

LIN THORNTON + BETTY GOLAY

A FRIENDSHIP FOR LIFE

Soul-level friendship often emerges in the most unlikely places, like a kindred career by way of a school bus driver's seat. Lin Thornton and Betty Golay first met as they entered the transportation business in the 1970s as a way to serve the community while keeping their young children in tow. They've since walked through more than 50 years of life in tandem, including grandbabies, difficult diagnoses, and daily rhythms—like lunching together every day.



BETTY: The school put out a call for substitute bus drivers. I thought, *Now this is something I can do.* I'd been looking for ways to enrich my life—and hopefully enrich others' along the way. My children, who were too young for primary school at the time, sat down on the ledge next to me as I drove. I quickly learned how special it is getting to be the first face students see in the morning and the last before they go home for the night.

LIN: My brother-in-law started the bus program at the school our children attended and asked if I'd be interested in helping out. I thought I might as well give it a whirl since I could take my 2-year-old daughter with me and I'd be off in the summers. I rode with Betty on a few routes to train. I remember her having that busload of nearly 60 kids so well-behaved, singing songs and everything. She started having sciatic nerve pain in her back, so I got called to drive her usual route for a while. The students were not as well-behaved for me—ha! But that's how we first met. We just hit it off, plain and simple.

BETTY: We've done life together every day—raised babies, coached the school basketball team, taken daily lunch breaks across from one another, and even visited Disney World once on a girls' trip. Lin's been like a sister to me. I didn't have one growing up and neither did she, so we've gotten to be that for each other. She walked with me through my battle with cancer and when my husband, Nick, passed away in 2010.

LIN: It goes both ways. Betty helped me through losing both of my parents. After all these years, it feels like each of our families have merged into one big family. Now five decades later, our daughters are close friends and their children are growing up together. It's a three-generation friendship, which is pretty special.

BETTY: Our grandchildren are really the reason we continue to drive school buses, to be there for field trips and such. I also have a foreign exchange student who's lived with me for seven years. He was involved in the school show choir, so Lin and I would put in requests to drive for those competitions so we could support him.

LIN: I'm not sure how much longer we'll keep working. We've always joked we'll probably end up fully retired, sitting in rocking chairs next to each other on the porch. But we like to stay active, and we're busier than ever right now. I don't know about you, Betty, but the older I get, the more I appreciate this friendship.

BETTY: I do too. It's wonderful to go through this life together.