

## How You Gonna Get Her Down on the Farm

Connect with: Linda Freeman

I have a personal mantra, “Never let a positive thought cross your mind without crossing your lips.” So, I started our call with the reason I chose Linda this month. She looks like I always hoped I’d look as an older woman. She is not wrinkled, yet still her face announces, “I’ve been smiling all of my life.” Her hair, the perfect shade of gray, falls in thick lovely waves on her shoulders & this appears to happen without effort. She has a calm happy disposition,

with the ease to step right into Pilot & take over a large task.

Surprised & pleased Linda replied, “Interesting, since I spent most of my life very overweight & with very short hair!” What happened, I wondered? She just one day decided to lose 50 pounds! Two knee replacements & a hip surgery were the stimulus. She joined Noom... an eating education as well as a weight loss program. It focuses on things “about you”: what, when, why you eat what you eat as well as your goal for joining. Is it to fit into a dress for an event or is it for a life change? Linda had tried weight loss programs for silly reasons like

that many times. But this time her goal was to not just lose weight, but “to live longer, be healthy & enjoy it”. The program allows for occasional indulgences, teaching how to then resume the good sense eating regiment. It’s working for her. She eats smaller portions, way more vegetables & fruit. She knows the high carb plate is like putting kindling on the fire while the nutrient dense calories (protein, vegetables, healthy fats) are the big log on the slow burning fire of energy & satiation. Well done, Linda. You did it the mature wise way most people hope

to do. She is reaping the rewards.  
Just look at her.

Although so interesting to discuss, I had to break from it to learn the many wonderful things about her life. Linda is from Illinois. She went to Illinois State U, became a teacher there with her first job in Plano. She lived in Sandwich, Ill, a tiny town only three miles from the even tinier town in which my husband, Vern, grew up. (Here is where you say, "Small world!") She met her husband, Leonard, at this time. He had been to college in Illinois, then the Marine Corps & then the Peace

Corps! He was back & working in a radio station when a mutual friend set them up on a blind date. That was it...they married in 1973.

Leonard had a farming background & a group he knew bought a farm in Hastings, Fl. He came down here to manage the potato harvest in 1979. He returned from that, enamored with our rural Florida & began to convince Linda this is where they belonged. He brought her down for a “vacation”. She was hesitant with the idea of leaving a good teaching job & home in the Midwest, but the chips began to just fall into place. They found a

house in Dunn's Creek, she got a teaching job in Crescent City & bingo, they have been thrilled to be here ever since. In 1990, they moved into town...into the very house now owned by Pilot member, Jennifer Thompson Taricano! Linda was joyous to attend this year's Christmas Party in the home she had spent Christmas's & hosted holiday parties for years.

(Ya, small world again.)

Linda enjoyed that teaching job as an ESE teacher at Crescent City HS for six years. She moved onto the Northeast Florida Educational

Consortium as a Learning Resource Specialist working with Special Ed Teachers in Putnam, St. Johns & Flagler counties. She returned to Putnam to be a curriculum coach & to work with Title One as a resource teacher for the district. At a nearing retirement point she thought, “I’ve spent all these years telling teachers how, when & what to do that maybe it’s time for me to put my money where my mouth is & get back into the classroom.” So, she went back in & taught 1st, 2nd, & 5th grade classrooms & ESE & guess what? She learned things she hadn’t

known. The final six years found Linda working with Smart Horizons, an on-line high school that partners with businesses to support students finishing high school. She had students ranging from 16 to 82 years old! It was a satisfying position...not so much as a teacher, but as a mentor, coach & cheerleader.

Three years ago, she did retire...well, from teaching anyway. She & Leonard had bought a farm 10 years earlier & now it was time to leave the pretty downtown house & move to the farm! The Good Earth Farm is in East Palatka/Hastings area where



they raise sod, chickens & sheep!  
Retired? Nah.

This job incorporates much of what creates her sought after health & well-being... physical exertion, bright sunlight & fresh air. To complete the pleasures, they host open house jam sessions, "Chicken Picken", the 4th

Sunday of the month in the barn.

Local musicians come to play & local yocals come to picnic & tap their feet. Put the next one, September 22, on your calendar... I'll see you there.

If you did the math earlier, you'll know Linda has been married for 51 years.

So, what makes a marriage work?

“Patience, communication, doing a lot of things together like working, vacationing & playing,” she replied.

“You have to talk about the things that are negative or upsetting, not let them build up unsaid.” This good

philosophy & good marriage has been enhanced for years by their wonderful daughter, Betsy, who lives nearby & also works the farm. I

backtracked as I had not asked about Betsy before in the conversation.

Betsy was adopted. The call came one day while Linda was teaching at Crescent City so she did not have

phone access. Leonard called the principal to see if he could break the rules & speak with Linda. She was called into the office, quickly convinced she was about to be fired, but instead was given the phone to get the life changing news she had desired. Even the principal cried. They had 24 hours to prepare to pick up their new, five-week-old, baby girl. They had no idea what age child they might receive. Ironically, they recently on a whim, had purchased a crib & a car seat. As it turned out, they did this unknowingly, on the actual day Betsy was born. It also was on Leonard's birthday. (I know,

goose bumps, right?). As a family, they always celebrated Betsy's calendar birthday but the bigger, better celebration is what they call "Gotcha Day" – the day they brought Betsy home.

Linda & I covered so many interesting topics that won't fit here. You will have to ask her about them. In ending our call, I asked what brought her to Pilot & her thoughts on it. Linda, like many of us, goes to Thairapy Salon to get that great head of hair done. While there, Marilyn & Jane were yucking it up & came over to meet Linda. Jane, as usual, effervesced, "You would love to be a

Pilot!” So, Linda joined. She loves that “Pilot club members get things done. They are active. They are making a difference in the community. That is what appealed to me.. to work with a group of women that like to help other people. I love the Caring for Caregivers, as they are so often left out. I love feeling the excitement & joy that comes with planning, executing & then watching the impact it has. This was so evident in the Night to Shine project!”

Linda is accomplishing her goals. She is “living longer, healthy & enjoying it”. And while most of us fear being “put out to pasture” as we

age, Linda is doing all of this out IN  
THE PASTURE! Linda, it is pleasure  
to get to know you.