

## Coming Full Circle in Western New York

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Believe it or not, people do come home to Western New York. Maybe it's just that Western New York tends to follow you wherever you go. My parents were born and raised here, married, and had five children. In 1989 they retired and shocked everyone with their announcement of plans to sell their Grand Island home and move. They built a house in Lady Lake, Florida and blossomed into a lifestyle they'd never had while living here.

It happened very slowly and was a delight to watch. Freed from the daily restrictions of jobs and family commitments, they were able to focus completely on each other and what made them happy. The Square Dance Club, AARP meetings, and The Western New York Club led to new friendships filled with brunches, activities and day trips. Every couple they discovered from Western New York soon became a friend. Acquaintances they'd known most of their lives from Western New York came to visit and in this more open and carefree lifestyle, they developed strong, trusted friendships they never imagined possible "up North."

More important, however, was what happened with us kids. Four out of five of us lived on Grand Island with them. We often stopped in. There were quick hellos and then off we'd go to the grocery store, or home to make dinner. In a rush we'd yell "thanks" as we dropped off the grand-kids for them to watch while we went off somewhere. In my quick stops I saw them maybe half an hour a week.

Then they moved. Everything changed. My long distance bill went sky high and I wrote long letters. I missed them terribly, but in my heart I knew they deserved the right to be let go, as they had done with me when I chose to leave them and claim my own life.

My husband, son and I would visit once or twice a year and a wonderful thing happened. I became friends with my parents. In their new home, I got up and had breakfast with them in my pajamas. We'd linger over sour cream donuts and talk before we'd head to the screened porch to leisurely read the paper. Days were filled with a few hours at the pool and a quick trip on the golf cart to Winn Dixie for a loaf of bread. Trips

to area attractions were complete with picnic lunches and ice cream cones savored on shaded benches. Laughter followed us everywhere.

The move gave us kids the gift of time we don't often get with our parents as adults. In the vacationing, high quality time that we shared, our relationship changed. It developed a deeper nuance. Given the unencumbered time, we got to really know each other. When they only lived a couple miles away, our busy lives and close proximity had limited us without our realizing it.

Their move away brought them intimately in touch with people in a way that wasn't possible when they lived so close-by. Now it's come full circle. My parents have decided, for a variety of reasons, to move again and come back to Western New York after what they call a wonderful, ten-year "vacation" in Florida. They will literally be right around the corner again.

I can't wait for my parents, my friends, to get here. I don't have any fear that the quick visit relationship will return. We've developed into much more than that. Even so, sometime they may find me at their doorstep, suitcase in hand, ready to spend the night. Short of that, I need to find someplace that carries really good sour cream donuts.