

A Serendipitous Encounter

“You never know who you’ll meet.”

Such was the case for PCV member and volunteer Simon B., who lent a hand to member Jane M., who needed help with packing some boxes. They got to chatting and discovered, much to each other’s amazement, that they had both emigrated to the U.S. from Cuba. Jane was delighted that PCV had sent her a fellow Cuban!

Jane and her two brothers left Cuba in 1954 along with their parents who had emigrated to Cuba from Russia. She has never been back. Simon left Cuba when he was 15 years old in 1960, two years after Fidel Castro came to power. He was the first from his family to come. With no knowledge of the English language, he stayed with an uncle in Chicago whom he barely knew. After two years he left Chicago and went to New York to join his mother and brother and to attend college. His father, originally from Ukraine, and his mother, originally from Poland, as well as the remaining members of his large extended family, followed from Cuba to the U.S.

Jane and her husband, the owner of a liquor store, raised two sons and a daughter. Another one of her big interests used to be gardening, but since she now uses a walker to get around, she has to be content to just admire gardens. Simon, with a Ph.D. in electrical engineering, worked full-time until 2015, and still does some consulting. With a daughter who has lived in Israel for 8 years and is the parent of 6 children, he and his wife visit there once or twice a year. They also go to Florida 3 or 4 times a year to visit relatives and his wife’s 101-year-old father. Both Jane and Simon are longtime residents of Potomac, Jane since 1969 and Simon since 1982.