

Meet Your Neighbors

Robin and Dave Layton



With all the current chatter and buzz about government and foreign affairs—and all the related politics—it seemed like a really good time to sit and talk with two Diamond A residents with firsthand knowledge of how the United States functions in the international arena—Robin and Dave Layton. Don't get your hopes up, this profile is not about politics....but that doesn't mean that you can't try to talk to them about current events at a Diamond A event.

Robin held a number of really interesting positions, including leading the 10-person U.S. negotiating team on the APEC Privacy Framework (trying to get some consistency among the larger nations on electronic privacy questions) and as Director of the Office of Communication Trade Policy at the Department of Commerce. Dave was the assistant to the Observer at

UNESCO in Paris (at that time, the US only had an observer as it did not participate in the entire UNESCO program) as well as a Senior Trade Compliance Specialist at the US Department of Commerce. [ed. Note: Those are very, very long titles for significant and interesting positions; I'd suggest that any of you who want to know more about what those jobs entailed, stop by their place with a bottle of good wine and be prepared to learn.] Suffice it to say, they both did important and interesting work which required them to live for extended periods in Paris and also in Italy for graduate school. [ed. Note: someone had to do it.]

Robin was raised in Georgia, and Dave was primarily raised in the San Jose area. After college, they both attended the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies in Bologna, which was where they connected before moving together back to DC. They had spent a lot of time in Paris, but when it came time to look for a place to retire, there were a lot of factors that drew them to Sonoma County including Dave's background in the South Bay, SFO as a transit hub, good shopping, food and medical care and acreage to grow grapes—Dave's primary hobby now—as well as a community into which Robin could sink community service roots. They live with their rescue cat Bimbo (male) on 1.7 acres on Spring Drive on which are planted a lot of fruit trees and 196 cabernet sauvignon grapevines. (One of Dave's responsibilities in Paris was to work on the US embassy wine committee to make sure that the embassy shop was well stocked with delicious, tax-free French wines.

If you ask them, either one will be pleased to tell you about grandson Jamie (14 months) and might even show you a photo or two. They are very proud of their two daughters. Claire (34) lives in Silver Spring, MD with her partner Sean Murphy, grandson Jamie and Mickey the dog. Though she graduated from Parsons School of Design, Claire's now applying to nursing school. Julia (31) lives in Pasadena with her wife, Laura Sreebny, Buck the dog and two cats. Julia writes scripts for Disney 'tween sitcoms.

As usual, I asked them a few questions:

First job: Robin: checker at Kmart; Dave: Mowing lawns.

Favorite Diamond A event: Both: the Wednesday night barbeques.

Favorite US restaurant: Both: Fig Café.

Favorite foreign restaurant: Robin: Willie's Wine Bar in Paris; Dave: La Florence in Reims.

How you'd like to be different: Robin: once her new knees (one is in place, the other will be soon) are accommodating, she wants to exercise more, probably walking, and get more involved in community activities; Dave: wants to find an appropriate way to contribute to this community.

Pet peeves: Robin: people who don't get things done right and on time; Dave: Bad/inconsiderate drivers.

Favorite season: Robin: Fall; Dave: Spring

Favorite local charity (of so many good ones): Robin: Impact100 (she's on the Board of Directors); Dave: Pets Lifeline.

Regrets: Robin: that she worked full time when her daughters were little; Dave: that he was working too hard when the girls were little. [ED. NOTE TO PARENTS OF SMALL CHILDREN: Read that one again.)

Guilty Pleasure: Robin: playing Solitaire. Dave: watching adventure/fantasy tv series, like Game of Thrones.

What worries you: Robin: fires and earthquakes; Dave: the extreme isolationism on both the left and the right.

Bucket list: Robin: visiting Portugal and New Zealand; Dave: spending more than a few weeks in a less traveled part of Italy and also an unspoiled corner of the Himalayas.

Books: Robin (in a book club): Soul of an Octopus; Dave: Don Quixote and Winston Churchill.

Recent bliss moment: Both—folks, it's all about Jamie. Can you blame them?