

Local couples share home and work

By Charity Prater

Most of us don't go to work as husband and wife, but there are a surprising number of couples working together in the Hollywood neighborhood. Craig and Inka Elliott own the Hollywood Burger Bar. John and Shauna Perkins run Perkins Architectural. Greg and Lisa Mistell are proprietors of Fleur de Lis Bakery and Café.

Working as husband and wife can be a blessing, although sometimes in disguise. The Elliotts aren't bashful about the challenges they still face after working together for more than 18 years.

"We bicker like cats and dogs, but the difference is that we both understand the hardships that we're going through, since we work together," says Inka.

Craig jokingly comes from another perspective, saying, "We disagree about nothing here!"

Inka returns his comment, saying, "I knew you were going to give her different answers to the same questions!"

The Elliotts have been married for 38 years and have known each other since high school. The Hollywood Burger Bar has been around for some time, but the Elliotts acquired it from the last owner who offered them a price they couldn't refuse. Since then, they have managed to work out most of the kinks in their working relationship.

"We mostly disagree about menu or procedural changes," says Inka. "Sometimes we have to agree to disagree, or compromise. We don't like to bicker in front of the customers, and there is nowhere to go and yell it out in this little place."

Shauna joined the company as the office manager nearly a year and a half ago.

"Working together is a breeze!" says John.

"Like any couple, we have some head-butting," says Shauna. "A couple weeks ago we were having a 'discussion,' so we headed over to the Hollywood Burger Bar to talk it out and overheard Craig and Inka having a 'discussion!' We didn't feel so bad after that!"

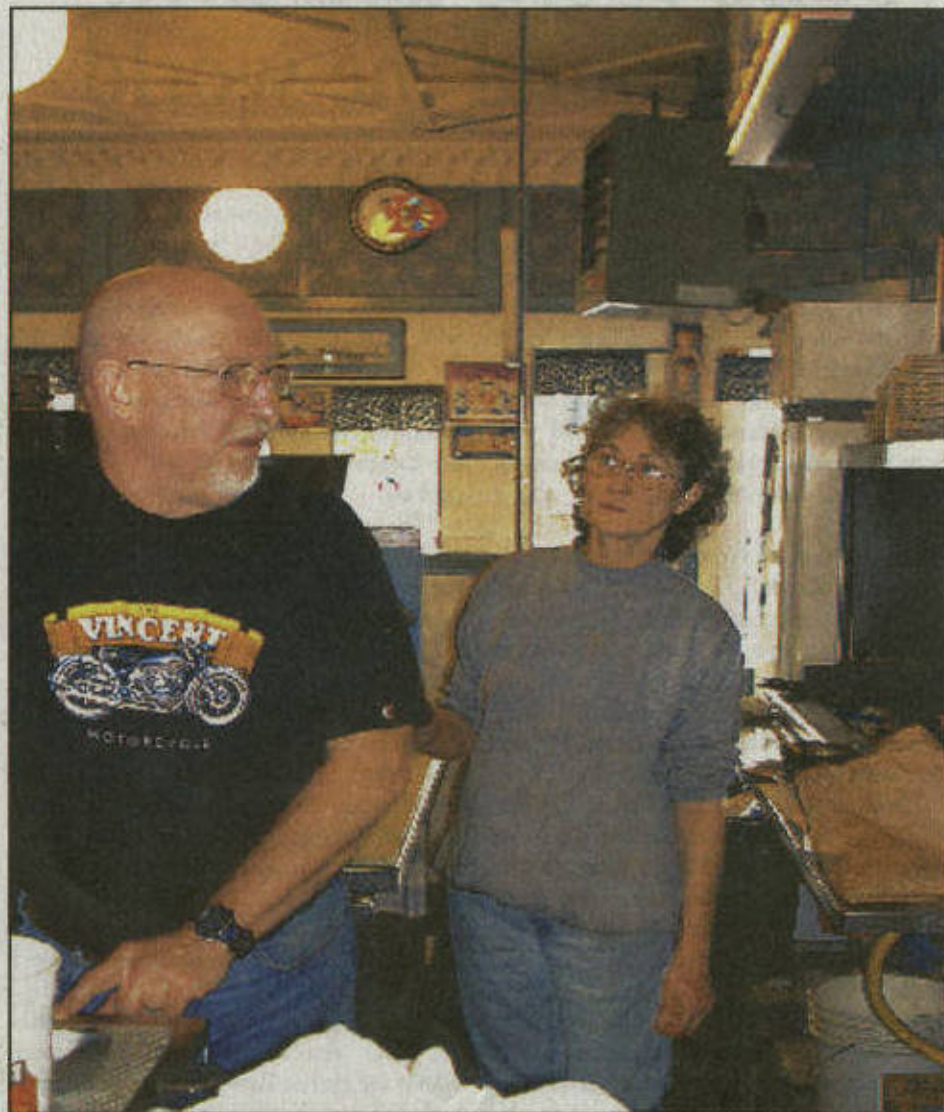
After being married for 32 years, the Perkins have found some common ground that makes it easier to work together.

"We've really started paying more attention to those stressful days where we both are having a bad day for different reasons, and we unknowingly start sniping at each other," says Shauna.

The Perkins have a rule to keep work at work and home at home. Since Shauna came on board, the company has become a more fun place to work.

"Shauna makes it possible for us to go on field trips, celebrate birthdays and even have a client-appreciation day," says John. "Since she's started working here, I've actually been able to be an architect, as well. I don't have to focus on filing or billing, but actually get to practice."

In 2005, Greg and Lisa Mistell opened Fleur de Lis Bakery and Café, where Lisa takes care of management and sales while Greg does the baking and cooking. Their business has brought them closer together and taught them to communicate more often.



Craig and Inka Elliott, owners of the Hollywood Burger Bar, have been working together for more than 18 years. — Photo by Charity Prater

"Sometimes," says Craig, "the magic works; and other days, when we get fussy customers, machinery breaks-down or all our employees are sick, we always know that life is, and will always be, me and her against the world."

John Perkins has owned Perkins Architectural for almost eight years. His wife

"We've realized that we fight only when we aren't communicating," says Lisa, "Our business is much like having a baby. We really cherish it, as we do our family."

Which only makes sense — Lisa gave birth to a boy in December. Two of the Mistell's older children work at the bakery, making it a true family business.

together for more than 18 years. — Photo by Charity Prater

Working with a spouse can be fun and challenging. Regardless of how different these businesses are, it's clear that the spouses know how to balance work and marriage. Lisa and Greg use humor to lighten the mood at their bakery. Shauna and John use

company outings. Inka and Craig enjoy poking fun at their frequent customers.

"The customers are always right, except when they're wrong!" says Craig.

"The last person out the door never tips!" says Inka. ★