

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Barbara O'Neil: "I Love This Place!"



TGN: What brought you to Menlo Commons, Barbara?

Barbara: I had been renting a 2 bedroom apartment in the downtown San Mateo area for the past 12 years, when in 2016, a 65% rent increase was imposed on the residents of my building. As a result, I became very active in the local tenants' rights movement, appearing in local news articles, on radio interviews, on television commercials in support of Measure K, and in gathering signatures and advocating for a Rent Stabilization Measure which appeared on the ballot in San Mateo (but was fought heavily by the realty industry, and lost) this past November. When a realtor friend of mine found out how much I was paying to rent, she convinced me that I should buy, rather than continue paying such an outrageous amount to my landlord. Together we found this wonderful unit in Building A at Menlo Commons. Using a small inheritance from my parents, I was able to purchase in this lovely community. I have wonderful neighbors who have become dear friends, and I have found everyone to be friendly, warm and welcoming, I feel truly blessed to be here. I love this place!

TGN: Tell us your background.

Barbara: I was born and raised on Long Island, NY, where I graduated from SUNY Stony Brook on eastern Long Island, with a degree in Spanish and Italian Language and Literature. I also speak, read, and write Greek, French, and Portuguese. I was hired right out of school by Pan Am in New York, and after meeting and falling in love with both a California boy as well as the SF Bay area, I transferred to San Francisco. We were married 2 years later and purchased a small Tudor style home in San Mateo, where our daughter Dominique was born, and where we lived for about 11 years. We later divorced, and I began working for the San Mateo/Foster City School District as a Community Liaison. Some years later, I was hired to teach Home Arts (cooking and knitting) and Spanish at Bowditch Middle School in Foster City. This is my 18th year at Bowditch, where I currently teach 7th and 8th grade Spanish.

TGN: I see you have two cats.

Barbara: Yes, they are named "Mr. Fox" and "Miss Honey". My daughter and I named them after characters from childrens' stories by Roald Dahl.

TGN: So what keeps you busy now days?

Barbara: I still teach full time in Foster City, and I have a commercial baking kitchen in Redwood City that I rent out to

small bakers when I am at school. When the kitchen is not being used by my tenants, I produce my own wholesale bakery product, an Italian boscotti. These are hard, twice baked cookies that are meant to be dipped in coffee, cocoa, milk or even sweet wine! The name of my company is "Bravo Biscotti", and one of my oldest (20 years) and best accounts is Draegers in Menlo Park. I also love to travel, cook, garden, read, and entertain.

TGN: What does your daughter do?

Barbara: My daughter works at the airport in Guest Services for Virgin America/Alaska Airlines. She has just become engaged, and is currently planning a wedding in Brazil, where her fiancée is originally from. She speaks fluent Portuguese, and is a member of Aquarela Brazil Dance Ensemble, a professional Brazilian dance group that performs samba in beautiful feathered costumes, on stage for Brazilian musical artists as well as at parties and other Brazilian events and celebrations.

TGN: Where have you been traveling?

Barbara: Since Dominique's future in-laws live in Brazil, I have traveled there quite a bit over the past few years, and have gotten to know the state of Goias, where they live (in the interior, several hours from Brasilia). I also love visiting Rio de Janeiro whenever I get the chance! Three summers ago I spent a month in Paris, refreshing my French and immersing myself in French food, art, and culture. The summer of 2016 I spent 24 days on a once in a lifetime Mediterranean cruise - visiting Athens, Santorini, Mykonos and Corfu in Greece, Marseilles, Nice, St. Tropez, Sete, in the south of France, along with Monaco. We also visited Rome, Sienna, Venice Salerno and Naples in Italy, and Barcelona, Spain. This past summer I managed to squeeze in a weekend in Las Vegas, a weekend in Houston to attend a family wedding, and 12 days in Brazil.

TGN: What do you plan for the future?

Barbara: I plan to stay put for a while and enjoy my lovely new home! I have plans to replace the upper cabinets in my kitchen to provide more storage for my cooking, and baking supplies, as space is tight in the kitchen. Although I have had to downsize considerably when I moved here, I do have some large storage pieces that help to make this space just right for me. I am very happy to be living here!



