

East Fishkill

Living

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At Home with Joe and Linda Pettinella



For Linda and Joe Pettinella, Home is Where the Heart Is

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow and Lauren Fitzgerald | Photos by Patti Hale

These days, there are no truer words, especially for Linda and Joseph Pettinella. The long-time Hopewell Junction residents know a thing or two about home, as Joe's been helping others find it since 1983.

Working hard to help others is something Joe will always remember about his parents. Joe's father, Alberto, came to the U.S. at 14 and joined his uncle in the catering business (Alex and Henry's) and construction. Working in the Bronx, he spotted a beautiful young woman at the bus stop. "Who's that girl?" he asked his friend and future wife's cousin, who set them up on a date. Two years later, Alberto married Anna Maria, who also had immigrated from Italy. A year later, Joe was born.

In 1960, they moved to Fishkill, where they later welcomed daughter Nancy and son Albert. Their dad continued working for his uncle in the catering business and built Recine Manor on the corner of Route 82 and Cedar Hill Rd. (the current site of Deer Crossing townhomes). "The mayor of New York City used to come visit, even former President Harry Truman stayed there," Joe recalls. Sadly, it burned down in the 1960s.

The Land of Hard Work

In building the resort, Alberto developed a passion for construction. He spent the next 30 years of his life as a self-employed partner of K&A Excavating Inc. "He was happiest on a bulldozer or backhoe moving the earth," Joe remembers. "Growing up, I never knew when he'd come to my basketball games, but when he did, it was a thrill for me."

Likewise, while Anna Maria stayed home raising her three children, she always helped out at school. Joe was one of the first class of students at Saint Denis-Saint Columba School, then graduated from John Jay High School. When the kids got



Joe and Linda like to entertain in their Hopewell Junction home, complete with a wine cellar.

older, she obtained her real estate license and worked feverishly for her clients for 17 years.

His mother was only 60 when she died of cancer. "I did not get to spend the time with her I would have liked to," Joe reflects. His father, at 77, died in 2010.

Today, Joe and his siblings carry on their parents' tireless work ethic. Joe works closely with his brother Albert, who builds and remodels homes locally, and his sister Nancy, who is a trainer and mentor for more than 350 agents at Century 21 Alliance Realty Group. The largest Century 21 brokerage in Hudson Valley area and number-two in the state, it now spans the entire Hudson Valley, from New York City to Columbia County. Still, Joe often thinks about its humble beginnings in the basement of his first home in Fishkill. "Two desks and two phones in front of the washer and dryer. You couldn't do laundry when Mom was making calls," laughs Linda.

Real estate and custom homebuilding were not Joe's original career goals. After high school, he attended Fordham University and earned a B.S. in accounting. He worked for Price Waterhouse then became a commercial loan officer. Working in Stamford, Conn., he longed to return to the Hudson Valley and be near his family, where he was working construction on weekends. "It was the place I knew and never wanted to leave," he says.

It was also home to his love Linda, whom he had met through a mutual friend, in 1978 and dated through college.

So in 1983, Joe got his real estate license and joined his mom in their independent real estate agency. After 10 years, Century 21 approached the mother-son team. "It was a great opportunity, so we decided to affiliate," he says.

Since then, he's never looked back. Now married 35 years, together for 42, the couple love the life they've built. Their home in East Fishkill, where they've lived since 2003, is a sanctuary

that's entertainment ready, complete with a wine cellar. Joe's man cave has a pool table and lots of sports memorabilia showcasing his beloved Yankees, Giants, Rangers and Knicks. They love the nature surrounding their quiet and peaceful backyard, adjacent to Fishkill Farms.

The Land of Beaches and Baseball

Their second home is in St. Petersburg, Fla., where Joe's parents used to vacation. They try to get there once a month, especially since Joe, a licensed broker and certified building contractor in Florida, is now president of Century 21 Coastal Alliance in Palm Harbor and Tierra Verde. They enjoy a lot of baseball in the Tampa Bay area, including going to the Tampa Bay Rays games and seeing players advance to the major league from their minor league affiliate, the Hudson Valley Renegades. They also get to Steinbrenner Field to watch Yankee spring training and other Grapefruit League games in the Tampa Bay area. Linda's first baseball game was Game 1 of the 1998 World Series, when Tino Martinez's dramatic grand slam home run in the seventh inning propelled the Yankees to a 9-6 victory over the San Diego Padres. A few years ago, "I got to meet Tino in the airport on one of our flights to Florida," Linda smiles.

The daughter of a German-born mom and a German-American dad, Linda was born in Syracuse. Her parents met in Germany, where her father was stationed in the Army. They married and moved to the U.S. He was an engineer at General Electric before joining IBM in Poughkeepsie in 1964. Linda and her younger sister graduated from R.C. Ketcham High School and grew up with traditional European values. "My parents were very strict and had strong work ethics too," says Linda. Her dad passed away in 2005, and her mom lives in Poughkeepsie.

After high school, Linda studied fashion, marketing and management at Berkeley College. She's always loved sewing and retail sales. The manager of the Chico's store in Central Valley, Linda is "going on 40 years in retail, and I love it." She also doesn't mind the 40-minute commute: "Every day, going over the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, I take in that beautiful panoramic view." Linda also loves to read. Her favorite book is *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle.



Linda gazes out the window at the surrounding nature in the vicinity of Fishkill Farms

Before the pandemic, the couple enjoyed trips to Broadway, more time at local restaurants and wineries, and listening to their favorite '60s, '70s and '80s tunes being performed by local bands, like Hurley Mountain Highway and the Chain Gang (who are fellow John Jay graduates). Once they're able to travel abroad, their hearts are set on Italy.

Home in the Hudson Valley

These days, though, with all the migration north from New York City, it's difficult to pull away from the real estate business. When they do, they are especially grateful for Joe's trusted team, including many he's worked with for decades. "They amaze and motivate me every day, especially how they got things done during the pandemic," says Joe, an active member of the Dutchess County Association of Realtors and a licensed real estate instructor. He's also a member of the East Fishkill Economic Development and Housing committees and "proud of the business-friendly policies that will bring prosperity to our town."

While they have no children, family is everything to Linda and Joe. Their five nieces and one nephew are "bright young adults with great careers," Joe beams. "Their lives are built on the same core values we were taught by my parents: hard work, community and never giving up." For that, he expresses tremendous gratitude to his immigrant parents, who were first and foremost "proud Americans."

"They both taught me that if you work hard, do the right thing and stay true to your word, then life will be good to you," Joe concludes. "And that it has." ♦



Joe is always up for a game of pool in his man cave.

**We would like to thank
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