

NORTH VALPO NEIGHBOR

Inside This Issue

Boston Marathon Runners
Trees and Insurance
Sugars, Not So Sweet

Cover photo by Angie
Januchowski, Aspen Studios

HIGHFLYERS ED AND KAREN SEYKOWSKI

POWERED BY



BEST VERSION MEDIA

www.bestversionmedia.com

ED AND KAREN SEYKOWSKI

HIGHFLYERS

By Cheryl Wooten | Photos provided by the family

Photo by Angie Januchowski, Aspen Studios

Ed and Karen Seykowski have excelled in their chosen fields and now, as retirees, are applying their ambition, skills, and desire to help others in new endeavors both locally and abroad. Truly highflyers, this delightful couple is setting new standards and inspiring others to reach for greatness.

Since 1947, Ed has called Valparaiso home. Spending his boyhood like Huckleberry Finn on Long Lake, Ed fished, swam, explored, and had plenty of outdoor adventures. While in high school at age 17, Ed joined the Naval Reserves. Upon graduating from Liberty Township High School in 1958, Ed began active duty.

Karen grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and after high school enrolled at Valparaiso University. In the spring of 1963 while in the library, Karen introduced herself to Ed and asked for his help. As Ed remembers it, "This very attractive young lady came up to me and asked if I could help with her car." Karen explains in more detail. "I had a '54 Chevy Belair that got maybe 15 miles to the gallon and only got 10 miles on a quart of oil. My idea was to strap a barrel of oil on the roof and run a line into the sump to gravity feed it!" Although Ed's solution didn't involve a barrel on her car roof, he was able to get the car running better. Not long after, they began dating and in August of 1965 were married in Karen's hometown of Pittsburgh.

Karen graduated in 1963 from VU with a bachelor's degree in physical education and with her master's degree in education from Purdue in 1970. Over her career, Karen has taught PE at LaPorte High School, Aylesworth Middle School, and in the Duneland

School Corporation. From 1998 to 2008 Karen was the part-time Christian Education Director at Christ Lutheran Church where the family has been members since 1972. As an educator, one of her favorite sports to teach was trampolining. "Kids that didn't like PE loved bouncing on the tramp," she shares.

A sportswoman in her own right, Karen excelled at a variety of sports. "We didn't have Title 9 when I was in high school, so we played intramural recreational games," Karen recalls.

A tall young woman, Karen enjoyed basketball, volleyball, softball, cycling, field hockey and tennis. She's also was an accomplished race walker, having earned several medals. And to top it off, she's an eminently good marksman. "As a young girl, my older brother and I used to shoot cans with my .22 rifle. He thought he was the best at everything. I didn't like doing the dishes, so I said, 'If I hit a bullseye three times, you get to do the dishes.' And that's how I became a better shot than him."



Aloha!

During Ed's active duty in the Navy, he trained as an enlisted radar controller and was assigned to an aircraft carrier radar plane that assisted aircraft carriers with submarine patrol on the East Coast. "The team would locate and track Russian submarines using sonar buoys dropped from the airplanes".

Ed earned his Gold Air Crew Wings in the AD5-W Guppy and flew from four aircraft carriers including the USS Saratoga which, while cruising in the Mediterranean, stopped at ports in France, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, and Cyprus. "Late one night, we even made an unplanned landing on the island of Sardinia when one of the

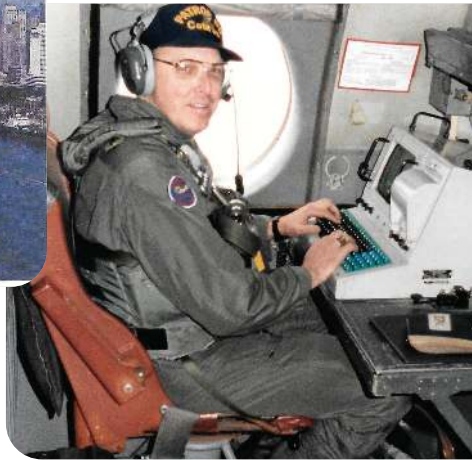


carrier's jets crashed into the stern of the USS Saratoga and caught on fire," shares Ed. While visiting Rome, Ed had the privilege of having a small private military audience with Pope John XXIII. Ed was promoted through the ranks from Airman to 3rd Class Petty Officer and finally to 2nd Class Petty Officer shortly before receiving an honorable discharge to return to civilian life in June 1962.

That same year, Ed enrolled as a part-time student at Valparaiso University and also began working as an account executive in broadcast advertising and agencies. Although he gave it a valiant effort, Ed had to drop out of school. "I ran out of grades and money," he laughs. However, in 1974, when congress reinstated the GI Bill, Ed went back to VU to complete his degree. "I also took a job in the steel mill as an instrument technician which allowed me to attend classes." He graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1976. For the next 20 years, Ed worked as an industrial educator using the skills he acquired as a naval instructor.

