

Meet Your Neighbors

John and Judith Walsh



Years ago, there was a cartoon column in newspapers (remember newspapers?) called Ripley's Believe It Or Not, featuring some barely credible event that had actually happened somewhere on Earth. Right here in Diamond A, our John Walsh is married to our Judith Walsh; that's not the amazing part. Believe it or not, folks, John's former wife

was named Judith Walsh, and Judith's former husband was named John Walsh. Now, *that's* amazing.

As many of you know, John has invested hundreds of hours in his role as President of the Diamond A Neighborhood Association, dealing extensively and intensively with, among other things, the short term rental issue while suffering threats of litigation; Judith puts in countless hours working with multiple Sonoma non-profits in various roles while also helping to make Diamond A the welcoming community it is, including (among other roles) as the co-chair of the committee that puts on the Hill Warming and other events. We are so fortunate to have them as such active members of our community up here on the hill.

John was born and raised in New Jersey, in the town that serves as a backdrop for The Sopranos TV series. He graduated from New Jersey Institute of Technology, where he was the captain of three varsity sports teams and was one of the first two athletes inaugurated into its athletic hall of fame. He got his MSEE from Rutgers and spent his working years both at large companies like IBM and AT&T and at smaller firms as CEO. John has the distinction of having had 14 surgeries, and only one of them was to put something in; he's gamely dealing with severe dietary restrictions as a result of very unusual heart issues that were discovered about a year ago.

Judith is a "California girl," born and raised in the Napa area and a graduate of UC Berkeley and Boalt Hall, the UC Berkeley law school. She remembers her first job, making props for her kindergarten teacher-mother to use at school and working at the Napa library while still in high school. However, most of her working life was spent as a lawyer in the Tax Planning group at Chevron, covering all aspects of that company's operations. Her non-profit activities include being on the Boards of Impact 100 Sonoma and Sonoma Overnight Support and actively modernizing the rental assistance records at FISH (Friends in Sonoma Helping).

John and Judith married in 2005 after a non-whirlwind 26 year courtship. They'd first met in 1979 at a birthday party that Judith threw for herself, and a friend had brought John along. The relationship was long distance twice as John was moved around the country while working for IBM and then AT&T. But John moved back to the Bay Area for good in 1987. They maintained dual households (but with visiting privileges) until 2008. John jokes that he didn't want to rush into anything.

They found a spectacular Diamond A parcel on Viewcrest in 2007 but for various reasons did not get their thoughtfully elder-safe house completed until 2011, as which point they became Diamond A residents.

I asked them a few questions:

Role Model: John: older brother; Judith: mother.

Favorite Restaurant: John: EDK; Judith: Oso/Shiso.

Bliss Moments:: John: prefer not to discuss (wink); Judith: Water Yoga at the Sonoma Mission Inn and wine on the terrace on a warm night.

Who Cooks: Having lived alone for quite a few years, they developed different rhythms and preferences, so they generally fend for themselves, though Judith does frequently prepare the low-salt dinners that John has to eat, often using the produce from the garden that she tends.

What gets you up in the morning: John: my body clock; Judith: Pussycat, the 15 year old blonde stray cat who adopted me in Napa many years ago.

Reading list: John: mainly periodicals and what's on the computer; Judith: whatever the book club is reading next, as well as mysteries.

Exercise: John plays golf about twice a week; Judith, who ran two marathons (in the "distant past"), walks several days a week and takes Pilates/Gyrotonics lessons at Studio M weekly as well.

Screen Time: Both admit to spending a lot of time in front of the computer screen, but much of it relates to either Diamond A or local non-profits.

Travel Dreams: Under the circumstances, it's pretty nice right here in Diamond A.

Favorite Sports Teams: John: SF Giants and Niners; Judith: (yawn)

Whole Foods or Sonoma Market: John: Trader Joe's and Safeway; Judith: Whole Foods and Sonoma Market (Not much for following directions)

Favorite Local Activities: Both: Transcendence, Wednesday night BBQs and the Diamond A car show.

Guilty Pleasure: John: potato chips; Judith: chocolate and reading books with no educational value.

Pet Peeve: John: people who don't speak the English language properly; Judith: very slow drivers (of which there are many in Sonoma).

Car: John: Keeps his old Miata but is reluctantly falling in love with his new Hyundai which makes the trips to Stanford Hospital more comfortable; Judith: her 2001 BMW 325 sedan with 196,000 miles on it.