

Getting to Know You

Chris Lloyd and Vassie Sinopoulos

By Jenny Gelfan

It's a true story. A young man from the Chicago area met a woman from the mountains of Greece while they were both in Canada, and after a transatlantic courtship, they came to live in Woodstock and were married by Russell Bletzer, a Unitarian minister, in East Barnard.



Chris had been working in publishing in New York City, moved to Woodstock where his parents had a summer home, and took the opportunity to buy into The Countryman Press, which grew and flourished first in Taftsville and later in Woodstock for several decades. He worked with a wonderful team of big personalities including Peter Jennison, Lou and Peg Kannenstine, and Paul Taylor. Chris developed some real estate in Woodstock with Robert Meyers. In 1995 Countryman Press was sold to Norton.

Chris describes Vassie as a mover and shaker in the community. She brought foreign languages into the elementary school, and later was on the board of the high school during the time they established an endowment and developed a grant program to support innovative educational projects. She helped raise the money to renovate the North Chapel organ.

Vassie has been involved with the arts, most particularly weaving, for decades. She started with Delectable Mountain quilters in East Barnard, expanded to designing clothes specializing in using mola, a Central

American fabric. When Chris's family gave her a loom, she tried weaving and was hooked. She made cloth for clothing and upholstery, but now makes decorative wall hangings. She loves participating in her weaving cooperative and teaching, both now suspended due to Covid.

Chris has volunteered at the Norman Williams Public Library for decades, serving as an officer and trustee. He also has served on the Billings Park Commission for twenty years. As a justice of the peace he married a few people including Jay and Renee. He was involved with Woodstock's Democratic party.

"Many people we knew went to North Chapel," Chris said. When their twins Sophia and Daniel were around 5 or 6, the family joined the North Chapel, along with many other young parents, for the vibrant religious education group of around 60 kids lead by Annette Compton. Vassie along with other mothers were also teachers. Chris joined the choir. They helped with the annual church fair for many years and with coffee hour. Vassie started the resource committee, was on the board as secretary for a few terms and on the building and grounds committee for awhile. Chris was on the music committee through the transition from the former musical director of around 30 years to Diane Mellinger, but then more steadily has been a trustee of funds managing the North Chapel endowment and he is on the finance committee.

Vassie likes the rituals of the Greek Orthodox church she grew up in. Chris's family were Quakers, which gave him a foundation in social activism. "The UU church is a perfect fit for us," Chris commented. Vassie enjoys the structure the minister provides, and Chris enjoys the singing and community involvement.

Vassie's son by her first marriage, Cherif Aziz, grew up with them and now lives in New York with their granddaughter Maya Joy Aziz. Their daughter Sophia Sinopoulos-Lloyd is married and lives with her partner Pinar in Washington State. Sadly, Covid made them cancel plans for visiting this summer. Their other son Daniel lives next door to them.

“We love Woodstock and are grateful to be here,” Vassie commented. The mountains remind her of where she grew up. At home they garden and have chickens and fruit trees. They have spent lots of time canoeing, biking and hiking, “to check the routes,” Chris said with a smile, referring to the many area guidebooks The Countryman Press published. “We love the church,” Chris added. “ It is like a hub with wonderful people orbiting around it. And we miss seeing everyone.”

In February this year, after decades living in Vermont, Vassie finally became a US citizen, in addition to her Greek and Canadian citizenships. “I want to vote,” she says.