

Meet Your Neighbors: Anne Dix and Danny Morse

He has the calm and thoughtful demeanor of a college professor. She has the effervescent and energetic demeanor of an American raised in Central America from the age of three. In Danny's own words, "... my life has been uneventful (lots of school, a few odd jobs, and the Naval Academy", where he teaches chemistry). Uneventful, that is, "other than my time with Anne." And therein, lies the tale of this delightful couple.

He had been a bachelor all his life, living alone or with housemates until he was in his fifties. She had a daughter who was in middle school; her two younger brothers, one born in the U.S. and one born in Guatemala, were living with her in her home on Dresden Street in Parkwood.

Family had always been important in Anne's life, beginning with her grandparents, who strongly encouraged the extended family to gather at their home in Potomac every year for the Christmas holidays. Other than a brief half semester in high school in the U.S., these holidays were Anne's only time back in the States until she went off to college at Mount Holyoke. So, her experience of America was that it was cold and snowy – quite different from Guatemala, which is "the land of eternal spring."

Danny was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, went to college at Washington University in St. Louis, and did his graduate work in Biochemistry at the University of Missouri. From there, he went to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City for his post-doc work and then on to the Naval Academy to teach and do research.

Anne was born in Athens, Georgia where her father was teaching at the university. Her parents, Michael and Margaret, are both biologists. They had met at Harvard where they both were doing their Ph.D.'s. When Anne was 3 years old (1969),

they moved to Guatemala City where her parents had gotten a 2-year fellowship. Margaret is from the Channel Islands (a part of the UK), and her visa required her to leave the US before applying for residence.

Her parents started the biology programs at two universities in Guatemala. Although it was supposed to be a 2-year fellowship, Anne's parents never left, and they became well-respected, practically legends there. Many doctors and government officials were once their students. They have lived in the same house for more than 50 years

in Guatemala. It was originally out in the middle of nowhere, but the city has grown to engulf it.

After college, Anne got her Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Georgia, living in the house where she was born (the family still owns this house). She gave birth to her daughter, Katy, who was six months old when

Anne had to defend her thesis. She had chosen to be a single mom and drove back with her Dad and Katy through Mexico to Guatemala in a pickup truck.

Back in Central America Anne taught at a local university and worked at an environmental NGO managing their research program and doing fundraising. Then she was hired by USAID where she has worked for the last 20 years. Her initial AID assignment was to help do quality control of construction projects throughout Central America after the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch; she also reviewed earthquake reconstruction projects after the El Salvador Earthquake.

Anne and Katy returned to DC just before September 11, 2001. All of us can remember where we were on that day. Anne was at an orientation for new Foreign Service officers (FSOs); Katy was in a daycare center in a Smithsonian building. Anne immediately left the briefing, found Katy, and spent the afternoon on the Mall giving her lots of crayons



Figure 1: Anne and Danny celebrating Mother's Day

for her coloring books until the traffic thinned out enough for her to take Katy home.



Figure 2: Anne, a younger Katy, and a couple of canines

That same year, Danny had moved to Annapolis to take up his job at the Academy. When the terrorists struck, the midshipmen were all ordered back to their dorms, a decision that struck Danny as odd, since it placed a large segment of our future naval officers in a single location. He remembers thinking that he had just left a very safe city (Salt Lake) to come to a place that clearly had a target on its back. But this was just the beginning of the end of his quiet bachelorhood.



Figure 3: Some of Danny's dedicated chemistry students at the Naval Academy

After completing her FSO training, Anne had a series of assignments, including managing bilateral environment programs for protected areas in Guatemala and then environmental programs for all

of Central America, working out of El Salvador. When she came back to the U.S., Anne served as the desk officer for Bangladesh, and then for Pakistan. From 2009-2012, she managed the AID Amazon Program. It was during this time that Anne's two brothers moved in with her.

And then Danny and Anne met...on E-Harmony. Their first meeting was at Guapo's on Wisconsin Avenue. Danny had recently gotten tenure at the Academy and had bought a house in Annapolis. In his own words, he had decided it was time to try to have a "normal life!" They were married in 2010 after Danny had been vetted by Katy, and they determined that their dogs could get along.

