

Tish Rabe

AND FRIENDS

By Lisa Saunders | Photographs by Sasha Dale

John, a retired senior sales executive, and Tish Rabe (pronounced “Robby”), a best-selling children’s book author, met in high school in Needham, Massachusetts, when both got the lead roles of Laurey and Curly in the high school musical version of *Oklahoma!* During that time, they also performed together in a four-person, folk rock band, The Town Dump. “Hey, it was the 60s,” laughs Tish when asked who would name a band after a dump.

Their lives went separate ways after high school but they reunited 15 years later and got married in 1987. Together they have four children and four grandchildren. Two children live in New York City and two are in Boston. Wanting to live halfway between them, Mystic seemed an ideal place to settle down. “John is an avid fisherman,” says Tish, “which makes Mystic the perfect place to be!”

In 2013, they decided to put a new band together and created Tish Rabe and Friends, a quintet that performs jazz and country tunes regularly at the Steak Loft. Tish says, “John is an expert tenor banjo player and plays both banjo and bass with our band. I enjoy singing with our great musicians and we always have a terrific crowd.” The couple especially loves it when their children, Johnny and Melody, come from New York to perform with them. Their next performance is Sun., July 28 (see calendar of events). To download a free copy of their new album, visit: TishRabeandfriends.com.

Tish continues to write books for children. “After the death of Dr. Seuss in 1991, I was hired by Random House to write *The Cat in the Hat’s Learning Library*, a series of rhyming science books for early readers. One of my first books was *Fine Feathered Friends - All About Birds*. I remember writing, ‘When birds want to go on a winter vacation they all take a trip and they call it migration.’” Tish never knows where and when she will find inspiration. “I carry a spiral notebook wherever I go. I write my ideas in longhand and only sit down at the computer when I’m ready to submit my manuscript to the publisher.”

Her next book, *The 100 Hats of the Cat in the Hat*, will be released on August 6. It’s about the number 100 and a celebration of the 100th day of school. “Every book in this series takes over two years to research for accuracy and is approved by an expert in each scientific field,” says Tish. “The creative challenge for me is making sure I follow the rhythm and rhyme patterns of the other Dr. Seuss books.”

Tish also writes for many other popular children’s characters. She has written over 170 books for Disney, Nickelodeon, Sesame Street, PBS Kids, Scholastic, Houghton Mifflin and many others. Her most recent release, *The First Day of Summer Vacation*, published by





The whole Rabe family in John's boat at Spicer's Marina. Photograph by Charlie Rabe.

HarperCollins in May, is available at Bank Square Books and Amazon, as are all her other books. "If Bank Square Books doesn't have the book in stock, they will order it for you," says Tish.

Although Tish is clearly a successful children's author, she still suffers setbacks like all other writers. "I always tell my kids that 'rejection is my middle name,'" she laughs. "In 1996, I submitted a book to Random House that began, 'Maurus O'Raurus was

a brachiosaurus who had the best voice in the dinosaur chorus. He loved to play tennis and swim in the sea but mostly he liked to eat fresh broccoli.' Every time I tell students that, they laugh, but he still isn't published. The good news is Maurus helped me get my job writing for Dr. Seuss."

Tish graduated cum-laude from Ithaca College in 1973 with a Bachelor of Music degree in Applied Vocal Performance. "I planned to be a full-time opera or jazz singer," she says. "In 1975, I was hired by Sesame Street in the music department and went on to sing with the Muppets on the show as well as on record albums." In 1982, Tish was the Associate Producer of *Big Bird in China*, working with the Sesame Street film crew on location in China and sang 'The Monkey King Song' on the show which won the Emmy for Best Children's Special for NBC. She was also a senior producer and scriptwriter for "3-2-1 Contact," an award-winning science series for kids on PBS and wrote lyrics for over 200 songs, including "Endangered" performed by Grammy winner Pat Benatar.



Joe Grieco of Mystic and Tish and John Rabe rehearse with their band, Tish Rabe and Friends. Photograph submitted by Tish Rabe.





John and Tish welcome their new cat Willy from Compassion for Cats of New London County, Inc. Photograph submitted by Tish Rabe.

John and Tish bought their Mystic home on Noank Road in 2008 and began living there part-time after moving from Greenwich, Connecticut, in 2011. While John was working, the couple spent weekends in Mystic while commuting by train to their apartment in New York City with their cat, Eddie Spaghetti (featured in the August 2018 issue). They love living in Mystic. “We have met a lot of friendly neighbors and enjoy getting together for dinner at each other’s houses,” says Tish. “Thanks to John’s amazing skill as a fisherman, we often serve seabass, blackfish and fluke.”

Tish enjoys doing author visits at schools in Mystic, Pawcatuck and Westerly, Rhode Island. Recently, she launched “Virtual School Author Visits,” which uses Zoom internet technology to let her visit schools across the U.S.A. and around the world—“Without leaving our basement!” Tish laughs.

Tish belongs to the Southeastern Connecticut Authors and Publishers Association and often hosts their gatherings at her home. Local authors can learn more about the Association at: www.aboutcapa.com.

The community can keep up with Tish Rabe by signing up for her newsletter. If you would like a book personally autographed by Tish or to check her availability for an author visit, contact her at tishrabe@gmail.com or find her at: www.tishrabe.com, facebook.com/tishrabebooks or www.tishrabeandfriends.com.

You can watch my interview with Tish on SEC-TV on YouTube by using the search terms, “Lisa Saunders interviews Tish Rabe”.

When asked for a message to the sponsors of *Groton-Mystic Neighbors*, Tish said, “I was impressed with the magazine from the very first issue and all the sponsors who have supported it from the beginning.”

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Do you want to share your story or do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at lsaunders@bestversionmedia.com.