

Cruising Along

By Amy Morgan

Dixie and John Watson are among a very small group of people who can claim they celebrated the Millennium New Year twice. They were cruising on the Silver Wind, which positioned itself in waters on the International Dateline so they would be the first to ring in 2000. Then they simply crossed the dateline back into 1999, and rang 2000 in again.

The Millennium New Year is not the first time John has been present at a milestone occasion. His father's august military career afforded him a bird's eye view of events in the last half of the 20th century as they played out on the world's stage.

John, his mother and brother were some of the first dependents allowed to join military personnel stationed in Japan after World War II. Later, his father was named U.S. Commandant of Berlin while the Berlin Wall was being erected. John was fortunate to be allowed on the dais along with then-Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and the other Allied commanders for a commemorative event. The family moved to Atlanta, where his father took command of the 3rd Army – during the Cuban Missile Crisis. John's experiences, whether as a small child or teen, impressed upon him a life-long bond of respect and admiration for the military.

It was in Atlanta that John met Dixie at an officers' club mixer for college students, as they were both "Army Brats." The two attended the University of Georgia and were married as soon as they graduated. The Watsons still delight in following their Georgia Bulldog teams and have high hopes for a National Football Championship.

John began a career in retail at Rich's Department store. He would travel to New York to buy all the fashion fabrics for the high-end, Atlanta-based chain. He eventually spent 20 years in the retail business while Dixie happily raised their two daughters, Ginny and Susan.

The couple moved to San Antonio in 1985 to be close to Dixie's widowed mother. John seized the opportunity to reconnect with his military roots and apply for a civil service position at Kelly Air Force Base. His business skills and attention to detail led to his two-decades long second career in logistics. While at Kelly, he redesigned the labor-intensive storage system for assets needed for deployment. His service was timely, as the base ramped up to supply reserve units during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. John earned his master's degree in purchasing and acquisitions in 1999, which jumpstarted a move to Corpus Christi Army Depot.

Dixie held down the home front in San Antonio, working in information systems at Bexar County and then USAA until she retired in 2003. While they enjoyed their home in Oakwell Farms, they grew tired of its upkeep and were delighted to move to Independence Village in 2012.

Now the Watsons have yard service, housekeeping, maintenance and access to pools and a clubhouse – all included. They have enjoyed attending the Friday afternoon get-togethers, concerts and outings with friends. John takes balance classes and finds Independence Village's location very convenient to his physical therapy appointments and their church home, Cornerstone. Dixie often joins neighbors on walks all over the grounds with their two beloved Shih Tzus, Bailey and Precious.

"We enjoy the people here in Independence Village," John said. "Many are former servicemen. We admire the patriotic display of U.S. flags in the neighborhood."

When the Watsons are not busy locally, they see the world with friends they've made cruising annually since 1996. Their inaugural voyage was into China – where they were among the first allowed entrance into that country via their cruise line. Their second cruise was to St. Petersburg. They still remember their trip to the United Kingdom where they were able to see the Queen herself as she "trooped the line" in her royal yacht, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.



The Watsons collect pins from all the places they've visited, which they proudly display in a place of honor in the den of their home, along with other mementos of their family and travels.

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