



Member Spotlight

Naomi Brooks

By Lee Granger

On a blistering August afternoon, I sat down to interview Naomi Brooks, a great-grandmother and spry octogenarian, for our member Spotlight feature. With her upbeat demeanor and the gleam in her blue eyes, I knew that this woman had an interesting tale to tell. Her father, Sam Schneider, originally from Russia, took a German name before he stowed away on a ship, at the age of 17, to find a new life in America. Thereafter, he was instrumental in helping the rest of his family to immigrate. Sam owned a bakery during the depression, to which Naomi attributes her sweet tooth! He also studied the stock market and had investment successes. Her brother, Dr. Allen Schneider, is a professor of physiological psychology at Swarth-more College. The siblings stay close through visits and a regular call every Sun-day morning. She is very proud of her grandson, Marc, a PGA professional who manages a golf course in Berlin, CT, and especially of her new great-grandson Marc Warren!

In her early years, Naomi had ambitions to become an actress, singing “Matchmaker, Matchmaker” in a community production of the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. But, when she graduated from high school in 1942, the War made her think of more analytical pursuits and she enrolled in Morse Business School. As it turned out, Naomi was a whiz with numbers which she parlayed into a 30 year career at CIGNA in the payroll department.

Although she has lived in Central Florida for 14+ years, she grew up and raised her family in the Bloomfield, CT area (outside Hart-ford). Naomi and her husband raised three daughters—Ellen (Yeaser), Betsy, and Mary. After her father passed away, Naomi’s mother, Dora, came to live with the family and helped to raise the girls. Dora

was an inspiration to all of them, holding down an out-side job and contributing significantly to the household chores. Dora is credited with being a strong presence with the ability to make quick decisions. In addition, she created prize-winning knitted garments and needlepoint pieces.

Naomi developed her skill with needles from her mother. Just about everyone in her family received a knitted sweater from Naomi at some time. Plus, she contributed to the WWII effort by knitting khaki sweaters for the troops! She is now too busy to do needle work, but likes to read mystery novels on her Kindle including works from authors James Patterson, Mary Higgins Clark, and Danielle Steel.

In addition to baking, Naomi's father also loved to play games—bingo, poker, canasta, pinochle, etc. Naomi learned that love of games, and due to her prowess with numbers, she enjoyed going to casinos and playing the slots. She and her husband Jack were frequent visitors to the Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut and on Caribbean/Bermuda cruises. With her love of games and game shows, a lifetime thrill was her appearance on “The Price is Right” in New York City during the 1950s. Naomi won a sterling silver tea service!

Naomi and her husband Jack moved to Central Florida in the late 1990s and took up residence in the Heathrow Community. She joined Heathrow Women's Club in 1999, along with her daughter Ellen. Naomi has been very active in the Club, developing deep friendships, and serving as the Corresponding Secretary. She taught a number of members how to play Mah Jongg, which led to many spirited social events.

These days Naomi lives at Lake Mary's resort, otherwise known as Oakmonte Village. She enjoys the community's activities, including exercise classes, and especially the games. She says, “It is just like being on a cruise ship!” Naomi attends most of the Heathrow Women's Club events and activities. Her philosophy is to “think young and stay active.” We in the HWC are blessed to have Naomi as one of our members.