

## Pat & Pam Elwell

In the fall of 1978, Pat and Pam Elwell were living in Orono with Pat commuting to Augusta for work in Pam's mom's accounting business. A realtor they had worked with contacted Pat about a few pieces of land that might interest them. One of them was a parcel that was part of an old farm in Smithfield. Pam wanted land with blueberries and, when Pat brought her a sampling of apples from the property as well as news that there were blueberries on it, she was sold. In 1980, they started building their home, took up residence in June of 1982 with one-and-a-half-year-old Alison, and have been there since. Their second daughter, Lee, was born on the anniversary of that move a year later.



Alison harvesting blueberries shortly after moving to Smithfield, June 1982.

Reflecting on how things have changed in Smithfield over the past four decades, they paused. "Not much," they replied. And that's why they like it.

Pam grew up in Manchester while Pat was born and raised in the Sherman Station



Pam filling in as cashier at a Grange supper

section of Stacyville. Both started their careers as educators at Ashland Community High School where Pat taught math and physics and Pam taught math. For three years they comprised the math department before returning to Orono for graduate studies. Pat had spent three years in the Army before they met, ten years in the National Guard in the 1980s, and has been in bookkeeping since 1977. During their second stint at the University of Maine at Orono Pam was a graduate teaching



Pat and Bert putting up ceiling in kitchen at church

assistant and instructor of ornamental horticulture. She then spent a few years out of the workforce to raise the couple's daughters before going back into education. During that time she pursued her love of gardening and flower and garden photography. Her return to education began at the elementary level but resulted in eventually spending over 20 years at Messalonskee High School as an ed tech in the technology department.

Pat and Pam have both been involved extensively in the Smithfield community. Pat has served as treasurer of both the Historical Society and the church, was a member of the volunteer fire department for a few years and was on the earliest iteration of the Appeals Board. Both Pam and Pat have been members of Fairview Grange #342 for close to forty years. They became members shortly after moving to Smithfield, having been connected

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to the organization through long-time Smithfield resident Erla Merry. Pat also represented Smithfield on the school board for 15 years and served as board chair for about half that time.

All four of the Elwells have been active members of Smithfield Baptist Church for many years with church activities making up a large part of their in-town lives. They've volunteered in the Sunday school and with "countless" church suppers. "There's been a lot of baking," Pam laughs.

In addition, they all have helped run the Loon Call 5K road races and have contributed their musical skills in many ways, from vocal and tone chime choirs to filling in for the organist occasionally.

While their daughters Alison and Lee, now 42 and 39, were growing up, the Elwells "did a heck of a lot" of volunteer work. "One of my favorite volunteering activities was chaperoning bus trips to music festivals," Pam said. "Both girls played multiple instruments, so we were always involved with the festivals."



Pat and Bert sparring during the downstairs ceiling project at the church



Lee handing out awards after the Loon Call 5K road race



Smithfield Baptist Chime Choir with Pat at the far end, several years ago.

Their resilience, emblematic of the kind of people who make Smithfield home, is evident in a story they shared. Back before the road was paved, they recall a washout on Quaker Lane after a hard rainstorm where a stream flows under the road not far from their driveway. The day happened to coincide with a church supper. Although they couldn't get across the washout to



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get to the dinner, they did manage to pass the supper food to a citizen on the other side, who got it safely to the church. “Mud season was always quite interesting, too,” Pam joked.

The biggest change they’ve noticed in Smithfield over the years is the dwindling number of young families with children, but the Elwells have enjoyed being able to bring their grandchildren to their home and sharing with them the natural world about which they’re both so passionate.



Pam, Alison, Emily, Fawn Paradis, and Derek Downing formed a ukulele choir for a Christmas Eve service

Pam retired in August of 2019, and describes the timing as “fortunate.” When the pandemic lock-down hit, they became part of the homeschooling team for their two grandsons in Auburn, who were then in 1st and 4th grades. Because their daughter Lee and her husband had to continue to work outside the home through the pandemic, Pat and Pam would bring the boys to Smithfield for several



Elwell family with Bert and Carol at the Brewster retirement party

days at a time. Pat was working from home by then so they both were able to help the boys keep up with their schoolwork and alternated weeks of being teachers again with the other set of grandparents. Pam capitalized on her love of nature and guided her grandsons through the spring waterfowl migration as she drove them from Auburn to Smithfield.

Forty-five years after their first visit to Smithfield, the Elwells can’t imagine life anywhere else. “There are so many good people,” Pam said. Pat nods in agreement. “And we’re still exploring the property and the area and finding new things,” Pam added.



Whole family at Lee's family's sheep farm in Litchfield, 2021