

“Profile Story”

This week’s feature : Lia Noukas Staaf



Lia was born in Tallinn, Estonia. She lived in Estonia until she was 11 years old. The Soviet Union invaded her country, denounced her father who was an Estonian Police Officer as an enemy of the state and sentenced him to Siberia. Her father hid at her grandmother’s farm for two months until the Germans occupied Estonia from 1941-1944. In 1944, the Soviet Union then invaded Estonia again. Lia’s family tried to flee to Sweden on a fishing boat but the German military seized their boat and forced them onto a ship to Germany with other Estonians. During and after

World War II, they lived in various refugee camps in Germany for the next four years.

They ended up in the French Occupation zone in Trier. Her mother obtained permission for the family to move to an Estonian camp in Kleinneubach in the American zone, where Estonian refugees had established schools. In 1948, Congress approved the Displaced Persons Act to allow refugees to enter the U.S. At age 16, a Lutheran Church in Lucky, Ohio sponsored the family and lent them money to come to the United States . They lived in Genoa, a small farming community at the time. Lia is grateful to that church and to the people who helped them along the way.

Early in life, her schooling was interrupted often due to the war. After immigrating to The United States, Lia attended and graduated from Genoa High School; Bowling Green State University and also Western Reserve University (now Case). She majored in history as an undergraduate then earned a Master's Degree in Library Science. She met her husband, Bud, in a medieval history class in college!

Lia has had a career that spans many skills . She has worked as a babysitter, an elevator operator, a sales clerk for a bakery, library assistant at Cleveland Public Library, and spent most of her working life as a middle school librarian /media specialist in the Lakewood Public School System. Lia has two adult daughters, Monica and Norma. Monica and her partner, Glen, live in Massachusetts. Norma and her husband live in Idaho.

She was a member of Faith Lutheran Church in Lakewood for many years. The church began to lose members. Several POP members who were friends from College Club West, invited her to a tea. Lia fell in love with POP and joined about 16 years ago. She volunteers as a greeter, attends Bible Study, and is involved with Sisters in Spirit.

Her energy is put to good use in her hobbies and interests. Reading has been her lifelong passion. She enjoys meeting people of all ages and

sending them cards. She participates in College Club West; the Rocky River Historical Society; American Nationalities Movement; the Cleveland Museum of Art; and the Rocky River Senior Center. Lia enjoys attending concerts and plays. She has traveled to all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and 22 countries! Until recently, she went to the Chautauqua Institute every summer to attend lectures and cultural activities.

Something that people may not know about Lia is that she played in Bridge tournaments for many years and is a Silver Life Master in Duplicate Bridge! During many services and events at our church, you will always notice Lia engaging with many in our congregation. She has a Big and Loving Heart for people! Lia always seeks to Give God the Glory!

*Much appreciation is given to Monica for her interview of Lia
Tom Robinholt : Profile Reporter*