

COLOR LIGHTS THE LIVES OF BIRD KEY COUPLE

People driving out of Bird Key might wonder who grows the stunning roses in the yard next to the gatehouse.

Big bright blooms of scarlet, goldenrod, crimson, and apricot nod in the Gulf breeze as if to wave goodbye to visitors as they leave the neighborhood.

"Color is happy," said John-Norman Tuck, the artist and rosarian who lives at the corner of Seagull Lane and Bird Key Drive.

"Everyone stops to talk to him," said his wife Marcia.

Love of color dominates John-Norman's life. He is a hair colorist and stylist at Green Ginger Hair Design on St. Armand's Circle. And, the interior the home he shares with Marcia is an homage to the rainbow, where his paintings in brilliant colors are hung in every room.

White tile floors and ivory walls showcase John-Norman's paintings in the intense hues of the color wheel. Valentine red, cobalt blue, sunflower yellow with bold purples, greens and oranges dominate the canvases he has painted over the years. In his studio stand three works in progress on easels waiting for the next brush strokes.

But among the exuberant images is a single terrifying portrait of a building on fire.

"It is my first recollection," he said.

John-Norman was born in London in 1940. His Jewish parents had fled Germany in April 1939, only to experience Hitler's blitzkrieg in England soon thereafter. His mother fell ill with multiple sclerosis after his birth, and John-Norman's father was interned by the British because he was a German citizen. John-Norman was placed in an orphanage until his father was released after the war.

The painting, named *First Recollection*,



is a picture of a blazing structure, with four tiny figures: John-Norman falling off the lap of the matron, and his father with a policeman who reassured him that no children had perished in the fire. He was perhaps three years old at the time.

"But, that is the past, and this is now," he said.

Marcia and John-Norman met in Detroit as teenagers. She was a student at Mumford High School, and he was a student at Commerce High School, the abbreviated name of the High School of Commerce and Business Administration. He planned to become a CPA, like his father.

They were high school sweethearts. He graduated in 1959, and she in 1960. A sepia portrait in a silver frame shows a smiling young couple. A prom picture is displayed in another room of the house.

"After I graduated, he wanted me to go to California with him," Marcia said. "Married, of course, which is what we did in those days. But, I just felt I was too young."

She is a twin, and was just 18 at

that time. She said no. So, he went to California, and she stayed in Detroit.

They kept in touch, but eventually, each married someone else. But, they never lost track of each other. Each was later divorced. They reconnected in 2000, and married in 2002.

The couple lived in Northwest Bradenton for a few years when they first came to Florida. But, as with so many Sarasota residents, they were drawn here by the arts community. They have lived on Bird Key for six years.

Anniversary cards are displayed on a tabletop, sent to the couple for their wedding anniversary Feb. 2. Had things happened differently, they might have celebrated a golden wedding anniversary. But, Marcia is philosophical about their late marriage.

"When you are young, you don't realize that some differences are not so important," she said.

"The bottom line is, that love won out," John-Norman said.

By Roberta Nelson
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