

Meet Your Neighbors ~ The Freemans

By Marge Green

My generation of pre and post World War II is very different from our culture today. Coming out of the Depression, the concerns of our parents were jobs and security. Rarely were we able to match a passion for sports to the job market. Fortunately that is no longer true and our younger generation is in many cases more adventurous and able to match their leisure time pleasures to the job market. Some are opening small niche businesses that combine the two. I spent some time the other day talking to such a couple, Chris and Sloan Freeman of 152 Hawthorne Drive. Chris is an avid surfer and an environmental coastal geologist.

Chris was born and raised in Ocean City, Maryland and graduated from Stephen Decatur High School in Berlin, Maryland. It was here he developed his love for surfing which led him to the study environmental coastal geology. As he was traveling around to various surfing competitions he discovered Wrightsville Beach and the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW) and liked it so much in that area that he spent the next 11 years there. As an undergraduate at UNCCH he was involved in a research project helping a doctoral candidate who was studying sand movement around the Cape Lookout Shoals. He would return to his living quarters in Wilmington for the weekends so he could work and pay for his studies. By this time his mother and grandmother had moved from Ocean City to California so Chris was more or less on his own. He would have to stop every so often to juggle his finances but managed to finish college and graduate school with the

help of student loans and hard work. One of the neat things about his avocation is the fact that work and "play" dovetailed so nicely. It even allowed him a trip to Australia to study the coastal reefs and sand migration patterns.

Sloan is a fifth generation Floridian. She grew up in the Lakeland area where her family still resides. She graduated from Lakeland High School then went to Charlottesville, Virginia to study environmental science at the University of Virginia. During

her third year she spent a semester on the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean studying and working in aquaculture farming. She specifically studied conchs, an important food for local residents. After finishing at UVA she traveled for awhile and then entered a masters program at Duke. She earned her M.S. in Coastal Environmental Management traveling around various coastal

areas, spending a considerable amount of time in New Zealand. Her first job introduced her to the Crystal Coast working in Beaufort at the Rachel Carson Reserve, a State and Federally funded area. She was concerned with the production of teaching aids for management

personnel. Sloan was no sooner settled into that job when her advisor at Duke received a large grant in fisheries management and offered her a position at the Duke Marine Lab in Morehead City as the manager of the program dealing with quantifying bycatch of endangered sea turtles in the tuna and sword fish industry. Bycatch are those species you catch and really do not want. She stayed with Duke Marine Lab doing various projects after completion of her initial grant. She retired in May

of 2005 to manage a delightful baby daughter and help husband Chris with his business.

Sloan and Chris met doing what comes naturally to the two of them, sports. The Duke, UNC and NC State complexes in Morehead City house many research labs and educational facilities as well as an active group of scientists. At one of their outdoor socials Sloan and Chris met playing Frisbee. Finally,

since it seemed to Sloan that Chris was a little reserved, she took the plunge and set up a date for them. They were married in Asheville in 2001. Sloan's grandmother and great uncle lived in Brevard where she spent many childhood days. She felt this was the

ideal place for their wedding.

They are now the proud parents of a beautiful little daughter, Clara Jane. She was born in August of 2004. In January of that year they moved to Pine Knoll Shores from their starter home in Morehead City. There is evidence of the carpenter in Chris when one visits their house. The entrance level where he has his business office and the upstairs, raised a story in height, makes one feel like they are living in the trees. They truly have nature in its best sense right inside their home. He is customizing the interior, doing away with a wall here or adding a doorway there.

Chris has always lived near a beach and is delighted to be on the island. He started doing high resolution mapping of the ocean floor while in grad school. This led him to start his business, Geodynamics. Using sonar he produces high resolution mapping of the sea floor. The analysis of this information can be used to study underwater geologic formations as well as identify fish habitat, sand movement, and the effect of wave action on the ocean floor. Sloan, with her background in coastal management, is the perfect bridge between the science and educational value of Chris's work. As a writer and teacher she helps prepare their reports for final release.

I apologize if I have erred too much on the side of science and perhaps tedium. However, I often wondered, "how do they know what is under the water in our waterways?" Chris and Sloan gave me a brief thumbnail description of how they know and the value of such knowledge. They are an engaging couple and a real asset to our community.



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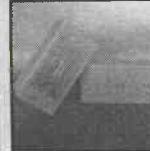
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