

## Krystyna Swearingen: Swimming Pool Is A "Life-Saver"



Retail business is going thru some major technical changes and it is important to stay relevant.

**TGN: What do you do in your spare time?**

**Krystyna:** For the past seven years I have spent my time with my husband Al as he was suffering from illness, and eventually in the last three years was living and being cared for at the VA unit in Menlo Park. He passed away this past April. So I am getting re-organized. It is an adjustment. I want to get back to playing tennis, possibly even some horseback riding which I enjoyed in the past throughout my whole life. On my "bucket list" is to take a mission trip with Menlo Church, I have been particularly inspired by Muhammad Yunus and his microfinancing business model. I believe that is super important for everyone to be self sufficient, independent, and poverty should not be an option. I also would love to go back to Ghana.

**TGN: What do you like about living at Menlo Commons?**

**Krystyna:** I consider it is my "little sanctuary". My unit here is in the rear corner of Building E, away from the street, and with some beautiful trees around it. I also like the swimming pool. I love to be in the water and consider it a "life-saver". I made quite a few friends here that I consider now my family.

**TGN: I notice you have interesting art work on your walls.**

**Krystyna:** Yes, I painted the one on the wall behind me. That was about 10 years ago. I named it HBP (yes, "high blood pressure"). I also like to collect art of people I know. That way every piece is attached to a personality, an experience that is just more special and meaningful.

**TGN: Thanks, Krystyna, for taking the time to share with us about yourself. Now, we can take a couple of pictures for our article showing both your painting and your location here at Menlo Commons.**

**TGN: Krystyna, tell us about your background.**

**Krystyna:** I was born and raised in Warsaw, Poland. When I was 5 years old my parents moved to Ghana, West Africa where I spent the next seven years of my early childhood. After that we came back to Poland where I attended an all-girls Catholic High School. One year after my graduation we moved to Montreal, Canada, and I obtained a degree in design and merchandising from La Salle College in Montreal. After that I got my B.A. degree from Concordia University in Montreal in theater scenography and costume design. During my last year at the university I started a manufacturing business with a partner, producing women's and children's clothing. A year later we opened our first retail store and then proceeded with a second one. I met my husband Al while he was on a business trip in Montreal. Two years later I sold my share of the business and moved to Los Altos Hills and we married. Since then we lived two years in Dallas, Texas, and 12 years in Newport Beach, CA, before coming to the Bay area. We moved to Menlo Commons in December 2001.

**TGN: Do you still have family in Montreal?**

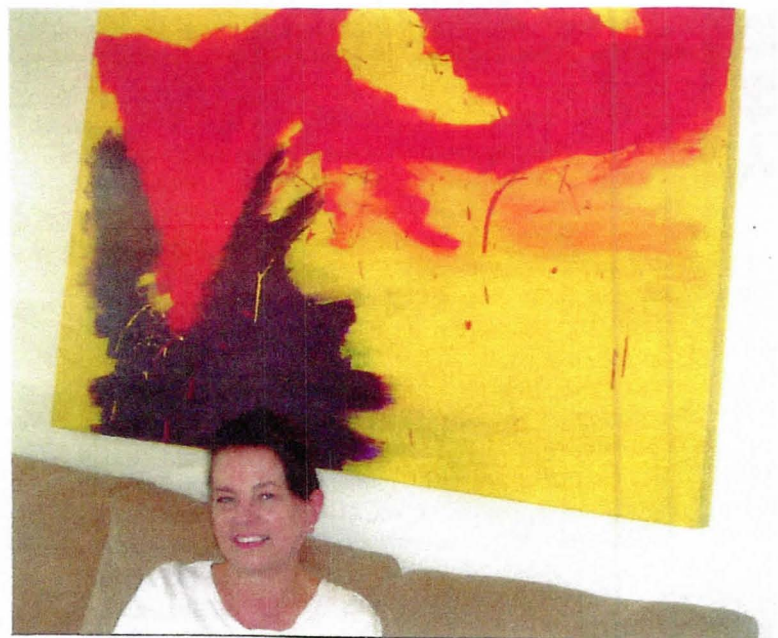
**Krystyna:** Yes. My parents still are living in Montreal, and I visit them at least annually. They both are in good health and enjoying their independence.

