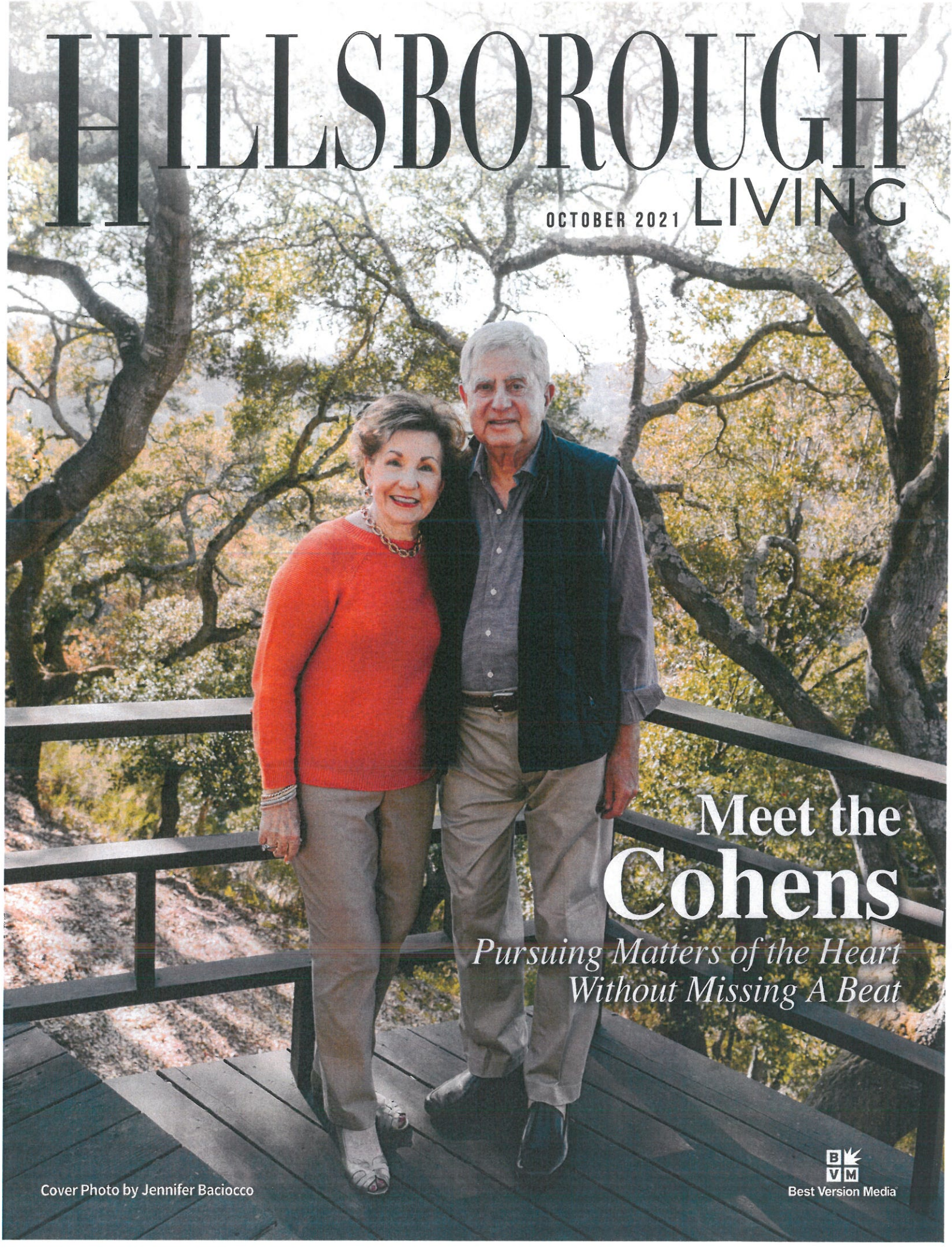
HILLSBOROUGH LIVING

OCTOBER 2021



Meet the Cohens

Pursuing Matters of the Heart Without Missing A Beat

Cover Photo by Jennifer Baciocco

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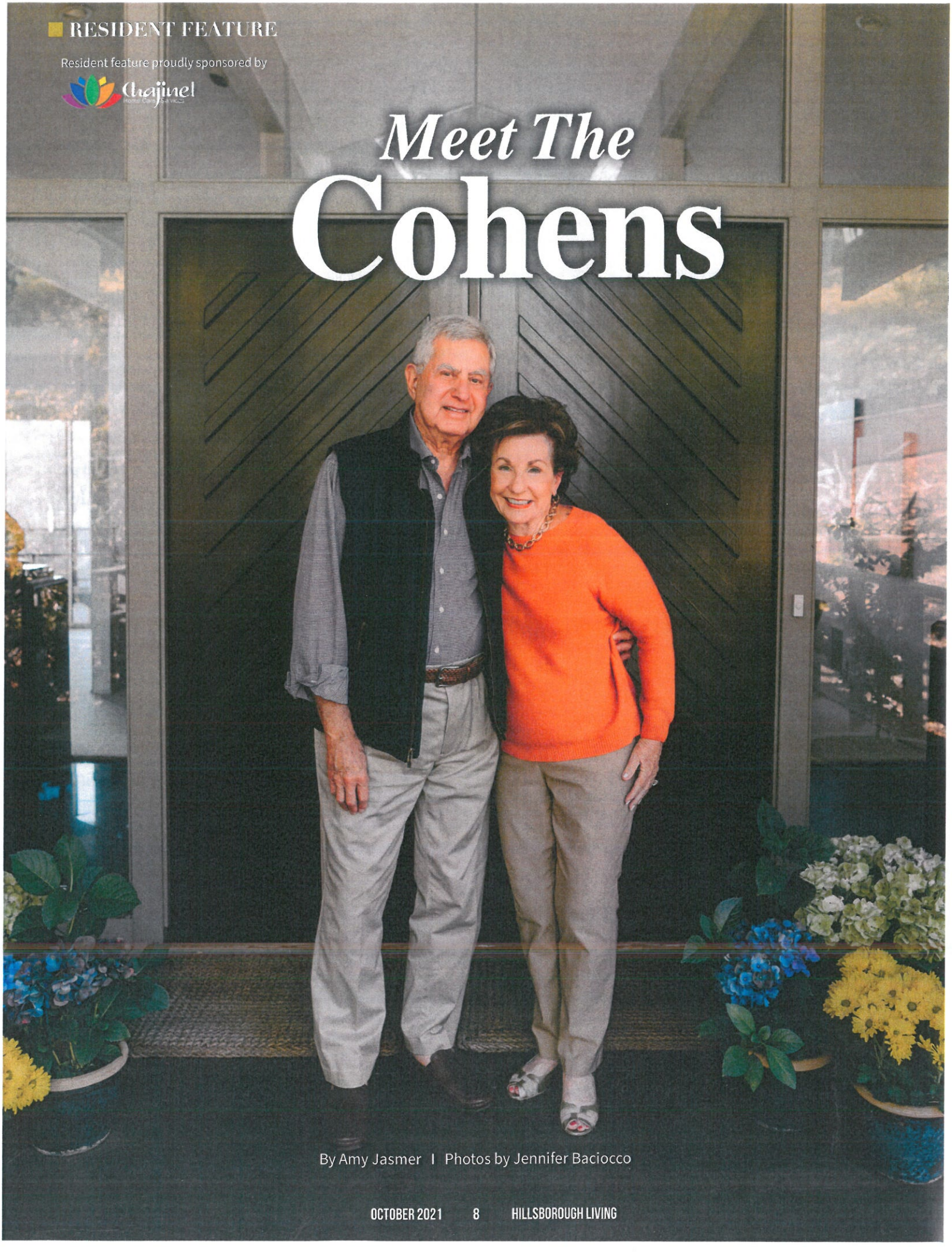
Meet The Cohens



By Amy Jasmer | Photos by Jennifer Baciocco

"To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — that is to have succeeded." - This idea of success, rooted in the betterment of another, is attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

These words are emblematic of the lives of this month's cover family: Elaine and George Cohen.

