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NORTON SHORES

Living

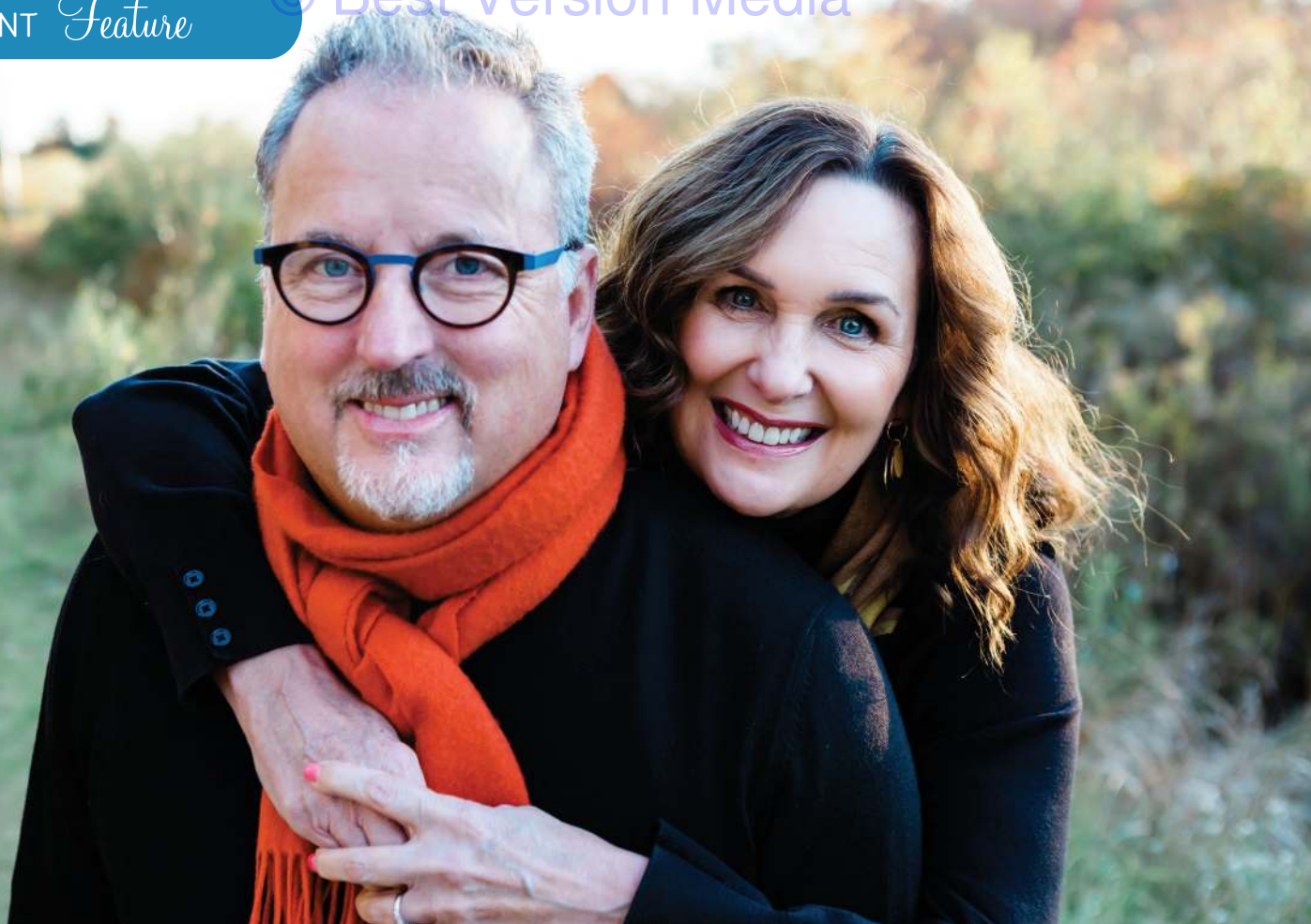
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NORTON SHORES
WARMLY WELCOMES
WEST COAST NATIVE



COVER PHOTO BY RENEE SCHRAM



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By Lisa Becker Campbell | Photos By Renee Schram

Norton Shores resident Doug McPhail recounts feeling fortunate that he brought his wife Karen – who is a native of Southern California -- to Michigan for the first time in July and not in January. The couple recalls that Karen had asked initially if the temperature ever gets as low as 20 degrees in Michigan, and that Doug wisely responded, “yes,” without elaborating any further.

