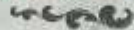




VILLAGER BACKSTORY



**You may know Betty Rohan, of the Village of Collier, from glass fusion at Colony Cottage Regional Recreation Complex, but what you may not know is that she also founded and ran her own travel agency in Jacksonville.**



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

**GETTING TO KNOW BETTY ROHAN**

**Age:** 74

**Village:** Collier

**Spouse/Partner:** Widowed

**Family:** Two children, two stepchildren and three grandchildren

**Moved Here in:** 2014

**Moved Here From:** Jacksonville

**Favorite Villages Activities:** Glass fusion, golfing and water aerobics



**Leah Schwarting**

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

*Do you know someone with an interesting backstory to tell? Email leah.schwarting@thevillagesmedia.com, or call 352-753-1119, ext. 5375*

Betty Rohan said her life was "filled with a bunch of highs and a bunch of lows."

Rohan married right out of college and began teaching school in Starke. The small town was right next to the Florida State Prison, also known as the Ralford Prison, which meant many of her students were the children of inmates.

Her work put her husband through law school, and after he graduated, they moved to Jacksonville. Rohan quit teaching school and raised the children while he practiced law.

One day, he came home and said that he loved her, but wasn't in love with her any more.

The divorce left Rohan with two young children and a decision to make. With her children so young, was she going to go back to teaching school?

"I realized being around children all day and then going home to children at night probably wasn't the best thing," Rohan said.

So, with the help of her mother and a friend, Rohan started up a travel agency, Travel Connections. Eventually, her friend dropped out and Rohan was left in charge of the agency, which grew to have 25 agents.

It was extremely difficult to start up her own agency with two children. The school bus would let them off at the shopping center where her business was. The two of them would then roller blade or scooter around the center while Rohan worked.

Rohan's daughter was a child actress to boot. Sometimes, her daughter would come back from a show at the Alhambra Theatre & Dining in Jacksonville at 10 p.m. with

school the next day.

After her daughter appeared as Amaryllis in a performance of "The Music Man," some of the adults encouraged her to take her daughter to the Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre to audition for "Annie."

So, the two flew down to Jupiter, and her daughter made the cut, not as Annie, but as one of the other orphans.

That opened up a whole new can of worms — how to get Rohan's daughter to the performances when they lived in Jacksonville. In the end, Rohan's mother had to move to Jupiter to make it work.

"I realized at that point 'I can't do this. I can't pedal this child all around the United States,'" Rohan said.

Her daughter continued to perform in Jacksonville though, and eventually got a job in the business side of the entertainment

industry in Los Angeles.

Rohan continued to run the travel agency as her children grew up. She was part of Leadership Jacksonville, and helmed her agency during a turbulent time for the industry. Rohan worked as travel agencies were rocked by the digital age and the 9/11 terror attacks before she decided to sell in 2007.

Something else happened after her children were grown though, or, rather, someone.

Herman Eisenberg, she said, was the love of her life. The two originally met in high school, and reconnected through a mutual friend.

They ended up traveling the world together, from Russia to Switzerland. Rohan fondly remembers her trips, especially the one to Switzerland. Just the beauty of the country is amazing, she said.

The two were together

for about 10 years, and married for about four, before Eisenberg passed from lung cancer in 2012.

About two years later, Rohan decided to leave for The Villages on the recommendation of a friend.

However, Rohan wasn't ready to stop pushing forward. Instead, she decided it was time to start a new phase in her life.

"I came here and I decided, even though I've had those pitfalls, the ups and the downs, I need to give back to the community," Rohan said.

Rohan started the Home-town Civitan Club in 2015, and now serves on the board for Pace Center for Girls Marion County.

"I feel like my journey hasn't always been roses, but it hasn't always been thorns either," Rohan said. "I'm pleased where I am now in my life."