Elaine Linenberg and George Cohen grew up in the same neighborhood in Philadelphia and went to the same junior high, high school and college two years apart. It was at her mother's urging one summer that Elaine meet a boy named George.

"We both worked in the same day camp," Elaine explains. "My mother knew of him and said, *'There is a guy working at camp. He plays piano. His family is nice. Do me a favor. Go out with him. You'll like him...* I was 13. And the rest, as they say, is history."

Elaine and George Cohen have been married 61 years and have lived in Hillsborough for over fifty years. During that time, they raised three children, Sheryl, Jeffrey and Jonathan (twins). Today, Sheryl (Sherrie) Greenberg lives in Westchester County, NY with her husband, Lawrence and their two sons, Daniel and Michael both of whom now live in Manhattan. Jeffrey lives in the Boston suburbs with his wife, Karen, and their four children, Shoshana, Jonah, Ezra and Levi. Jonathan lives in Redwood Shores with his two Labradors. All three children graduated from Ivy League Schools and built successful careers in finance and technology. Their parents credit their children's achievements with the excellent foundational education they received in the Hillsborough Schools.

Despite their long history as residents, the couple quite literally landed in Hillsborough by accident. "When we arrived in Hillsborough, we had no family or friends in this community," Elaine explains.

Elaine and George Cohen have been married 61 years and have lived in Hillsborough for over 50 years

Elaine graduated in three years from the University of Pennsylvania as a teacher in order to get married and support George through medical school. After medical school, internship, residency and fellowship in cardiology, George spent two years as a research flight surgeon in the United States Air Force. One day in order to get his required flight hours, he hitched a ride on a single-engine F100F jet fighter from the base in San Antonio, Texas and landed in the Bay Area at Moffett Field. The pilot reported a non-existent mechanical problem with the aircraft requiring a delay in turnaround just long enough for them to have a long weekend in San Francisco.

George used the opportunity to meet with cardiologists in Burlingame and San Mateo. He excitedly called his wife during the unplanned sojourn, "I met the man I'm going into practice with!" Elaine replied, *"Where are you?!"*

The couple made their way to California in 1969 for George to start a cardiology practice, and moved to Hillsborough in 1971. They still live in the first house they ever owned.

BUILDING A PRACTICE

When George arrived in the area to start his practice with Dr. Richard Shipley - the man he fortuitously met during the flight stopover - there were only three board-certified cardiologists in the greater area, and all of whom primarily practiced internal medicine. The specialty of Cardiology, George explains, evolved with the advent of electronic pacing at the time and had not yet become widely practiced outside of academic settings. "When I joined Dick Shipley, our goal was to develop a cardiac catheterization lab," shared George. "I joined his cardiology practice in late August 1969. By Labor Day Dick said, 'I'm going on the first vacation I've taken in years, the practice is all yours!"

The Cohen's daughter Sheryl and husband Larry Greenberg and their sons Daniel and Michael live in New York

Son Jeffrey Cohen and his wife Karen, and their children Jonah, Levi, Ezra, Shoshana, live in the Boston Area

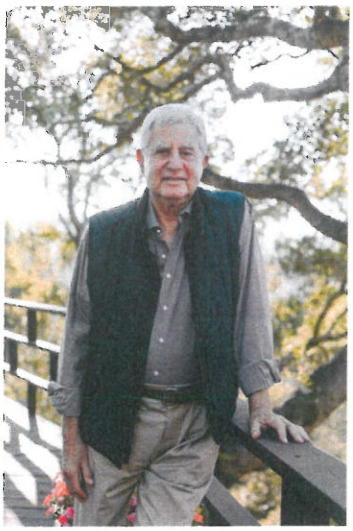
The Cohen's son Johnathan with his beloved labs Chelsea and Bailey lives in Redwood Shores

George spent much of the weekend attending to critically ill patients in the ICU. "By the next year, we started the catheterization lab."

