

John and Claire Bailey

One summer day in 2002 Marianne was at the Super Cooper Garage Sale in Benicia when she spotted a Model A on the street. She hustled up to the car and asked the owner if the car was for sale (a cabriolet). The answer was no. So the next logical question was – did the owner belong to a club. Again the answer was no. At that point the guy's wife walks out. Lo and behold! It was Claire Bailey from our veterinarian's office. At that point Marianne insisted that they needed to come to a club meeting and actually join the club too. And the rest is history.

But wait – a little about their history before the club.

John is a native Benician – born at Vallejo General Hospital. He attended Benicia High School and was on the tennis team. "I was a pretty boring guy." He also attended both Solano and DVC and spent 6 years in the Coast Guard reserves.

Claire was a military brat – born in Honolulu, Hawaii. But with her father a naval officer they were soon on the move and she has no memories of Hawaii. She lived in Colorado, Rhode Island and Virginia where her father was stationed at the Pentagon. When he retired they eventually ended up in Vallejo and she graduated from Vallejo High School where she was a flame twirling majorette. She also got a degree in Physical Education from Solano College where she was an intercollegiate gymnast.

Claire and John met in 1981. Claire had two jobs at the time – one with a vet and the other at a pet store. John had a parrot (which he still has) and he started buying a lot of parrot food at the store. Eventually this led to a first date at a restaurant in Napa which led to their marriage at the "Love Chapel" in Tahoe on April 10, 1982. They have two children – Maggie and Paul.

John worked for the City of Benicia from 1972-2004 starting in the Recreation Dept and retiring from the Waste Water Department. He spent one year in retirement and finding too little to do went back to work for them on a "consulting" basis and is currently working for CEM engineering at the Petaluma Waste Water facility.

John has always loved old cars. His uncle lived on a farm/ranch (near the Sharmans) with 9 sibs and as a result there were always a bunch of old cars out in the field which John thought was really cool. He always wanted a Model A and he "purchased" his first one by trading his 10 speed bike and a kayak for a 1930-31 coupe. He was shocked when he was able to sell it for \$1200 but then got a cabriolet in 1975. One day a man knocked on his door, asked him how much he wanted for it and John was \$2000 richer – not really wanting to sell it though. He then got a '29 roadster which he kept for 2 years and ended up becoming the down payment for the house he bought in Vallejo. In 1984 he bought "Mollie O" – his current 1931 cabriolet.

Jim McKesson (many of you remember him) actually tried to get him to join the club earlier, but he was afraid that his car wouldn't make the grade. When I convinced him that he didn't need to worry about that – he and Claire joined the club.

Their first year in the club saw them co-hosting the Mystery Tour with us. John also has been Tour Coordinator (2005), Vice President (2006), President (2007) and is now the Past President. The Baileys recently co-hosted another Mystery Tour.

John played fast pitch softball for 30 years and was, in fact, the MVP in all three decades. He also coached the Benicia High School softball team.

Claire's relatives on both sides of her family were officers both in the Army and Navy. In fact her grandfather, Admiral Hayler, had a ship named after him. In 1982 she attended the christening of the destroyer but just recently found out that it was used for target practice and sunk.

Her Uncle, General Michael Davidson, was Commander of the European Forces and one year she was able to visit him while he lived in Heidelberg, Germany. One of the most exciting events was being able to go through Checkpoint Charlie into East Berlin for a sightseeing tour of everything the Russians would allow them to see.

And as many of you know, Claire is a gourmet cook. She makes some of the best desserts to die for.

The one thing that John would still like to do is to drive their "A" on a long distance trip – maybe Vancouver will be that trip. As for Claire, she'd love to do a cruise. Can't get the water out of a Navy brat???

John has also wanted a Fordor for some time. But the Fordor has now become a houseboat that is berthed up at Lake Berryessa.

We had a great time spending a Sunday afternoon in their sunroom, overlooking the straits and talking about the times we have had with them since joining the club. The both agree with us – there couldn't be a better group to belong to.

