

My mouth dropped when I walked into Green Street Interiors at 10660 Los Alamitos Blvd for the first time in January of this year. The showroom is elegant yet comfortable, full without being cluttered, filled with an energy that both inspires creativity and welcomes a visitor to sit and stay a while. I guess that's what we'd all expect when walking into an established, successful 40-year-old decorating business. But this one is run by two of our own — the Klabouch mother-daughter duo: Judy (owner) and Karen (her youngest daughter, head designer, buyer, and manager).

What I didn't expect was to walk into their home for our interview in January and feel like I was walking into a second showroom. Entering, I was immediately struck by the juxtaposition of textures, textiles, color, and style. While mint-green and cabbage rose wallpaper adorn the kitchen and dining room walls, white curtains separate this space from the family room — curtains that reminded me of a 1970's bedspread. Only these curtains were divine; my mother's bedspread of the same ilk, not so much. In the kitchen, masterfully paired with the curtains and wallpaper, are timeless, classic, white subway backsplash tiles, shabby chic blue-painted cabinets, and a glass chandelier. I guess the eclectic decor and beauty shouldn't have surprised me — that's what they do. And they do it exceptionally well.

Judy and Karen both credit the previous generations of women in their family for their natural design, decor, and coordinating talents. Judy regaled me with stories of her mom and grandmother designing “by the seat of their pants,” tearing up couches to reupholster them “just for fun.” Without any formal training, Judy has always done the same thanks to their family's “artsy gene” that has been passed down through the generations. Just like the women before her, when Judy's kids were little, she coordinated and decorated her own home with garage sale finds, a good old-fashioned can of paint, and visits to the local fabric stores. She created for her young family a true home, making her own drapes, lampshades, and even a coffee table made from an old door.

Because Judy has such an eye for design, when her friends would stop by for a visit or playdate, they'd ask her to “make your mark” on their homes. In 1977, she finally decided to open up a storefront to turn this hobby into something more official — or as official as the original Los Alamitos Post Office, an old 400-square-foot dilapidated building, could offer.

She laughs now when she tells stories about this condemned building on Green Avenue behind the old pawn shop — where Enchanted Florist is now on Los Alamitos Blvd. Funny stories like having to turn off the window air conditioner when the phone rang, so she could hear the customer above the racket. And how this street was the inspiration for the business name, only she liked the sound of “Street” better than “Avenue.”

She started her business with wallpaper and blinds. Then she added carpet. Then customers started wanting consulting. This little hobby quickly outgrew its small space, and two years after hanging her shingle, she expanded to the retail center that housed Boondocks. She didn't have a showroom but was quickly discovering she needed one. So within just a few years of the move, she expanded again, taking over the entire ground floor of the center save for the bar.

Then in 2008, she moved again to her current location in the Los Alamitos Plaza where she has built an extravagant and beautiful and dreamy furniture showroom. Walk into this space and you'll find anything you could ever want in a design firm: accessories, gifts ready for purchase, design services for homes, businesses, and even wineries, custom furniture, window treatments, new construction coordination, paint. And you can get these services for any budget. Need help for an out-of-town location? No worries — they can help there, too.

For forty-two years Judy's been a business owner, a female business owner at that, raising three kids as a single parent, during a time when people used to call and ask, "May I speak to the man in charge?" and she'd answer, "You're speaking to him." She is the epitome of grit and hustle.

But how did the business end up in Rossmoor when Judy was Compton born and bred?

I learned within minutes of our time together that Judy is a Rossmoor treasure, deserving of a feature in our "Rossmoor Archives," as well as the "Rossmoor-Resident Owned Businesses." Sit down and get comfortable, this is the rest of her story.

Judy describes Compton as "the Rossmoor of the time." A city considered "the place to live." She graduated from Compton High School, sharing with me her pride in being a majorette and winning multiple awards during her time there. I felt her enthusiasm and pride for that small, close knit community — a feeling and energy she learned early and brought with her to Rossmoor.

While getting on with her life, studying sociology at Long Beach State to be a probation officer, getting married, and moving to Huntington Beach, her mom, Eileen Hampton, was getting on with building Rossmoor. Eileen was the original real estate broker in the neighborhood, owning De Benedictis Realty.

Eileen sold Judy her first Rossmoor home in 1971 after Judy fell in love with the trees. Judy's first house was on Kensington: a Brittany Gardens. Because it's what she does, she remodeled this original Cortese home by adding on an 800 sq. ft. family room with a fireplace. In 1976, when she set out to sell this first home, buyers were awed by the remodel. They'd never seen anything like it, as she was the first Rossmoor homeowner to do such a thing. She ended up selling this home for more than any other home had been sold in the neighborhood at that time: \$120,000. She repeated this another three times, moving next to Oak Leaf then Walker Lee and eventually Tucker, where she still lives today — an Estates, remodeled, of course.

Judy raised her three kids in Rossmoor: Kim, Don, and Karen who all attended Hopkinson, Oak and Los Alamitos High School. Then her three kids passed down their love of Rossmoor to their own children who also attended the same three schools. Rossmoor for Judy is truly “a family thing.”

But it’s also “a neighborhood thing,” as well.

She gives back to this community as much as she receives. She is a founding board member for Casa Youth Shelter and has served twice as its president, chairing their big fundraiser five times over the years. Her annual Texas Hold ‘Em Poker Party, hosted in her backyard for the past fourteen years, has raised almost \$150,000 for this organization. She is also a member of the Los Alamitos Chamber of Commerce, National Charity League, Rotary Club, Soroptimist, and We Care. Additionally, if you need support to raise money for your nonprofit, partner with Green Street Interiors for one night during the holidays and receive 20% of the evening’s sales for your nonprofit’s coffers.

I asked her before leaving about her exit strategy. If she plans to retire anytime soon? She told me, “I love the people. I love the office. I love the activity. I can’t imagine not doing what I love. I’ll retire when the paramedics carry me out feet first.”

Now that’s one great exit plan — one I guarantee she’ll handle with impeccable style.

For more information, you can contact Great Street Interiors at 562-598-8694 or juditheklabouch@gmail.com.