George and his partner built a thriving cardiology practice despite facing some initial challenges. "In those early days, we were very criticized for doing so," George explains. "Electronic pacing was a relatively new procedure. It was felt it was something that shouldn't be done in a community setting, only in teaching hospitals." By the mid-1970s their practice was among the first to perform coronary and valve surgery.

In addition to developing a flourishing practice, George was instrumental in integrating for the first time the specialties of cardiology, cardiovascular surgery, vascular surgery and cardiovascular imaging into a single administrative structure known as Cardiovascular Services. This configuration remains a critical branch of cardiovascular healthcare. George also served on the Mills-Peninsula Hospital Foundation Board receiving the De Guigne award for service and philanthropy, held roles as of Chief of Staff at Peninsula Hospital, Chief of Cardiovascular Disease and a founder of the Mills-Peninsula Medical Group (MPMG). Today, the practice started by George and Dr. Shipley has twelve cardiologists in the group, each with sub-specialties in their respective fields. George retired after 50 years in practice in 2019.

In addition to his esteemed medical career, George is well-known as a gifted pianist. "I started studying and practicing classical piano when I was



Dr. George Cohen co-founded one of the first cardiac catherization labs in the Bay Area

Notre Dame de Namur University established the Elaine Cohen Graduate Endowed Scholarship in recognition of her work in education

age 5 or 6," he shares. "By the time I was in high school, I realized I could play five or six engagements on a weekend and make a decent amount of money." As he moved onto an advanced education, the talent would prove a convenient side hustle.

George received his BA at the University of Pennsylvania, his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College, internship at Lankenau Hospital and residency/ fellowship at Hahnemann Hospital in Philadelphia. "At lunchtime, I could go across town, play a fashion show, and be back in time for a lecture."

George played piano with several of the society orchestras in Philadelphia during his weekends, often for notable Main Line families and at one point thought of becoming a professional musician. (He was advised by one of his music teachers, "Learn to play like a professional, but get a good daytime job.") George stopped playing professionally once he entered the Air Force.

In retirement, among pursuits such as travel with Elaine to all seven continents, and over one hundred countries, as well as taking university courses, it remains a great source of pleasure for George to play the grand piano in his living room.

EDUCATION AND ABILITY

Elaine's impact on Hillsborough and the greater community has had the same awe-inspiring effect as that of her husband.

Elaine received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Pennsylvania, Masters in Education from Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, and a Doctorate in Education from the University of San Francisco.

She spent forty years in the field of education, beginning her career as an elementary and junior high teacher, a principal and then a faculty member in education at the University of San Francisco and Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU - then the College of Notre Dame).

She is credited with developing the Master of Public Administration Program (MPA) at NDNU, serving as Dean of the Graduate School for sixteen years and developing 15 Masters programs in addition to teaching credentials. She is proud that the longest serving Superintendent of the Hillsborough Schools, Marilyn Miller, along with several Hillsborough Principals and teachers graduated from these programs during her tenure as a faculty member and Dean. Elaine adds, "Two past Hillsborough Chiefs of Police even graduated from the MPA programs." Upon her retirement at NDNU, the "Elaine Cohen Graduate Endowed Scholarship" was established in her honor.

