

## Life's Surprises

*by Liz Gibbons*

We all have had unexpected lucky breaks or chance meetings or serendipitous encounters. Many look upon serendipity as random luck, a surprising accident, or fortunate discovery. I believe it is more than chance, and our mindset and outlook on life all have a role to play for serendipity to appear.

First, we have to show up. It may be going to a party, meeting, or some other event. Sometimes it is even an affair that you have been hesitant to attend, but there you meet someone who influences your life. I was hesitant to attend the Windsor Gardens' Newcomers Party in the summer of 2018 at Centerpoint. I did not know what kind of party to expect. Would it be like a cocktail party with people milling around with iced tea glass in hand getting acquainted? I hate those kinds of parties. Or would it be something more structured, which thankfully it was. I purposely arrived a few minutes past the official start time. There were tables set up for us to sit at, and most of the tables were filled. A buffet was offered, and I filled my plate and sat at a table that had just a few people. About ten minutes later another woman sat down kitty corner across from me. I learned that she had just moved from Atlanta. Already we had something in common. She went on and told about some of her background, and I found her interests were similar to mine. At the end of the party we exchanged information, and she suggested we get together after she got settled as she had just arrived. An interesting friendship has unfolded which I would have missed if I had not attended.

Another aspect of serendipity is to be open to other people's suggestions. A year ago in September I began taking a drawing class here at Windsor. Two other women in the class encouraged me to take the watercolor class this fall. My initial resistance to the idea gradually gave way to acceptance. This class has opened a whole new horizon I never considered exploring. One thing I am learning is to let go and let the water and paint react as they wish. While the class is a challenge, it also is allowing me to use my imaginative side more. Who says grass has to be green or sky blue?

Being alert, observant and curious also aids in creating serendipitous moments. When I was in England in 2004 I took a bus from London to Taunton on the west coast of England to attend a health workshop. Seated next to me was a youngish man with long hair. He was glued to his CD player. About half way there my curiosity got the better of me, and I wanted to find out what made this young man tick. I asked if he lived in Taunton. He replied that he lived in London and worked for the National Health Service as an abuse counselor. This surprised me. He was learning acupuncture, and he was very interested in the workshop I was to attend. We had a lot of common interests to talk about. Also along the way he pointed out Stonehenge in the distance when we passed near it and shared some English history of the areas we were passing through. It was a beneficial encounter.

Serendipity makes life so much more interesting.