

American Landscape Pool & Spa

Spring is in the air. Our trees are starting to bud, bulbs are starting to peek up through the dirt, and the outdoors is beginning to call us outside.

For this issue of *Our Rossmoor*, it seemed like the perfect time to highlight a Rossmoor-owned business that specializes in creating outdoor spaces worthy of southern California living — **American Landscape Pool & Spas**.

In business for over 35 years, Doug Rubien, with his wife Kim, have been the one-stop design and build firm for our landscaping, pool, spa, and masonry needs. And when I walked into their house last month during a rainy afternoon to sit with them for this feature, all I kept wishing was that the sun were out so we could sit in their backyard — one filled with with a built-in fireplace, bar and bbq, pool and spa, and big screen TV. With their inviting backyard as the backdrop for our chat about his landscape business, I had no doubt that this is what he was meant to do.

But how did a Long Beach State engineering student end up in Rossmoor building outdoor living spaces that enrich our lives? Here's the rest of the story.

Doug grew up in Long Beach and attended Millikan High School. As a Long Beach kid, he started college at Long Beach City. While there, he had a friend with a maintenance route who needed a little help a couple days a week, so Doug joined him part time. Soon after, the friend wanted out of the business and, in 1985, handed him the entire route.

Under Doug's management, this little maintenance route started to grow. It turned into bigger landscaping jobs, softscape additions, and hardscape installations. By the time he was ready to graduate, his little route was earning good money, and he saw the potential in outdoor living. He immediately enrolled in Orange Coast Community College and earned a Landscape Design certificate. This, paired with his background in engineering and construction management, and he was off and running.

But he hasn't done it all on his own. This is where his wife Kim enters the story.

Three years into his new business, Doug had expanded to working in Seal Beach, Cypress, Huntington Beach, Rossmoor, and Los Alamitos. He happened to be in town, visiting a local haunt after a day toiling in the dirt, when Kim stopped into that same haunt after work on her way home. The rest, they say, is history.

How they ended up in Rossmoor to build their family business and raise their kids is no accident. Kim is the daughter of Judy Klabouch, owner of Green Street Interiors. Kim grew up in Rossmoor, attending Hopkinson, Oak, and Los Alamitos High School. When she and Doug met in 1988, she was already living in the Rossmoor Townhomes — where she was headed that day when fate intervened.

They married in 1990 at the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church. Because Kim grew up in and never left Rossmoor, she knew she wanted to raise their kids here. The neighborhood was home. She loved the area and wanted her kids to have the opportunity to experience the childhood and education she did.

It didn't take much convincing to get Doug to sell his home in Long Beach and move to Rossmoor. He loved the area and was already doing some work in the neighborhood. A marriage and a move to Rossmoor felt like a step up from his small place: bigger lots, close to the beach, amazing community, and built-in family.

But the one question we all have about Rossmoor residents? How and why *that* house?

Because luck always plays a role in all our stories of finding the right house in Rossmoor, their story feels reminiscent to us all.

Kim was friends with Brenda Gorman who was interested in buying a house on Kempton. Through some twist of fate and a nod to friendship, Brenda offered the opportunity to purchase the house to Doug and Kim first. It was a New Englander and had been a rental for years. They claimed to me that it was pretty beat up and totally ugly. Then they proceeded to give me the gory details: an electrical panel in the bedroom, a wall of gilded mirrors in the living room, shag carpets, and paneling everywhere.

Because Kim is a Klabouch, design runs in her blood, and she saw its potential. She knew Doug could handle the outside, and she could handle the inside. They saw it as a diamond in the rough, not to mention the house was actually across the street from the one in which she grew up. They decided to go for it even though they did take the time to do some much-needed demo before moving in.

Eventually, Kim's ultimate goal came to fruition. They have raised three girls in that home, and all three of them attended Hopkinson, Oak, and Los Alamitos High School just like their mom — and provided a perfect foundation for their futures.

Their oldest, Amanda, is married, living in Washington, D.C., and working as an official in the State Department. Christine, their middle daughter, is recently engaged and working as a jewelry specialist at Tiffany's — showering gifts on her mom for all the requisite holidays. Their youngest is just getting ready to graduate from college and has secured her first "real" job in a real estate private equities firm. The only price for three successful kids besides the price of college tuition? Empty nest syndrome. Doug and Kim just recently filled their empty nest on Kempton with Ringo — an adorable twelve-week-old Bernadoodle puppy filled with enough love, energy, and piss-and-vinegar to spare.

To this day, Kim still has neighbors she grew up next to and is dear friends with the Gorman family — a local real estate team in the neighborhood.

When not running the business, managing rental properties, or chasing after Ringo, Doug and Kim keep busy. They love the outdoors and try to spend a little time every month in Lake Havasu where they enjoy boating, hiking, off roading, and mountain bike riding. They make their way to Cody, Wyoming every year for horseback riding and fly fishing. And if they're not holed up at the lake or on the mountains, you can find them riding across the US on a Harley.

Doug and Kim are quintessential Rossmoor. They live here. Work here. Have literally planted roots here. In fact, Doug is the original builder of our very own Rossmoor and Kempton mini parks in the 1990s. He turned these pieces of land, donated from the water district to Rossmoor, into xeriscape treasures with his expert touch, installing all original pavers, masonry, sandboxes, sprinklers, and trees. Next time you're by one of these parks, stop to look for the plaque with his name.

Why has his business been such a local success?

It's because his attention to detail and professionalism are evident. Doug's business has grown from a simple college maintenance route to thriving business through word of mouth and repeat customers — a true testament to honesty and integrity. I'm convinced this is all because he handles every step of the process, managing the entire project himself. He's put his name and reputation on the line — and his commitment to his customers and Rossmoor shows.

Want a pool facelift, or need an actual pool, and want to be swimming the July 4th? Call Doug.

Want a one-stop shop you can trust to design and build a high-end, custom outdoor environment? Call Doug.

Want someone to help you fill your outdoor living space with color and cushions and design ideas? Call Doug — but ask for Kim!

This summer, I think we're all looking for an excuse to stay home. With a new backyard, I think a proper staycation could be in all our futures. Call American Landscape to help you make it happen — and then call a neighbor to enjoy it with you.

And be sure to leave two extra chairs for Doug and Kim — and having a dog treat handy might be a good idea, too.

They can be reached at 562-596-0688 or by email at Doug@AMLpools.com. You can also visit his website for more information at www.AMLpools.com.