

Meet Your Neighbors

The unofficial mayors of Diamond A



Wayne and Celia Schake

Summer 2016

(Editor's Note: There are lots of interesting stories to tell, but it is unlikely that many will hold a candle to the joint and separate profiles of the unofficial mayors of Diamond A, Celia and Wayne Schake. Although my original intent was

to write two different profiles, this one begged to be written as set forth below.)

This is a love story. Wayne and Celia Schake, both 80, have been married for 58 years and have three remarkable children, two grandchildren and two step-grandchildren. For many people, that should be a pretty amazing love story all by itself. But that's only the inward facing love within the nuclear family. The outward facing love is their joint and separate love affairs with Sonoma in general and Diamond A in particular.

They were both born on farms near small towns. They both had difficult childhoods—Celia was one of six kids who had to raise themselves from a very early age when her mother died in childbirth and her father was away much of the time building bridges-- but both made it to Bowling Green State University where their mutual love of rocks and fossils first brought them together in a geology class. They married in 1958. To fulfill Wayne's ROTC commitment he terminated his PhD studies at the University of Texas where they were both studying and became a pilot while Celia was finishing her Masters and PhD studies in paleontology. She became a high school teacher while Wayne was on his way to becoming a 300 mission pilot in Vietnam. Along the way he flew dangerous missions in the Congo and Ethiopia while Celia took the kids back to Ohio to live with her dad. Among Wayne's flights was taking JFK's secret service people and limo to (and then from) Dallas the day JFK was assassinated. Wayne had a 25-year career as a Pan Am

pilot, traveling the world, which exacerbated his “itchy feet” condition (as Celia calls it); he loves going to exotic places. While their photogenic and highly accomplished daughters-- Kristina who is Hillary Clinton’s communications director (after filling the same position for Michelle Obama and others) and Kori a research fellow at the Hoover Institution (Stanford’s Republican think tank)—get most of the family’s publicity because of their opposing political views (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/11/27/kristina-and-kori-schake-siblings-with-political-differences.html>), their son Kurt was an Air Force pilot for 25 years and now runs a for-profit nurse training company. And one of their grandsons is already an Air Force pilot. (Aside: Wayne and Celia tell me that there was no aforethought involved in giving all of their kids “K” names.) Although it’s more Wayne’s thing, both love traveling, and they spend about 60 days a year on the road, most recently visiting China for a second time. Talking with them and looking at them, it’s easy to think that they are still in their 50’s.

Celia has done an enormous amount of volunteer work, including being on the Library Board, the School Board and the Water Company Board. Wayne has served as a mentor for many years. But that does not scratch the surface of their community involvement which, among other things, included putting together a five family consortium to buy the land for the Rec and then getting the Rec designed and built. When someone buys a home in Diamond A, they ARE the welcome wagon.

I found them recently on the day before Wayne's 80th birthday which he was going to observe at UCSF waiting for Celia's early morning back surgery to be completed.
(Subsequent note: She's doing great!)

What do you like best about Sonoma?

Wayne: The small town atmosphere.

Celia: The people.

Favorite Sonoma event?

Wayne: The 4th of July parade.

Celia: The Diamond A Wednesday night barbeques.

What are you reading now?

Wayne: Mysteries; I'm in a mystery book club. And history.

Celia: I read about 400 pages a day, all non-fiction, mostly history.

Giants/Warriors/49ers?

GIANTS (both). (Wayne attended college on a baseball scholarship and his road not taken was a baseball career. He was a shortstop but fell, hurt his shoulder and will never know what might have been.)

Safeway/Sonoma Market/Whole Foods?

Celia: Wayne does the shopping.

Wayne: Sonoma Market (but also Costco and Trader Joe's).

Favorite summer produce?

Celia: Tomatoes (especially from the garden, but not this year)

Wayne: (Can I name three? Yes.) Tomatoes, corn,
Watmaugh Road strawberries.

Beatles/Stones?

Both: Actually, symphony, but if I have to choose one,
Beatles.

Favorite decade of your life?

Celia: Every one.

Wayne: 1950's and 1960's.

Favorite service vendor?

Celia: Dave Waldron--landscape

Wayne: Rudy Gutierrez—handyman/contractor

Happiest moments?

Both: Working in the garden.

Pet peeve?

Celia: None

Wayne: People who take from the community but don't
contribute back.