

Pat Collins, Shining Shriner Winner

By HERMES BOYATIS

I started going to the VA Hospital in Brockton a few years ago for nutritional advice, what I should and should not eat. Whenever I met with her, I shared my Aleppo Shriners News, revealing my editor's efforts to show the wonders of the Shriners Burn Hospital in Boston.

Waiting for me always was an energetic lady, **Pat Collins**. At my August appointment with her, I became aware of a great honor to be bestowed on her the next day in Washington. She would emplane in the morning from Logan Airport. With so much to deal with, preparing for her trip and her talk, I suggested we cancel our meeting. She worked her full day, and no way would she shorten my appointment!

When she returned, she wanted to tell me about what had happened in Washington. I urged her first to give me an hour or two about her start in life.

"I'm almost 55, born on March 15, 1952 in St. Albans, Vermont. My parents: **John** and **Catherine Steigner**. My dad was born here." "Steigner is a German name," I noted, "can you speak that language?" Laughingly in the negative, "I've had so many things to do!"

My next question: how did your most important career as a nutritional expert start? "I studied at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, at that time called **Peter Bent** Brigham Hospital. After my graduation from internship there in 1976, I

worked as a director of the Nutrition Services Department of the Shriners Burns Hospital under **Dr. Salvatore Russo**." I told Pat that her boss subsequently became Illustrious Potentate of Aleppo Shrine. "I've been in the Brockton VA Hospital for the last six years!" She added with usual delight.

Before we moved forward about health and nutrition to Pat's (she prefers Pat to Patricia), we turned to her private life and adventures.

Your happiest time? "Let me think a moment, there are So Many. My greatest joy was my marriage to **Bob Collins** on August 17, 1975. He is a remarkable husband, friend, so special for the whole world! He represents the IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare). His firm opposes such things as the killing of seals in Canadian waters. We put my nutritional work on hold, while we had children. We welcomed our son **Gregory** in 1978; daughter **Jennifer** in 1981; and daughter **Hilary** in 1985."

Ebullient always, Pat could not resist describing the successes of her now grown-up children. "Gregory is teaching history at a high school in New Hampshire; Jennifer works at a lab in Wareham, dealing with genetics and environmental testing; Hilary works in Randolph for the May Center of the National Center for Autistic Children." "Remember little autistic **Elias Tembenis**?" We told Pat that his final story will be included with hers in this issue.



PAT COLLINS

With victuals on my mind, I queried Pat at about what she cooks at her home in Brockton? "I like to make many kinds of meals - especially oven dishes." She added, "Don't tell my secret. My desserts are best, nothing low-fat, like my favorite cream cheese brownies!"

Surely you and Bob have found no time to travel? "We're cruising whenever we have a week or so free. Since our marriage in New Hampshire, we have traveled to Mexico and the Caribbean. Our most wonderful trip was the Mediterranean one, celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary. On board the cruise with us were Bob's father and his step-mother, celebrating their 50th anniversary."

Certainly you two have no time for pets? "We sure do! We have Baxter, a pug, and Champion, a Siamese, the brightest of all felines!"

I could not believe there was any time left, but asked, just in case. Any hobbies? "I can fix anything around the house. Bob knows why I insist on watching the TV show, *This Old House*, every Friday night."

Her funniest time? "Will anyone ever forget what I did? It's a wonder that I didn't lose my husband! I had just exited my car when I dropped my keys down the sewer. Bob had to call the fire department to pull up the grate, and once their job was done, they left him to go down into the mucky, gooey darkness to search for the keys! He always has cared for the welfare of nature's wildlife, but this time he cared about his own!"

Finally your interviewer asked our amazing nutritionist about her assignment in Washington! "My memorable reason for being there on August 27, 2007," she said, "came from an invitation by the VA to submit a competitive paper on nutrition. My entry brought me the great news: I was a winner!" "Truly the high point of my career was that Symposium on Obesity, Nutrition and Fitness! On that premier day in Washington, I was honored as 'coordinator, consultant, and nurse manager' for the Brockton campus!"

"The two posters on view that day were large and brilliantly colorful. They called for 'Healthier US Veterans' and 'Get Fit for Life'. The honorary presenter was football Hall of Fame quarterback John Elway!"

Everyone is so proud of our Pat Collins; patients, family, friends, felines and canines, people in New Hampshire and in cruise country. Take another holiday with Bob, then get back to your wondrous career!

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OSLO, NORWAY

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