HILLSBOROUGH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION BEGINNINGS

With the passage of Prop 13 in 1978 and the Serrano Priest decision, financial control shifted from school districts. Given her background in education, Elaine was asked to be involved in the formation of the Hillsborough Schools Foundation (HSF) and a founding member of the board in 1980. The purpose of the Foundation was to provide supplementary financial support and ensure the children of Hillsborough an excellent quality education at the time, and in the future. The initial group worked on getting non-profit status from the state, promoting the need and soliciting the initial funds from the community. Along with the only other female member of the group, Elaine produced the first tri-fold brochure to go to the community explaining the purpose and need for public school Foundation in our community. In its more than 40-year history, HSF continues to provide nearly 12% of the total operating budget for Hillsborough's four public schools.

ABILITYPATH

After she retired from academia, Elaine's support for the community remained robust. For the last fourteen years, AbilityPath has held a special place in her life. Shortly after her retirement, the AbilityPath leadership reached out to solicit her membership in the Auxiliary. A friend said, "You should come see what it's about. We could use your talent." With her trademark spirit she agreed. "I don't shirk when someone asks me for help, and thought to myself, I'll give it a shot."

She quickly felt connected. "It was a wonderful mission," Elaine enthuses. "The people are absolutely terrific! Those volunteering would put on an apron and just serve the clients. It didn't matter their own background, position in life, or circumstances. People just gave of themselves. It was very impressive."

The members of the organization, started by Catherine Hearst and others, devote their time, talent and treasure to support the lives of children and adults with developmental disabilities, and to empower people with special needs to achieve their full potential.

The Auxiliary (formally known as the Hillsborough Auxiliary to Community Gatepath) is an extension of the Abilitypath Agency which

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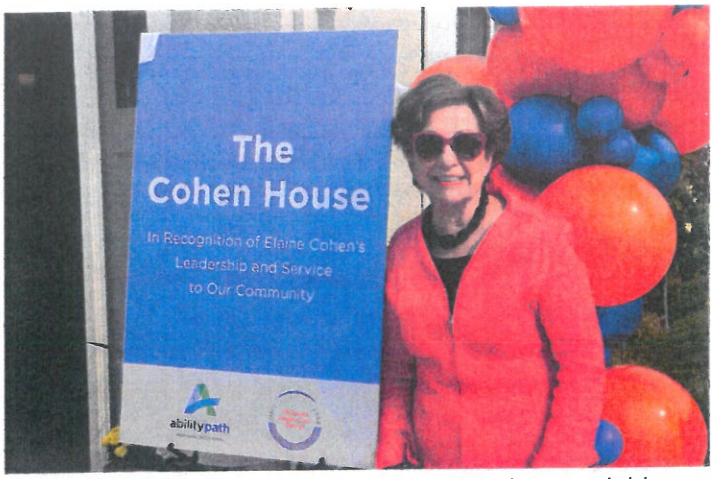

AbilityPath named the Elaine Cohen House in her honor; Elaine attended the dedication in 2020

The Elaine Cohen House in San Mateo is a co-op house for those with living with developmental disabilities

started as its fund-raising arm and now works with the clients as well as supports advocacy at the state level. The 150-member Auxiliary includes women from all areas of San Mateo County. The Auxiliary hosts a summer picnic and holiday party for the adult clients, and an annual Bridge Tournament and Luncheon that has been held for fifty years to support its mission. The Auxiliary also works closely with the Agency which hosts its annual Power of Possibilities Gala, the main fund-raising source for this vulnerable population.

Elaine's long-standing commitment with both the Auxiliary and AbilityPath Agency runs deep. As a past Auxiliary President and Agency Board Chair, she explains, "it's not only the mission, but it's all the people, volunteers and clients that make it such a special organization." In honor of Elaine's remarkable dedication and leadership to both entities, in 2020, AbilityPath named one of the new San Mateo Co-Op houses for those with developmental disabilities, The Elaine Cohen House.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

With a lifetime of inspirational contribution to community, we asked the Cohens if they have a family motto that encapsulates or guides their values and actions. Elaine fittingly shared the following.

"We tell our children, and grandchildren: Do what you love. Do it with people whom you like and respect. And leave this world a better place."