

NAPA *Spotlight*

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Sherri & Richard Neefe: **Cat Books, Treasure Hunts, What's Next?**

Dear Neighbor,

What Sherri and her husband, Richard, have accomplished over the past year, alone, is impressive. She became an author and published two books inspired by her rescue animals. Richard, meanwhile, designed epic treasure hunts and an unforgettable haunted house for their grandchildren. This creative couple, whose story is on page 6, are full of original ideas that always seem to result in amazing projects.

Current and prospective homeowners will be interested to read local Realtor Jamie Johnson Cook's article on page 8. The "old school" expectations for home inspections are beginning to shift, and Jamie provides important insight on how to navigate these changes and protect your investment.

Please enjoy this September edition of *Napa Spotlight*.

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Sherri & Richard Neefe

Cat Books, Treasure Hunts, What's Next?

By Isabelle Schmaltz · Photos by Frank Gutierrez

Sherri Neefe and her husband, Richard, are far from typical retirees. Not even last year's lockdowns slowed down this Napa couple—if anything, the restrictions fueled their artistic drive.

"We both love anything creative, where we can brainstorm and go a little crazy," Sherri said.

Sherri published two "Cat Tale" picture books in 2020 under her pen name, Nina Neefe. She recently finished a third book in the series, titled "2020: A Cat Odyssey."

Richard, meanwhile, designed and built two different projects for his grandchildren.

"He spent months building an elaborate haunted house for the grandkids since they couldn't go trick or treating," Sherri said. "This year, he worked for months creating an incredible two-day treasure hunt during a family camping trip with over 70 hidden clues and several handmade treasures to be discovered. It was epic."

Sherri was born and raised in San Diego and, for more than 50 years, had never been away for more than a 10-day vacation.

"So when we planned our relocation to Northern California, I was a little worried because everyone always said how 'lucky' I was to live in 'America's Finest City,'" she said. "Instead of saying we were moving away, we called it an 'adventure' so that emotionally we weren't cutting ties."

Richard was born in Hollywood, but he thrives in nature and loves exploring. He's climbed Mt. Whitney twice and recently began outdoor meditation.

Richard loves working with his hands—like gardening, construction, and drawing.

"At 6'5", Richard is a tall man, and anything he does, he goes big," Sherri said. "I often have to hold him back because he always makes things so much grander than expected!"

Richard created an entire "Rainbow Forest" on their property in east Napa, including a playhouse, sandbox, and a wigwam.



Sherri and Richard moved to Napa from San Diego in December 2013, just in time for the birth of their second granddaughter, who was born on Christmas Day.

Soon after settling in, Sherri said they felt “completely bonded” to Napa, and they “never looked back.”

“In fact, we’ve only visited San Diego once in these eight years, and we couldn’t wait to come home,” she said. “Those big-city freeways were frightening after being away from them.”

The couple has two adult daughters who are married and raising families in Marin County. They have four grandchildren ranging in age from 5 to 10 years old.

“Our eldest daughter, Jaclyn, was an elementary and middle school teacher, but she’s currently focused on raising her two children

and celebrating beating breast cancer last year,” Sherri said. “Our youngest, Cristina, has two young daughters and a residential interior design business in Marin.”

When the pandemic hit last year, Sherri was recovering from hip replacement surgery. To keep busy, she began writing books and “accidentally” ended up launching a new career, she said.

Her first two books, “Fantastical Cat Adventures” and “Mulan’s Big Adventure,” were inspired by her two Siamese cats, both rescues from the Napa Animal Shelter.

An animal lover, Sherri donates a portion of all book sales to Napa Humane. Her books are available online or locally at Milo & Friends Pet Boutique and Copperfield’s Books, both located in downtown Napa.

In addition to writing her “Cat Tale” books, Sherri’s hobbies include making photo albums and movies about her family adventures. She’s currently completing a film about the family’s 2020 Treasure Hunt. She posts many of her movies on her YouTube channel, “Sherri’s World.”

Sherri created the channel as a “central hub” for her family to enjoy. But some of her films have caught the attention of strangers—thousands of them, in fact.

A 23-minute video about her and Richard’s 2018 trip to London has more than 23,800 views. The comments section includes multiple “thank you’s” from locals describing her video as “wonderful,” “fantastic,” and “a cracking presentation” of some of England’s top attractions.

“It’s become a fun hobby and my ‘legacy’ to leave our kids a way to keep the memories alive and in living color,” Sherri said. “I have so many old home movies and video clips that I need another lifetime to convert them to watchable footage!”

Sherri and Richard met as competitors working in the title insurance industry. Both worked as managers at opposing companies until Richard was brought in as Sherri’s new boss.

“We discovered a shared get-it-done style and passion for creative projects and events,” Sherri said. “Over the years, we became friends and started dating—and the rest is history, as they say.”

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at ischmaltz@bestversionmedia.com.