While it has taken Karen a while to get acclimated to the snow and winter, she acknowledges that Michigan is beautiful, and the people are genuinely good people, who are kind and caring.

During that first visit, the pair got married at Pere Marquette Beach, surrounded by close family and friends. The ceremony was simple, but their courtship was a fascinating adventure filled with a synchronistic series of events, according to Karen.

In May of 2018, Doug had travelled to a personal development workshop in Paris where he met Karen, who was an elementary school teacher from Medford, Oregon. There, the pair, along with another workshop participant, spent an evening walkabout in the Latin Quarter looking for the home of Ernest Hemingway. After an evening enjoying Paris café life, Doug and Karen went their separate ways, with little idea how their life stories might unfold.

Nine months' later, to Karen's surprise, the mutual friend of the couple contacted Karen out of the blue and said, “Karen, I received a message

from God – you are supposed to contact Doug.”

“Doug from Paris?” Karen replied. “Yes!” said the friend. As Karen reports it, the mutual friend didn't want to be in the ‘middle of things’ so she asked Karen to not share her role.

“So, out of the blue,” Karen said, “I messaged Doug and suggested we talk some time. He immediately set a time and day.” And then they shared several months of ‘zoom dates.’

In early May 2019, Karen had a planned event in Denver, which Doug noted is the flight hub between Grand Rapids and Medford, Oregon.

“Doug said, ‘You're only 1,200 miles away from me, I can't not fly in and have dinner with you,’ Karen described. “Well, that was about the most romantic thing any man has ever said to me.”

Several weeks after that, the pair met again in San Francisco for the Memorial Day weekend, where Doug took bold action by bringing along an engagement ring and proposing marriage.

During the wedding week in Michigan, Karen's home in Oregon sold. Karen returned to the west coast to finish sale arrangements, complete her master's degree, and get her youngest child off to college. A second wedding celebration was held in Oregon for Karen's friends and family there.



Photo by Jenn Marie Photography



After the second celebration, Doug planned a two-week vacation in Italy, and the couple returned to Doug's former home in Lake Michigan Estates, where he had lived since the mid-1990s and raised his sons. During COVID, an opportunity presented itself for the couple to purchase a beautiful home in Evergreen, in southern Norton Shores, where they reside with their fur baby, Chloe, a 2-year-old yellow lab.

Their other family members are grown. Karen's two children are in college on the West Coast. Son Cole is a sophomore at Oregon State University, has already built his first tiny house, and has supported himself as a deep-sea fisherman in the waters of the Pacific. Karen's daughter Clara is entering her last year of college studies in microbiology at Chico State University near Sacramento, California.

After attending college, Doug's son, Cameron and his wife Michelle purchased a home in Norton Shores. Cam is an officer in the US Army Reserve along with being a licensed insurance agent and mortgage broker with a local State Farm office.

Doug's son Thomas and his wife Ruth met in graduate school at Emory University's Candler School of Theology. Tom and Ruth just moved back to Norton Shores from Atlanta, with Doug and Karen's first grandchild Ezra.

Since graduating from Alma College, Taylor has returned to the area as a Certified Financial Planner with Northwestern Mutual. Taylor and his new bride Morgan reside in Muskegon.

Doug's family moved to Norton Shores in the early 1970s when Doug's father, the late Rev. William McPhail, accepted the pastorate of a local church. All of Doug's boys attended Mona Shores schools; youngest son Taylor was an All-State Wrestler for Mona Shores High School.

Over the last 30 years Doug has built a boutique law practice specializing in estate planning and elder law. Since moving to Michigan, Karen -- who recently earned her Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction -- has been assisting in the law practice while developing her own coaching and life development business called Infinite Life Possibilities.

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