

Lance and Carol Stalker.

Ryan and Katie
Stalker with their
boys Alex (5) and
Ethan (16 months).



Pepper Creek's Lance and Carol Stalker Valpo Forever

By Cheryl Wooten

Choosing where to retire is a big decision. But for Lance and Carol Stalker, they had no doubt. It had to be Valparaiso. "We lived in Newburgh (Indiana) for twenty-one years before moving to Valparaiso to live closer to our children and grandchildren," shares Carol.

Family is paramount with the Stalkers. "Our favorite times are when all 11 of us are together, either here or on our annual vacation to Sanibel Island, Florida." Their backyard pool is another family favorite hangout. GC and Grandpa Dod, as the grandkids call them, enjoy going to their grandkids' school programs, soccer practices and games, and swim lessons and meets. "We pinch-hit on helping get the kids to different places," laughs Lance.

Last year the couple moved into their "forever" home built by Bucher Construction in the Estates of Pepper Creek. Moving into Pepper Creek, "we felt very welcomed," says Carol. "The neighbors are friendly and the neighborhood is small enough that we all look out for one another. We like the big lots and the appeal of living in nature." And, it's close to their daughter, Amanda, a busy stay-at-home mom and Rodan and Fields consultant, son-in-law Rob Moreth and Rob and Amanda's daughters Maddie (9), Lexie (6) and Stella (5). Rob and Amanda own Simko Signs and Rob manages the Walgreens on Calumet.

The Stalker's son, Ryan, and daughter-in-law, Katie, live in Minneapolis with their sons Alex (5) and Ethan (16 months). "We visit our son's family several times a year for holidays and vacations and video chat with them every Sunday afternoon," says Carol. Ryan is a Senior Brand Manager for Land O' Lakes and Katie contracts for the Association of Architecture Organizations and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

In addition to spending time with family, being retired has its benefits. For Carol, "The best thing about retirement is not having to get up and rush around in the morning. I can have my coffee, watch the news and go workout at the Y." Lance agrees, "Freedom of schedule means I usually choose how busy I want to be."

Lance and Carol met in 1969 at a college dance. "My best friend talked me into going to the dance," laughs Carol. The student union asked Lance to pick up Carol and her girlfriends and give them a ride to the dance. When Lance rumbled up in his glass-packed Ford Torino 428, Carol hopped in the front seat and she's been there ever since! One week later, on Valentine's Day, they had their first date. Four years later, they were married in Tucson, Arizona. In 2018, the Stalkers will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

Born in Concordia, Kansas, Lance moved to Lima, Peru when he was four. "My dad was sent there to open the first Sears store," shares Lance. He fondly remembers the beautiful Peruvian shores along the Pacific and the towering Andes to the east where they would fish for trout and cook them on the spot. Mostly, Lima was quite safe in the early 1960's. But Lance recalls, when 10 years old and walking to school, that a family of four grabbed him under his armpits and attempted a kidnapping. He managed to kick his way free. Still, the vast majority of his time was enjoyed with Peruvians and kids from around the world.

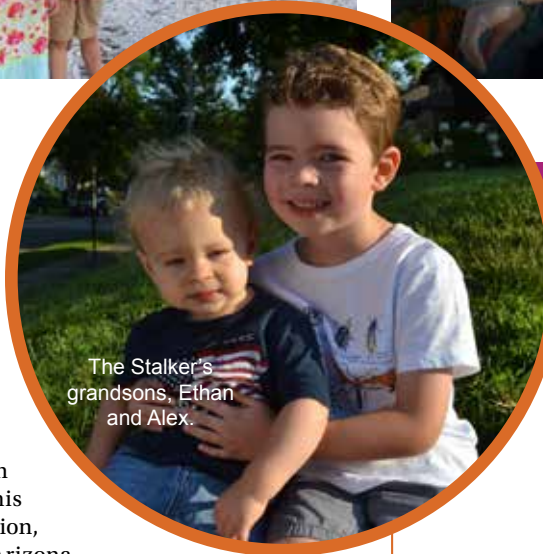
After nine years in Lima, Lance's family transferred to Bogota, Colombia in 1963. "Living in Bogota was unforgettable with the Spanish-influenced architecture and Colombia's beautiful settings. But life there became more politically tense and less safe, mainly because the Shining Path communist insurgents were revolting against the government. While his parents stayed in Colombia for



Lance and Carol with their five grandchildren in Florida.



The Moreths: Stella, Rob, Maddie, Amanda and Lexie.



The Stalker's grandsons, Ethan and Alex.

several years, at 14, Lance's parents decided it was time for Lance and his brother to return to the States to avoid being drafted into the Colombian army. They chose a private high school in Colorado Springs, Colorado near his uncle's cattle ranch. After graduation, Lance attended the University of Arizona, graduating in 1972 with a degree in business and an MBA in 1973.

Carol was born and raised in Tucson and recalls living an idyllic childhood. "It was almost always warm there, but when it did get cold, we got excited to wear a jacket!" Carol recalls helping her dad plant orange trees on their property, a very tough job. "The caliche soil there is as hard as concrete and it would take my dad weeks to dig a hole for the tree." Carol loves Tucson's artsy vibe and interesting attractions. "There's a lot of Native American history, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and Saguaro National Park. Did you know it takes the saguaro cactus 75-100 years to grow an arm?" Carol graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in elementary education in 1973, followed by a Master's in Education from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

After their wedding, the pair moved to Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Virginia where Lance entered the Air Force as a Second Lieutenant in Management Engineering. Carol began her career and taught elementary school for four years until their son Ryan was born. For the next ten years she was a stay-at-home mom. After completing his military service, Lance's jobs took them to Evansville, Indiana, Grayslake, Illinois, and Newburgh, Indiana.

Now settled in Valparaiso, they attend Calvary Church and "love the energy Calvary provides to families of all ages. Valparaiso is an outstanding example of an enjoyable, fun, easy-to-live-in Midwestern town. The selection of restaurants is a real treat which deserves our community support," says Carol. "We love walking downtown, especially on first Thursdays." Lance agrees. "The restaurant scene is really fantastic and the eating experiences are quite varied. And the musicality! We've enjoyed several excellent musical groups. This type of experience is atypical for a town this size."

The Stalkers feel blessed to call Valpo home and would like to share their family's favorite toast with you: Salud, amor y pesetas y tiempo para disfrutarlas! (Health, love and money and the time to enjoy them!)

i Salud, amor y pesetas y tiempo para disfrutarlas!

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