BEFORE AND AFTER

*Judy Fink*

I grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania, a beautiful state with hills of pine, mountains bored through with tunnels and ever-changing seasons. Blue sky of summer, golds and reds in autumn, crystal beauty of snow, and bursts of color in spring.

 Joe and I lived near my daughter, and we both worked at the University of Pittsburgh, Joe, forty-two years and me sixteen. We reached retirement and decided Florida would be our next chapter. We built the house of our dreams in The Villages in central Florida, picked out carpets, cabinets, floor tiles and wall paint. We were so excited.

 Moving to Florida in July was somewhat of a shock, it was *hot*. Okay we knew that about Florida, it is the Sunshine State. Once we moved in, we had to start rebuilding our lives.

First big change-no friends to spend time with. Our only contacts were with each other…oh boy.

Second change-no family nearby to grab a spur-of-the-moment lunch and shopping trip.

Third challenge-how do we spend our time now. I guess we have to learn to play golf, (I think it’s a law in Florida). We took lessons but never had anyone to play with. Our neighborhood was not particularly friendly which only added to our isolation…I cried a lot during that time.

About six months in, Joe took up bike riding and rode to an area south just opening up for development. Behind the lots was a canal designated as a “wildlife corridor” which meant no streets, or homes could be built behind us. We jumped at buying a lot, sold our first home and built our second retirement home.

We moved in as new neighbors were settling into their freshly built homes around us. Immediately we began building relationships with new couples, golfing, playing cards, ladies luncheons and so on.

 Before and after. Leaving your comfort zone for new beginnings. Sometimes these journeys take a while but thankfully for us, the trip was worth it.