



coffee chat with **Kim Johannsen**

STORY: ASHLEY DEGRAAF

Sitting down with long-time Duncan Re/Max realtor Kim Johannsen turned into a really cool deep conversation about conquering life's goals, business ethics and growth and finding the perfect work/family-life balance.

This issue's Coffee Chat took place at the 56-year-old's stunning home on the water in Cowichan Bay, which is very much a reflection and result of all those things noted above.

As we talked outside on his deck, overlooking ocean and mountains, we discussed working hard, his family life and pastimes. The former Navy Engineer and house painter, turned realtor and land developer talked about his twin sons, as well, both preparing to fly the nest and take their first steps into the post-secondary education and the business world. His wife, Jitka, also manages and oversees the financial side of their business, Johannsen Group Real Estate.

Q: How have your past and former careers played a part in your future?

A: As you go down a path in your life, sometimes you really don't know where this path is leading, but then suddenly you find out what you learned, and then you learn how it's all applicable. Interesting enough, the naval career that you would think has nothing to do with real estate, has everything to do with it.

The Navy taught me about being methodical, using systems, checklists and being organized. I was in engineering in the navy, so being able to creatively solve problems leads right into real estate as does relating to all walks of life and just simply getting along with everyone. You're on a ship with 200 guys. You better be able to get along, because if you don't they won't let you ashore at the next port.

Q: Do you have anything special you can share from your 10 years in the navy?

A: Unfortunately, the civilians in the world will never get or understand the camaraderie you get when you're in the military for any length of time. It's hard to replicate that. That's what I miss the most. That's what all the navy guys I talk to miss as well.

Q: Does that also affect your day-to-day now?

A: A little. Because I run a real estate team, I like to have that camaraderie and I guess, esprit de corps inside my team. I try as much as I can to foster that. One of my team members is an ex-army captain, Rod Macintosh. He actually served in the army for 10 years.

Q: Wow, that's a strong team you have. Have you ever found it challenging being a husband-wife team and working together with your wife?

A: Interestingly, I was a painting contractor and painting houses after the navy and my wife and I dabbled in some real estate and she saw something bigger for us. A nudge from her to try out real estate sales helped me get to where we're at now. I really have her to thank.

You would think it would be hard. But I'm going to say, 'No.' There's a lot of decisions to be made and we're both very different personalities. I'm the fly by the seat of my pants persona which is great if you're in sales and she's a very logical person which keeps it organized and even keeled. The two of us come up with the best ideas together.

Q: Do you think retirement is close for you, so that one day you can just sit back and enjoy this view more often?

A: Yes, but what does retirement mean? That's the big question. I've actually gone to retirement seminars trying to figure that out. For me that doesn't mean doing nothing. It means picking and choosing what I do and when I do it more and more, because my life is kind of going in that direction now.

I'm going to keep running a team organization, but I think the business is such that I can start doing more of my own things, which for me includes picking up properties and doing fix and flips and having some rental properties.

I like to keep it fun. I love the business because it's different every day. Once you've established yourself, you can set the tone for how you want to work.

Q: How did you get to where you're at today?

A: I worked really, really hard, maybe not smart but hard. I've been doing this for 24 years. At points in my life it was unbalanced. That's probably the one word, 'balance' if you're going to survive in this industry and thrive, that's what you need to find and maintain.

Q: By that, do you mean balance with your family life?

A: Yes, that and covering all the bases and doing it without being stressed out.

Q: Do you have any tips you can provide on how you got there?

A: Find out what you're really good at and do that. Don't do the things you're not good at. Find someone else who can do those and have them work with you.

There are a lot of people who work without goals. I'm a list guy. I write lists every day. I have bucket lists, goals and objectives, prioritize and re-prioritize regularly and that helps me think about those big goals. I planned to be here and I got here.

One thing I found along the way that has helped me has been going for walks and hiking.

I make a point of three-to-four times a week going up Cobble Hill mountain or Mt. Tzhouhalem. It's physical and mental.

Q: What other hobbies do you have?

A: Because of my history with the navy, I've always loved being on the water. I do my fair share of boating, sailing and crabbing. I like socializing with friends and throwing parties. This is a great place to have a party here. For my 50th birthday I went a little crazy here and we had a dance floor built over the swimming pool and I built a pirate ship and we had 70 pirates. It was the best party.

I'm also a bit of a photo bug and artist.

Q: Because you're a creative person as well, do you find you're always thinking about opportunities, whether it's creative or business related?

A: Yes. I probably drive my wife crazy. Yes. Yes. I think in technicolor about a lot of things. It's good and bad. (He shows me a neat photo of a fireball sunset glaring off the roadway he recently took.)

A lot of people would just cruise by, but I had to stop. I don't just look, I see things with an artist's eye.

Q: Can you tell me a bit about your kids?

A: Kyle does my drone videos. He's very creative and talented. He's going into commerce and marketing at UVIC. I am telling him don't ever go into a job that doesn't require or appreciate the gift of the creativity that he possesses.

Erik is off to Brock University pursuing a degree in Sports Management. He sees himself getting into hockey management. They were both actually born with medical issues. They were both preemies. They were 4 lbs each. They were born at Vic General and then we found out Kyle was born with a club foot, and he's had two surgeries and he's now actually been on a champion hip-hop dance team and he's a great soccer player and athlete and Erik was born with a heart defect requiring heart surgery at Children's Hospital when he was 10 days old. He was even a Poster Child for Children's Hospital and met Marie Osmond. What I've seen in my kids is pretty amazing. Erik had heart monitoring every year and he was never allowed to play contact sports. Hockey has been his passion. So while he played soccer and rowed, he couldn't play hockey. When he was 16, they said he was OK to play contact sports after having a titanium stint placed in his aorta. He learned to skate with small kids at 16 and then he played on the development team at Brentwood and then in Grade 12 for the senior varsity team.