Darlene Jeris & John Loughlin: Here Since July



TGN: Darlene, tell us about your background.

Darlene: I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, and received my degree in Urban Studies from Cleveland State, and then moved to Washington, D.C. to work with the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. I left D.C., and came to California to get my MBA in Finance from USC. I moved to New York City to work at Merrill Lynch as an investment banker doing commercial real estate transactions, and subsequently I also worked as a pension fund adviser. I met and married John in 1987, and we had our first child - our daughter Julia - in 1992. Then we had an opportunity to move to Iowa where our second child - Adam - was born. In Iowa I had my own consulting firm, and then was appointed by the governor to lead the Iowa Finance Authority - the state's bonding authority. In 2000, we moved back to New York where I worked as a financial consultant for the Chairman of IBM. I also got involved in teaching women how to use computers. During 2004 until 2009 I headed Grace Outreach, a small nonprofit helping women obtain their high school diplomas and move on to college or a job. I then got my Masters degree in clinical social work at NYU. I worked as a psychiatric social worker at New York Presbyterian Hospital until moving to California last year. Once getting settled I went to work for the Veterans Administration on Willow Rd. here in Menlo Park, where I am helping homeless veterans find housing and get back on their feet.

TGN: Your turn, John.

John: I was born in western New York state, and attended college at St. Lawrence University in the Adirondack. My first "real job" was working for AT&T in their Management Development Program. From there I went on to Harvard Business School and graduated with an MBA in 1985. I then joined the New York Times Company's strategy team, focusing on new products. At that time the company had many regional newspapers, a magazine group, and local TV stations, in addition to their flagship newspaper. I ended up helping to run their magazine businesses. Then in 1992 I had the opportunity to go to work for the Meredith Corporation and off we moved to Iowa. Meredith published a large number of consumer magazines, including Better Homes & Gardens, and they had a portfolio of TV stations. After running several of their magazine titles, I then became president of their 14 television stations. In 2000 we returned to New York and I became president of Primedia's 160 consumer magazine portfolio with

titles including New York Magazine, Seventeen and Motor/Trend, among them. Then I was recruited by Rupert Murdoch and did a short stint at News Corporation. In 2005 I became EVP & general manager of Hearst Corporation's magazine division running operations and creating their digital strategy. Then in April 2015, I came to California as CEO of Next Issue Media, a digital streaming magazine business owned by Time, Inc., Conde Nast, Hearst, Meredith and KKR. We're headquartered on Marsh Rd. here in Menlo Park.

TGN: Darlene, tell us what your children are doing.

Darlene: Julia graduated from the University of Chicago, and now works for Kaiser Permanente in Oakland doing strategic planning. Adam graduated from Santa Clara University, and now works for a digital advertising service company start-up in San Bruno, and he lives in Campbell.

TGN: When did you move into Menlo Commons?

John: We moved here in July of this year after living in Palo Alto for a year. We have been busy unpacking and getting acquainted. We're both struck by how friendly and welcoming everyone has been. We are very lucky to have found Menlo Commons.

TGN: What do you like to do in your spare time?

John: We like to travel, and are particularly enjoying getting to know the wonderful areas of California, including Bodega Bay, Mendocino, Napa, the Monterey peninsula, and Yosemite.

Darlene: We like to hike, run, and bike, and the weather lets us be outdoors almost all year round. I have been involved in running marathons and have done six or seven of them over the past few years.. We also enjoy live music and are enjoying the Mountain Winery and the Greek Theater at Berkeley. We also are discovering some of the terrific restaurants locally. I also like to paint and draw.

John: I've begun working with Gwen Leonard and the SAFE committee on the challenges associated with Santa Cruz Ave. and the "Y". Making it safe for pedestrians, bikers, and residents of Menlo Commons is really important.

TGN: I see you have two pets.

John: Yes, our dog is named Winston and our cat is named Einstein. The names represent two of our heroes of the 20th century.

TGN: Yes, I notice the cat is in deep thought, perhaps about relativity? Well, thank you for taking the time out of your busy lives to share with us.

