

Gil and Sharon Roderick

They say life is an adventure, and few people can point to as many adventures as Gil and Sharon Roderick have had before and since their retirement.

The couple have gone on 20 Elderhostel trips since retirement, exploring Australia, Bolivia/Peru and New Zealand. They have taken four grandchildren on intergenerational Elderhostels that have introduced the children to the joys of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, canoeing and rock climbing.

Employment offered opportunities to expand Gil and Sharon's horizons as well. Gil taught civil engineering at URI and then at UW-Milwaukee, where he was also an associate dean of the College of Engineering & Applied Science for three years. Once their son and daughter were in school, Sharon returned to work half time as a library assistant. Many of Gil's colleagues came from other countries, so they enjoyed learning the cultures and cuisine of Korea, India, Pakistan, etc. During this time they participated in the usual parents' activities – Boy and Girl Scouts leaders, band, the PTA – while answering the call to adventure in the summer. Then they would load up the kids and camping gear and take off for hiking in the parks of the US and Canada.

Sharon's volunteer work brought a new type of adventure when their children reached high school age. Their daughter introduced them to American Field Service (AFS); first they became an aunt and uncle family and then the host family for a girl from Bolivia. In the meantime, their daughter spent a summer as an AFS student in Australia. Gil and Sharon still maintain close ties to their AFS daughter and have spent time with her and her family in Bolivia. They also met their daughter's host family when they toured Australia. Sharon's volunteer work helped extend the AFS adventure for many others. She served as Volunteer Coordinator for five suburban and three Milwaukee high schools, helping to keep things running smoothly for host families and students. In the 15 years she was involved, Sharon worked with over a hundred students from 35 countries, some of whom still keep in touch with her.

Retirement brought another kind of adventure in addition to their many travels: the move from Shorewood to Oshkosh. They had decided they did not want to retire in a big city, so when the health of Sharon's father began to fail, Oshkosh seemed the logical choice. The city was familiar to Sharon, of course, having grown up here. Gil had long since shed his roots – born and raised on a farm in Iowa, he had been drafted into the army and spent 18 months in Korea. He used the GI bill to study civil engineering at Iowa State. That's when he and Sharon met on a blind date that wasn't supposed to take place: Gil's roommate was scheduled for the date. Sharon had earned her master's at UW and was a librarian at ISU. After a year of working in Colorado and Arizona, Gil returned to ISU to earn his MS and Ph.D., and to marry Sharon. The rest, as they say, is history.

So Gil and Sharon now call Oshkosh home. They joined LIR soon after moving here. In their usual style, they did not just sit back to enjoy its benefits, though both are quick to point out there are many, but volunteered to serve as well. Gil is a member of the Administration and Finance Committee and served as its chair for two years. Sharon joined the Membership Committee and chaired it for three years. A few years ago Sharon presented a series on ancient civilizations of the Americas, a subject she began exploring after a trip to Mexico several years ago.

With Sharon's mother about to turn 98 in October, and children and grandchildren in Milwaukee and New Brighton, MN, Gil and Sharon's roots remain firmly in the Midwest, but the call to adventure – through travel and LIR sessions – is sure to lure this active couple to explore other places.