

GETTING TO KNOW... Connie Timlake



Connie on the 2019 Dominican Republic mission

Love of family; love of nature; love of music; energy; creativity; protean interests; resilience; and faith—all describe one of our newest members. Below is recounted a small portion of Connie's remarkable story.

Tell us a bit about your early life. My life began on a farm in Norwich, just across the river. My sister, two brothers and I were known as the kids from New Boston Road. My childhood was idyllic in many ways. We had horses, dogs we trained for hunting and field trials, and we had pigs, chickens, and black angus cattle.

I adored riding. Unless there were chores to do, I was off on Dapper Dan or Major. Dapper could jump anything; so half the time we sprouted wings and flew. Major could outrun just about any other horse in the area; so we ran a lot of races. In the winter we skied behind one of our sleighs. If you fell there was no outrunning the horse; so there was a long walk home.

I rode on the equestrian team in college, but I really was happiest when riding on an old McClellan army saddle down an old logging road or just as far as I could go on New Boston Road, Norford Lake Road, and as far as Thetford and Union Village as long as it was daylight, which was about 30 miles.

Did your love of music come early also? Music was a big part of our family. My Mom and Dad loved to sing and the four of us kids just chimed right in. We grew up listening to classical, big band, early rock and roll, and blues. Road trips were never boring! When I was 10 I started singing in the children's choir at church and never stopped. Once I was in a choir of 200 people. It had to be big to reach the congregation of 15,000!

Singing at the drop of a hat continued with my children and grandchildren. We sang in the car as I drove them to school. Even though my oldest daughter is hearing impaired, she always knew the words. It didn't matter that she hit the right note one out of 20 times—it was always about the joy! Four of my six grandchildren sing in choirs, in musicals, and plays simply for the love of it. My youngest grandson wants to be an actor and has performed in two of Jodi Picault's plays.

I detect a proud grandmother. I am so fortunate that four of the six live close to me and that the other two live in New York state. I am very proud of them all. They are all talented and good people with amazing ranges of interests in music, singing, writing, sports, and languages. For example, one speaks Mandarin and one is a dedicated classical music listener. One grandson created his own forge and makes beautiful pieces for gardens, etc.

Please tell us a bit about your post-college life. My major in college was the history of art. After college I returned to the Upper Valley, where I worked for an art supply firm and even became an art restorer. What a wonderful experience that was.

Then I married a soldier. During his career, we were stationed at Fort Polk, Fort Sam Houston, Fort Dix, Fort Bliss, Fort Campbell, and Fort Leonard Wood. He served two tours in Vietnam. You might be interested in the system we used to determine where I would live during his first tour. Since his time there was unaccompanied, we got an atlas of the United States and he turned it around while I was blindfolded. I then pointed blindly to a spot on the map. As it turned out, it was Salt Lake City during his first tour and Joliet for the second (but not in the prison, thank you).

While in Salt Lake City I worked two jobs, but wanted to do something to assist wounded soldiers retuning from combat. I volunteered at the Veterans Administration Hospital, where I read to, talked with, and wrote letters for, the soldiers. Inevitably, they asked what kind of car I drove. It was a turquoise Thunderbird with white leather interior and white side walled tires! It was an ostentatious, unloved car, by me, but the guys loved it! The doctors gave me permission to take three of the soldiers for excursions that became adventures. With their wheelchairs and crutches in the trunk, they could sit up tall, laugh, and joke and no one knew the horror they had endured. One day as we were exploring, everyone decided it was time for lunch. When asked where they wanted to go, the unanimous choice was "that new place," McDonald's. As we pulled in we were amazed at the sign that proclaimed "35,000 sold!"

I also had the honor to welcome a number of Army prisoners of war into my home on their return to the United States.

You mentioned to me earlier that you enjoy traveling. I have been blessed to have visited Italy, Amsterdam, England, Ireland, Croatia, Spain, Sicily, Monte Carlo (I didn't break the bank), France, and,

memorably, cruised around Stromboli while it was erupting. I also had the pleasure of visiting Belgium twice, where I had two moving experiences. I visited the British war cemetery, which was both beautiful and solemn and, in the Ardennes, a farm established in the 1300's that had a doily on display that was the exact pattern my great grandmother had crocheted 150 years ago while in a convent in Quebec. I have traveled to all but five states, Mexico, the Bahamas, St. Thomas, St. Bart's, Puerto Rico, and Canada. History of all kinds has been one of my loves. There is so much in life to be interested in and much more to see and do.

How did you return to the Upper Valley? We had lived in Houston, Texas, for 14 years. The children's grandparents and great grandparents were still living and I wanted them to know them. It was just time to come home.

Were you always a Baptist? I was raised as a Congregationalist. While we were living in Houston, my children and I attended a revival at Sagemont Baptist Church, where we all made professions of faith. I have been a Baptist since and began attending the church in Houston until we moved back home. I was part of two local Baptist churches in the Upper Valley, but at my cousin Ellie's recommendation, I began attending the Etna Baptist Church. How right she was. I love being a member of this congregation.

If you were approached by someone looking for a church home, how would you describe our congregation? The people are very friendly, kind, welcoming, and love the Lord. Pastor Mike and Susan are very involved, warm, talented, extremely caring, and giving of their time and energy. Our congregation is the same way. We are an awesome family.

Interviewed by Ralph Puckett and Karen Hoffmeister