**TGN: Describe your working career.**

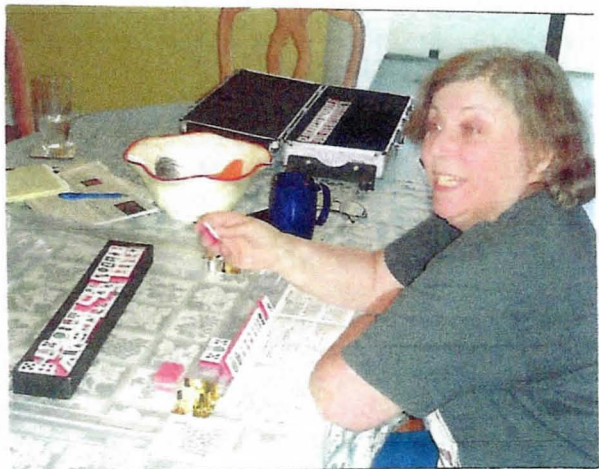
**Krystyna:** I have spent most of my career in apparel manufacturing and product development. Then about 13 years ago, Gap, Inc., contacted me to be a merchandiser for Banana Republic, which is owned by Gap. Since then I worked in multiple locations - San Mateo, San Francisco, Burlingame, Los Gatos - and am currently their operations manager at the Stanford Shopping Center where I have been for past 5 years.

**TGN: What do you do as operations manager?**

**Krystyna:** I am in charge of personnel (hiring and firing), scheduling, product training, and overseeing budget compliance. I enjoy working with a lot of young people (they keep me young and up to date).



## Susan Monje: "People Here Are So Friendly, Welcoming, and Helpful"



**TGN:** Susan, tell us about your personal history.

**Susan:** I come from New York City. I was graduated from the University of Colorado with a BA in sociology, psychology and theater. Then I went to work for IBM as a programmer in 1968 (that was before women's lib), I worked for them for 32 years. I met my husband at college and we were married in 1969. He was a consumer reporter on TV. We lived in Connecticut. I became a systems engineer with IBM, After seven years we moved to Indiana where I had my first and only child, my daughter Michelle. I moved to California several years after my divorce, and continued working for IBM, becoming an instructor in customer executive education. I worked as a Systems Engineering Manager on IBM's Bank of America Sales Team. IBM went through its downturn. The program went from 70 people to two. I moved to the database lab and was in charge of world wide sales of some data products. I traveled internationally quite a bit for IBM, and also had some interesting side trips. I visited Thailand where my daughter got to ride elephants, and was in Hong Kong before China took it over. I went to South Africa at the time Apartheid ended and Nelson Mandela was elected. For four or five years around 2000, I helped my parents who were living at Rossmor in Walnut Creek. My father had macular degeneration and cancer and my mother had dementia. I retired from IBM in 2004 to help them full time for three years. After my parents passed away, Michelle and her husband started having children. I watched their baby full time for two years.

**TGN:** Tell us about Michelle.

**Susan:** She obtained her M.D. and Ph.D, from Stanford, and is now a pediatric neuro-oncologist at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. She has been researching brain tumors in children, and is studying what mechanisms are involved in Mylan repair and in tumor growth. Her husband Karl is a psychiatrist and a neuroscientist in the bioengineering department at Stanford. He has invented Optigenetics and Developed CLARITY, both are research tools that are used in hundreds of research labs around the world. They now have three children - Alexander (age 7), Hudson (age 5) and Emma (age 3). That's what led to my finding Menlo Commons. It was the best thing that ever happened to me, as it solved a dilemma. I was living in Danville. For awhile I was commuting 50 miles to see and help take

care of my grandchildren. Menlo Commons has turned out to be a delight. The people here are so friendly, welcoming and helpful. Now I am spending part of my time here and part in Danville. I am slowly "transitioning" from my place in Danville.

**TGN:** What do you do in your spare time?

**Susan:** I have started teaching Mah Jong at Menlo Commons. It is the most popular game in the Orient. In America, there is a Mah Jong League. The game is played with 152 tiles divided into four groups - Winds, Dragons, Suits, and Flowers, with Jokers. I have finished my first group here which consisted of five students and four lessons of two hours each. I will start my second class October 18, and can have up to eight students at a time. I furnish the tiles and racks and cards (which defines the hands and changes every year) at my lessons. I also am playing bridge again, re-learning it since the last time I played was in college. I am into sewing and embroidering. I have sewed children's clothes. I have embroidered books for children. Also I will show you the bedroom which my grandchildren can use when they visit. I have made bedspreads and other stuffed animals for them. I have also sewn respirator covers for the transplant patients at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. And I like to knit sweaters and afghans.

**TGN:** Do you travel?

**Susan:** Yes. I like to go to the theater. Recently visiting Ashland, Oregon for the festival, and Broadway theater in New York City. I attend the productions at Leshner Performing Arts Theater in Walnut Creek. I also like to do puzzles, walk, do floor exercises regularly, shop, and eat out.

**TGN:** How about reading?

**Susan:** Yes, I am a member of a book club. Also I have been in an investment club in the past.

**TGN:** Thanks, Susan for spending the time to get acquainted with us. Now let's get a picture of you at the Mah Jong table, as well as in your grandchildren's bedroom.