The flying bug bit Ed once again and in 1977, he returned to the Navy Reserve VP60 Squadron as an aviation electronics technician, in-flight communicator, and crew chief before getting his commission. During one top secret mission, Ed and his crew flew to Iceland "to get sound signatures from the Russian's newest submarine." His last naval assignment was the Executive Officer of the Reserve Unit for the USS Frank Cable, a submarine tender stationed in Guam. Ed W. Seykowski, Chief Warrant Officer (CWO4) USNR (Ret.). He retired from the military in 1999.

Of note is that both Ed and his brother, Don, are retired naval officers and naval aviators. "Don went to the Naval Academy, and I



came up through the ranks," says Ed. "Don was in jet aircraft, and I was in prop aircraft. I got commissioned as a Chief Warrant Officer when I was 50 and in the Navy Reserve. Don did the commissioning ceremony in front of my Naval Squadron VP60 at Glenview Naval Air Station. All I can say is never say never! We were raised lower middle class, obtained college educations, and became naval officers." Although retired, Ed has been serving as a Blue and Gold Officer for the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland for the last 34 years. His territory is Northwest Indiana. "Of the hundreds of candidates I've interviewed, more than 35 of them have graduated from the Academy to become fine Naval and Marine Corps officers."

The Seykowskis live in a lovely home on Long Lake. "When my parents bought the cottage, it had a coal stove and horsehair insulation in the walls," says Ed. In 1965, after they got married, Ed and Karen moved into the cottage next door to Ed's mother, who was ill. In 1970, wanting a larger home, they relocated their cottage and joined it to his mother's to make one large home. "We were our own contractors and hired professionals to help where we didn't have the skills." It's been 77 years, and they're still enjoying the wildlife, birds, natural environment, clear water, and fresh air. As the longest and oldest resident on Long Lake, Ed shares that he has "become an armchair historian for the Valparaiso Northern Railroad, a trolley that ran from downtown Valparaiso for 10 miles north to Woodville from 1909 to 1939. The right-of-way is just

Refresh your home.



Tudor Floors & More Kiba Studios | KITCHEN & BATH

Waterproof Vinyl,
Pet Friendly Carpet,
Porcelain, Hardwood,
Cabinets & Countertops

We are the local name you know and trust.
Family owned & operated since 1969.

Discover More

219.462.8026

www.tudorfloors.com

401 US-30 Valparaiso, IN



across the road from home and was my playground as a boy.”

Living on a lake and being in the Navy, it’s no surprise that the Seykowskis owned and sailed their 21’ sailboat *Murphy’s Law* for a decade. They also crewed on the 1974 Mackinac sailboat race. Other fun hobbies include canoeing, camping, and home remodeling.

Ed and Karen have one adult son, Edward J., who works as a library assistant at IUN in Gary. “He’s an Eagle Scout and in 2018 received the Diakonia en Cristos award from the Lutheran Diaconal Association,” shares Karen. Ed J. actively volunteers in many roles at Christ Lutheran Church. The Seykowskis also have a fur baby named Precious, a Russian blue cat, who loves perching in the window sill and watching the world go by.

Both Karen and Ed are “professional volunteers” in many church and community entities including Sunday school, church council, district chairman for Boy Scouts, BSA Silver Beaver, precinct committeeman, precinct election judge, township advisor, Red Cross instructor, March of Dimes chair, Valparaiso Chain of Lakes, Dunes Moraine BSA, United Way, RSVP, and Indiana Fraternal Alliance.

But some of their most vivid memories have come from their volunteer efforts through Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity and with Global Volunteers. While Ed has visited over



Elephant safari in Africa; Victoria Falls, Africa; European adventures.

50 countries, mostly while in the Navy, he and Karen have, in recent years, traveled to all parts of the world immersing themselves in other country’s cultures, learning about their customs and cuisine, and engaging in service opportunities. “Last summer we taught conversational English at a summer camp in Poland,” shares Karen. “We’ve

helped build with Habitat for Humanity in every continent except Australia!”



Volunteering in Costa Rica.

Now in their 80’s, Ed and Karen have started to slow down and also wonder, “Who is going to replace us as volunteers? How are we going to train and encourage young people to volunteer in the community?” This led them to partner with Valparaiso University’s Philanthropic Service Leadership program. “We pledged \$5,000 a year to help with that program,” says Ed. “We truly want to train the next generation in ways beyond the next bake sale, because bake sales just don’t cut it anymore.”

With a new vision and passion, Ed and Karen are now training others to soar to new heights.

DO YOU KNOW A NEIGHBOR WHO HAS A STORY TO SHARE?

Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at cwooten@bestversionmedia.com.





EcoPooch

**DOG
WASTE
REMOVAL
SERVICES**

219-216-3913



Get a free quote at ecopooch.org