At that time Anne, Katy, and the brothers had been living on Dresden Street in a rental house. Anne and Danny wanted Katy to be able to stay at Walter Johnson, so they looked for a house in Parkwood that was big enough for everyone and still affordable. *That* took a while. Then one day as they were driving up Edgefield, they saw someone just putting up a sign – For Sale By Owner. They stopped immediately and told the owner they were interested but did not think it was big enough for everyone. "You haven't seen the basement, yet" he said; there were two more bedrooms downstairs. After some additional renovations, the basement became an apartment "for the boys" [i.e. her brothers].

Then life got even more interesting. In 2012, they all (Anne, Danny, Katy, and their dog, Leah) went to Accra, Ghana for two years. At this point the brothers moved into their own places in other parts of Maryland.

In Accra, Anne was in charge of the regional environment program, so she traveled throughout West Africa (Katy often joined her). Among the things she and her team accomplished was completion of a water and sanitation program with the help of Florida International University. They also set in motion a critical sanitation marketing program as well as working on transboundary protected areas, one of which was located near ground zero for the first Ebola crisis.



Figure 4: Anne's West Africa team



Figure 5: A Sierra Leone water source

Meanwhile, Danny stayed in Accra having his usual life of teaching and research at the University of Ghana. Katy did her last two years of high school in an international school in Accra, which had an I.B. program.

Anne then decided to shorten her assignment in Ghana by committing to Afghanistan for one year. After a few weeks of training back in D.C., she was off again. Danny stayed in his house in Annapolis so that he did not have the long commute to the Academy, and Katy went off to Williams College.

In Afghanistan Anne was in charge of infrastructure (power lines, a dam, roads, etc.). Because USAID often assigns very large jobs to very small teams, in both Ghana and Afghanistan, she had just a few people on her staffs to accomplish their mission. The dam her team worked on in Afghanistan had been built in the 1960s, and the final turbine had

never been set up due to political unrest. The team installed high power transmission lines from a town near Kabul to Ghazni despite losing key engineering capacity at the time due to staffing cuts. In her own words, "I had an awesome multinational team who worked hard and brought their whole selves to the table."

In Kabul, Anne lived in a converted truck container. It was a very stressful time for both of them. Danny remembers calling her once and hearing a siren go off. "Oops, gotta go, we're being attacked!", she said. Luckily, the rockets did not do any damage inside the embassy compound. During other times, the violence got so bad, that Anne was not allowed to leave the embassy to monitor her programs. Once, when she needed emergency dental care, they flew her to the dentist at a military base in a helicopter.

In 2016, after completing her time in Afghanistan, Anne returned to the U.S. to manage the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad [ASHA] program for USAID. This program predates USAID itself and came about as part of Marshall Plan, which started after World War II. One of ASHA's first grants was to the American University of Beirut.



Figure 6: Danny and a local boy bailing out their boat in Ghana (not exactly his "usual life" and probably not the kinds of boats he was used to at the Naval Academy.)

Danny and Anne are now settled in Parkwood, at least until Anne has to leave on her next overseas rotation. A major challenge they face, however, is Anne's aging parents who still live in Guatemala. Her mother is still working, even though she is over 80 and needs to be on oxygen. As a child, Anne lived through the civil war in Guatemala in the 70s. Now her parents have to contend with the high rates

of crime in the country, and it is clear, at least to Danny and Anne, that they have to bring them back to the States. Their plan is to have her parents live on the first floor of their house while they move to the basement apartment that her brothers had previously occupied. Family is always first.

Meanwhile, Katy has graduated from Williams and has spent the last year in Toulouse France teaching English to immigrant kids from Morocco and Algeria in a vocational school. When she returns, she plans to get a Master's in International Development at Brandeis. She has always loved the international life so she will likely work for NGOs around the world. As Anne says, "She has the travel bug."

scared, she said, because there were no walls around the house on Dresden, as there had been in Guatemala and El Salvador; she said she felt safer waiting outside, which she did. A Parkwood neighbor noticed Katy outside and after Katy explained how she felt, the neighbor took her into her own home until Anne got home.

We are glad they are back in Parkwood, at least for now, and so are they.



Figure7: Katy picking coffee in Nicaragua

Finally, here are two stories that say much about why Parkwood is such a good place to live.

When Danny first arrived at the Academy, his lab was not ready yet. His research focuses on RNA structure and function. So a friend at NIH offered him lab space for two years until his own lab could be completed. That is a bit of professional kindness that probably ranks above and beyond...

And when Katy came back to the States after Anne had completed one of her overseas assignments, Anne had arranged for her to let herself in each afternoon when she got home from middle school. Anne would then arrive an hour or so later. But Katy did not want to go into the house. She was