



Photo by Gayle Krueger Photography

## JUDY AND MIKE CANNING

Judy and Mike Canning remember the exact date of their first meeting—August 25, 1963. Seated at the same table for lunch on the ocean liner MS Berlin that was taking each of them to Europe for a year of German language study, they found that they had much in common. Both had grown up in what they described as “wonderful” communities in the American mid-west; each had a lively curiosity about the rest of the world. Now, forty six years later, having lived in eight foreign cities on four continents and studied multiple languages, the Cannings are enjoying life on Capitol Hill, the place that truly has become home.

When Mike retired from the Foreign Service in 1993 both he and Judy were anxious to give back to the community that had been a constant during their years of travel and moves. Although they loved their foreign assignments—they remember with particular fondness Kampala, Nairobi and four marvelous years in Rome – they always looked forward to returning to the neighborhood and to the house they bought on Fifth Street Southeast in 1969 and where they still live. Being part of the babysitting coop, Brent school PTA and the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop made it easier and more fun to come back after each foreign sojourn.

Mike’s Foreign Service work was with the United States Information Agency. He saw the job of explaining American government, policy and culture to people in other countries as outreach, and he relished the opportunities it afforded him to, as he puts it, “introduce complexity into facile arguments.” He served in challenging times and place—Judy and their daughters, Elizabeth and Rachel, were evacuated from Kampala in 1973 when Idi Amin threatened to throw all Americans in jail; the man who replaced Mike at the Embassy in Tehran was

among the Americans taken hostage there in 1979. But the work was always exhilarating, the camaraderie with fellow foreign workers satisfying and the travel thrilling.

For her part, Judy cultivated the unique opportunities to work and volunteer offered by each posting. In Managua, Nicaragua she taught fourth grade at an American school; in Lima, Peru she taught English as a second language. She earned a Master’s Degree in Library Science from the University of Maryland while back in Washington in the early 1970s, and then worked as a volunteer librarian at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and at the University of Nairobi. She worked at the library of an English-language women’s college in Tehran and at St. Steven’s high school in Rome. Back in Washington, when the Edmund Burke School, where Rachel was a student, needed a librarian on short notice, Judy stepped in.

Now, as often as not, when Judy volunteers Mike is beside her. For ten years they delivered meals once a week to people homebound with HIV/AIDS as part of Food & Friends. In 1998, at a difficult moment in CHAW’s history, Judy, who had been serving on the Board, stepped in as acting director at no pay. Mike is treasurer of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and has had a satisfying second career as a movie reviewer for the Hill Rag, writing reviews of 30 to 50 films a year and co-founding Films on the Hill, which shows classic films on weekends at CHAW. And both Cannings were founding members of and remain active volunteers with Capitol Hill Village.

In their busy retirement Judy and Mike are clear about two things. Their five grandchildren are the light of their lives, and there is no place they would rather live than right here on Capitol Hill.