**Joe Vorwerk**

Joe Vorwerk’s parents were originally from Yugoslavia (modern-day Bosnia). During World War II, when Russia invaded the country from the south and Germany invaded from the north, many families fled to what they hoped would be places of refuge. Joe’s father, August, made it to Linz, Austria, and worked as a fireman in a chemical plant—an occupation that saved him from being drafted into the German army. After the war, his father left to find the rest of his family, dispersed throughout various displaced persons’ camps. It was in one of those camps that he met and married Joe’s mother. In 1952, they were able to immigrate to America with two children and one on the way. They settled outside of Chicago and later moved to Wisconsin, where they had a small farm, and Joe’s dad also did factory work to support the family.

In 1973 the Vorwerk’s moved to Florida and settled in Crystal River where Joe graduated from high school and became an Eagle Scout just before his eighteenth birthday. Postponing his entry into the University of Florida until the winter semester, he traveled around Europe for two months and recalled, “I was fortunate to discover relatives, aunts and uncles, in various countries and particularly enjoyed widening my personal perspective on life.”

Returning to Crystal River, Joe enrolled at the University of Florida. Playing football and pursuing studies in three different fields of engineering for the first couple of years, he incidentally took an accounting class and decided to switch his major to business, concentrating on finance. At a UF fraternity party he also met his future wife, Bonnie, who was an education major and Homecoming Queen. They were married in 1990. Bonnie was Dean of Students at CFCC and is currently a guidance counselor at Blessed Trinity School. They have three adult daughters, Ali, Andie, and Lanie.

Joe has been a career banker for over 35 years, gaining valuable expertise and in-depth knowledge of mortgage lending, investments, and real estate development. Alongside that work in 1996, Joe became partners with Thad Boyd and started as a commercial real estate broker in 2011. My banking background proved to be a helpful asset to all phases of our business.”

Where Joe feels most comfortable in his multi-layered profession is in financing loans and raising equity. A strong camaraderie has been formed with the other two senior partners, Thad Boyd and Joe Krim. They bring out each other’s particular talents and skills to produce a synergy effect. Joe said, “It’s like putting together puzzle pieces and figuring out how to manage risk. Thad and Joe are incredible at bringing people together to get important projects developed and brought to fruition. I’ve learned so much from them over the years.”

For anyone who works as hard and concentrates as intensely as Joe does on all these transactions, it’s necessary from time to time to get away from it all. Joe and his family love the outdoors and enjoy spending time at their beach place in St. Augustine, boating and fishing. They also try to take annual snow skiing trips out west to resorts in Colorado, Big Sky, Montana, and Lake, Tahoe, California. Joe added, “We have some good friends with a sizeable boat who generously invite us to join them on week- or ten-day-long Bahamas adventures.”

Joe reflected, “I’ve been very fortunate in my long and varied career, which has allowed me to get to know many community-minded residents and business leaders. It’s been a privilege to serve on the board of the Ocala Silver Springs Rotary Club for fifteen years. Rotary is an important resource that consistently sponsors a number of charitable events for causes like the Kimberly Center, Interfaith, Young Life, and the Marion County Literacy Center. Joe and Bonnie are also long-term members of First Presbyterian Church in Ocala.

From family roots in distressed, war-torn 1940s Europe to the permanent roots he and his family have put down in central Florida, Joe Vorwerk’s journey has been a remarkable, impressive, and inspiring one.