. If she was too busy to do this, I get it. I just knew nothing. Well, it turns out she was & is too busy. Her husband has been accepted into a long wait-listed program at Mayo Clinic which brought excitement, hope & many days on the road, in the clinic & in hotels. Her third son just graduated from college bringing more hours on the road, planning, partying & transitioning. But that isn’t enough to make her tell me to go away. She has been watching her new house be built for the last many months & finally....they just got the occupancy permit & were moving the entire last week! I don’t know

about you guys, but just the graduation would have taken me out of a silly phone call. Marcia is a busy woman. She is a doer, a learner, a caretaker, a go getter, an accomplished professional, a problem solver with a positive attitude, a difference maker in the world.....and she makes a stellar chicken pot pie.

As Marcia began to answer my list of lead questions – brief history, locations, spouses, children, jobs, etc. – I began to excitedly discover that we have a lot in common. She was born & raised in Palatka (*not the in common part*), but then left home for college in Georgia where she met her husband. They stayed together & played together throughout college & beyond before considering marriage. She said they traveled, had lots of friends & were having too much fun to stop & get married. Same was true of Vern & I in our early days. They even bought a house before marrying which, I can attest, will drive a mother bonkers, as it did both hers & mine. Mine said, “Oh for Pete’s sake (*who is Pete anyway?*),

you are putting the horse before the cart!”
(*Imagine a loud huff here.*) But in time,
marriage seems the right thing to do, so they
got married (*as did V & I*).

Marcia was drawn to the fields of health &
psychology but wound up getting an education
degree. I was drawn to education but wound
up getting a psychology degree. She moved
from the college town of Valdosta, going to
Atlanta to blaze trails in education, adding the
special needs population to fulfill that line of
interest. At about this point in life (*for me as
well*), everyone (*but us*) thought it was time to
have children. She told me it wasn't that they
didn't want them, they just didn't care if they
had them. It was this same mental state that
Vern & I shared, so I could relate to the shock
& disapproval this brought from family &
friends. To relieve some of this pressure, both
couples just “stopped preventing it” & bam,
guess what happened?! Marcia beams when
she speaks of her “my three sons”. And when
asked, “Of what are you most proud?”, that is

her answer, “My three sons”, then adds, “from the person who didn’t want any!”

We both had first born babies that screamed & never slept with second borns being so delightful, we were certain there was something wrong with them. Both agreed Mother Nature was wise enough to give the challenge child & the reward child in just that order. If not, at least in my case, bodies would have come flying out of windows! Mother Nature went on to surprise Marcia with her third son when she was 40 years old! She brags he is the best blessing ever!

They continued to live in Atlanta for 42 years. There Marcia “made a difference” in education for 37 years. The last of those 12 years, she served as Director of a private school that included Elementary, Middle, High School, Adults with Disabilities, plus a Supported Employment Program & a Supported Living Program. Once the special needs students graduated from high school, they were taught a

job that could take them out on their own. There was actually a “fake apartment” in the school in which to teach real world skills for survival! That’s not all, the program supported them into their first apartments to ensure success. How about that?! Not a surprise, the job Marcia did, now has four employees to manage it.

Marcia is one of seven children, a “mixed family”, she said, but all raised happily as one. Many still live in this area. As she sadly is facing some health problems with her husband, she has happily returned to Palatka to be close to those many siblings for help & support. One would think with her past of making such a difference, she could rest on her laurels & just enjoy life, not go looking for a community service club! Although her plate is full with making a difference at home, she reports “It just doesn’t feed me like dealing with children”. When asked about her expectations of Pilot Club, she hopes when things settle down, she can get more involved because she continues

to “love doing for others.” She hopes to make new friends & her new passion is brain health which aligns with the club mission. I call dibs on being her new friend & we spoke at length on the topic of optimal health & how to pursue it, sharing a lot of the same information.

Other pearls of wisdom from my interview with amazing Marcia:

- Secret to a lasting marriage? “Compromise (!) & having fun together.”
- Tips on effective parenting? “Hmm,” she hesitated, “my sons were each so unique & different from each other, that I parented each of them differently. But one consistent tip is to take it all in stride!” Great educators do this...teach differently to the many different students & learning styles in the classroom. So I wasn’t surprised.
- What she does for fun? “Cooking is my therapy... in a nice kitchen. And thanks to Jerry Hafner, the home builder, I now have a nice kitchen!” (*You see the connection here, yes?*)

- Any piece of advice for anyone at any age? “Live life. Live it on your terms. Have fun. Do not put off what you could do today! You never know when your time will be up.”
- What do you have left you want to do? “Make a difference. I feel I did in Atlanta & I need to continue to make a difference however I can. I haven’t really found my niche here but I’m not giving up.”

I enjoyed feeling we had much in common, but the similarities were limited. She went on to make great changes in the world. I went on to bus tables, plunge toilets, deal with “crises du jour” in the restaurant world for 43 years! I can say I used my psychology degree every day, but the needs I met were limited to hunger & thirst! None the less, she is fun to get to know, impressive, admirable. I record my interviews to relisten when writing. At the end, we said our pleasant goodbyes, she left the call & there on the end before I had turned off the recorder was my exclamation, “Wow, she is just delightful!”

Welcome to the Club, Marcia. Club members, enjoy her. I promise I won't be her only new friend.