

SAG HARBOR

Neighbors

JUNE 2020



Laura Grenning:
Mastering the Art of Good Living

Laura Grenning:

Mastering the Art of Good Living

By MONIQUE SINGH-ROY



Katie Kneeland, Megan Toy, Laura Grenning, Jean Grenning & Zola. Photo credit: Fishtail Media Studios

Like much of the country, Laura Grenning has been self-quarantining in her Sag Harbor home. She's been joined by her mother, Jean, who lives in Manhattan and daughter, Katie, home from college. Three generations of women spending a lot of quality time together.

"It hit me a week ago," Laura revealed. "I've known my mom my whole life and I know my daughter, she lived with me till she was 18, but they have never lived together!"

Many families have learned a lot about themselves and each other during this health crisis, the Grenning/Kneeland family are no different.

"We've been living together for 7 to 8 weeks and we've had a ball," she said. "We're cooking together, we got a game called Catan and we've been watching a lot of Netflix."

Accomplished and assured, Laura Grenning is no stranger to acclimatizing to her surroundings. An international traveler and operator in the world of high finance, she has created the life that she wanted in Sag Harbor.

Raised in Rockville, Maryland, Laura attended Richard Montgomery High School. Her mother, Jean, was a special education teacher and her father, Edward Grenning was an aerospace engineer, who worked on the Apollo Space Project and then at Johns Hopkins Physics Laboratory.

While Laura majored in economics at Denison University, she also took art classes, something she loved but wouldn't find the

time for until many years later.

Graduating in 1987, Laura was hired by Goldman Sachs as an assistant to the sell side Semiconductor Analyst and Healthcare Analyst in the Equity Research Department. They analyzed top listed companies in the industry to spot relevant trends and predict stock prices.

"I saw the best of times and the worst of times working on Wall Street," Laura proclaimed. "My first six months included the 1987 crash in October, after the market peaked in June."

In 1989 Laura quit her job in New York to work in Hong Kong as a stock analyst. During her time there she became an Institutional Investor Analyst, covering financial stocks throughout Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

"Hong Kong was like a James Bond movie," she exclaimed.

"Every dinner party included many different nationalities, it was a great meeting of minds and a lot of fun."

It was also a lot of work, including 70-hour work weeks, and little down time. Eventually Laura realized she needed to step off the merry-go-round.

"Most New Yorkers couldn't take it for more than 18 months to two years because the pace was nearly double that in Hong Kong," she explained. "Everybody worked Saturdays and whenever you socialized you were usually with clients or colleagues, there was no time off."

During a leave of absence in 1994 Laura traveled through Singapore, Bali and Vietnam, where she got dangerously ill.

"I got typhus when I was hiking in Vietnam," she revealed. "It's very rare, I was sick, with a very high fever, I lost 15 pounds, and ended up in the hospital."

Her health scare, her mother's cancer diagnosis and the loss of a close friend to cancer brought Laura home in 1995. Coming home meant coming home to Shelter Island, to a house Laura had bought in 1993.

"I'd been coming out to Sag Harbor and Shelter Island my whole life, she explained. "My grandparents always rented on Noyac Road or Shelter Island for the summer, then in 1974 they built a house on Shelter Island."

Now a resident of Shelter Island, Laura realized she couldn't return to the finance world.

"I just didn't want to squeeze my feet back into those high heels again," she said. "So I called the brokerage firm and said I'm not coming back."

As fate would have it, within days of quitting, Laura would meet artist and fellow Shelter Island resident, Nelson A. White. Taking painting lessons with him rekindled her love of art, painting and art history.

"My passion for art had been on a low simmer the whole time," she explained. "In New York I took art and art history classes and even carted around an old milk crate of art supplies that I would dabble with on weekends. My work took me to Japan, Europe and the U.S., and whenever I had a free afternoon I'd go to the museums."

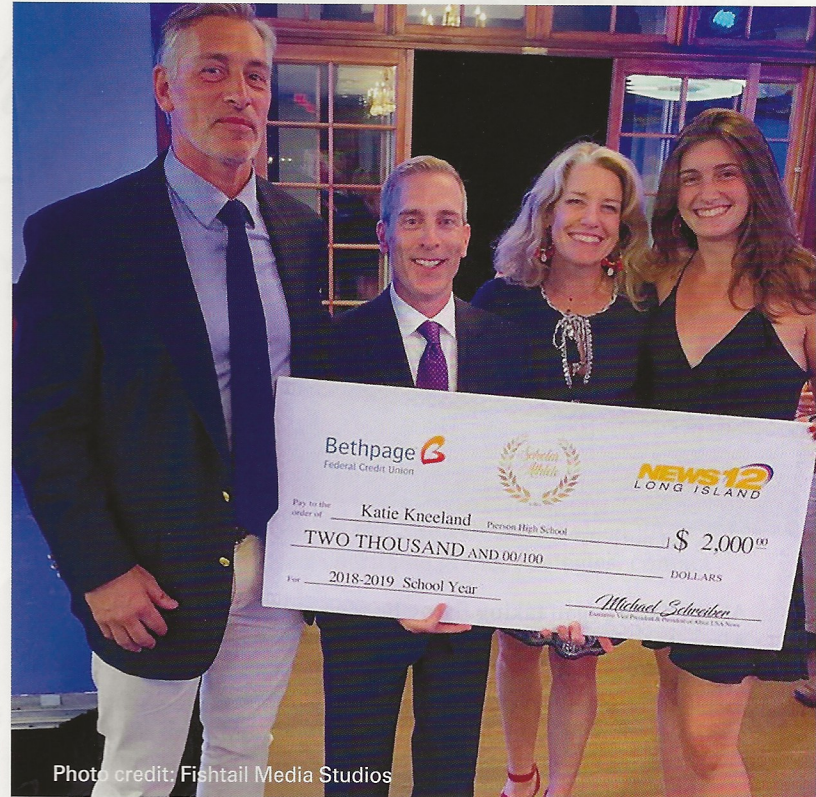
When White recommended she continue her studies in Italy, Laura traveled to Florence with her mother and then fiance, George Kneeland. For one year she studied at the Florence Academy of Art, but when her mother's cancer returned she went home.

Laura brought back several of her teacher's paintings, hoping they would inspire her to continue her studies, instead they inspired her to open Grenning Gallery in Soho in 1997.

"I realized I didn't have the patience to sit in a studio and paint seven hours a day," she proclaimed.

A year later Laura moved the gallery to Sag Harbor and it is now in its 23rd year. Along the way she and George married and had daughter Katie in 2001.

Katie excelled at sports, becoming an accomplished equestrian, as well as captain of last year's Whaler's Basketball and Soccer teams. Along with winning all county and all league honors, she is only the third female in Pierson High School history to score more than 1,000 varsity points.



George Kneeland, News 12's Kevin Maher, & Laura with Katie receiving the News 12 Scholar Athlete Award



Katie & Laura traveled to Machu Pichu last year

At 15, Katie began taking flying lessons at the East Hampton Airport, and flew solo at 18. She just finished her freshman year at Purdue University where she is majoring in engineering.

"Even though she never met my father nor my uncle, who was a physicist, her interest in math, nature, and aerospace has bubbled up," Laura exclaimed proudly.

K PASA

TACOS & TEQUILA



2 MAIN ST., SAG HARBOR
www.1-800-taco.com
631-800-TACO



23 Main Street, Sag Harbor
631-725-4774



Open 7 Days. Year Round.



Breakfast - Lunch - Dinner from 8am
Open Year Round

In 2005 Laura and George's marriage ended, but they remain friends. George teaches fifth grade at the Sag Harbor Elementary School and is Assistant Coach for the Pierson girls basketball team.

These days Grenning Gallery is Laura's main focus. More than just an outlet to showcase art, Grenning curates the artwork and the artists as well.

"I found myself interested in making sure the artist had enough money to continue working and developing whatever they were interested in," she explained. "It almost started in a non-profit mentality. It took a few years to be profitable and some years it's hugely profitable and some years it's just ok."

Helping Laura in that process is Gallery Manager Megan Toy, who has been with the gallery since 2016.

"Megan is an absolute essential worker!" Laura stressed. "She was hired to get our online presence going, which she did an amazing job. From there she's developed a very important role, not only administrating the movement of paintings, but crafting shows and bringing new artists to the gallery."

Despite the current business shutdown, the gallery has remained open for business online.

"On our website one can look at every piece of inventory and get the price," Laura explained. "We're also on first dibs in Artsy, so we've been selling a few paintings every week."

When not attending to the gallery, Laura walks her mini Australian Shepherd Zola near Sag Harbor Cove, where their house is. She also enjoys yoga, running, swimming, biking, and the occasional triathlon. She still paints, takes an occasional drawing class and is on the Board of the Florence Academy of Art.

Her mother Jean is active on social media and the telephone, staying in touch with friends while self-quarantining, and Katie just finished the last of her freshman classes online.

"We love living on our street, and now more than ever, I think we realize how lucky we are to live in this wonderful community," Laura proclaimed. "It's safe, we have loads of interesting neighbors and we live in a beautiful landscape. Let's show gratitude by taking care of our environment and supporting the shops in our town right now."

For more information visit grenninggallery.com.