



Mike Magidson and John Travolta aboard the Airbus

Mike Magidson,

From Sleepy Hollow to the Airbus

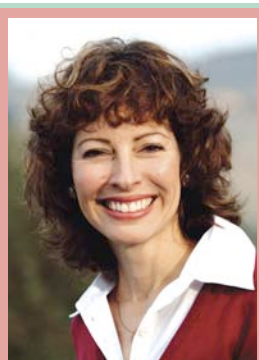
By Sophie Braccini

In 1977, Mike Magidson entered the 4th grade at Sleepy Hollow Elementary School. That same year, "Saturday Night Fever" was released and John Travolta rocketed to fame. Years later, both at the top of their game, Mike Magidson and John Travolta found themselves traveling together in the cockpit of the largest commercial airliner in the world, the Airbus A-380. In speaking with Mike shortly after the flight, it's clear the people and community of Orinda played a significant role in shaping his life in all sorts of important ways.

The Magidsons moved to Orinda when Mike was nine. There, he felt the first touch of destiny when Mrs. Pettit, a Sleepy Hollow teacher who had decided to enrich the standard curriculum, taught French to the class. At Miramonte, Mike was more into sports than arts, but his brother Jeff recommended he attend Mr. Artus' Chorus class. As a teenager, Mike had no idea he could become an artist. It was Mr. Artus who recognized that talent and gave him confidence. "You need somebody from the outside to give you that boost," remembers Mike. Another very influential person during his adolescence was Sue Graf, mother of his friend Peter Graf. In the Orinda community that Mike describes as a bubble, Sue was another eye opener. She took the kids camping in the desert, taught them to respect the environment, and

aroused their interest in native cultures. "Sue, who used to run a program at Wagner Ranch, was certainly one of the greatest influences in my entire life," says Mike with emotion. After he graduated from Miramonte, Mike went to UC Davis, transferred to UC Berkeley, and then completed his B.A. in International Relations at UC Santa Barbara. His senior year was spent in Grenoble (France), with the "education abroad" program. After graduation, Mike joined a friend from Miramonte, Brian Shepp, who was studying at UCLA and wrote plays. Mike went to L.A. to help with the plays, but started to edit films in order to make money. "You don't earn your living with plays in L.A.," Mike comments. But Mike had to go back to France: his brother was living there and he had met there that special someone who was to become Madame Magidson. Back in France he continued editing films for 5 to 6 years. Then it was time for him to become a director. His first documentary was called, "Canada with a K." Mike followed the "Rye-Jazz" music group Kadda Cherif Hadria, which was touring Canada. This first movie was about culture clash, Mike's favorite subject. As he started to make a name for himself in Europe, he decided to come back during the 2001-2002 school year to show his country to his girls. Celia attended second grade at Camino Pablo in Moraga and Eva went to pre-school. Mike had returned to his country 10 days before 9/11. As a result, a European network bought Mike's project "American Manifest," a film about how ordinary Americans, living in different parts of the country, reacted to the terrible event. Mike would have liked to stay more than a year here, but his career was in Europe. Upon his return, he directed "The Long Trail," one of his most acclaimed documentaries, about the Inuit populations in Greenland. Then in 2004, he was hired by Discovery Channel to develop a project about the creation of the Airbus A380, the biggest commercial carrier ever built. After 3 years of filming, the undertaking is coming to an end. Five 46 minutes films have been created by Mike. The first 3 have already been broadcast in the US, and the last two are coming. Subsequently, Mike has been all over the world with the plane. John Travolta is "the face" of the Australian Airline and as a certified 747 pilot, he was very interested in the specifics of piloting the A380. Mike had a blast filming him and was charmed by his genuine sweetness.

Now that the Airbus Project is at an end, Mike is starting a new chapter in his life. His first fiction film is in the making. The harder part is to secure the financing, but he expects to start filming in December 2008. The story is set in Greenland and the underlying theme is the collision between the modern and ancient Eskimo world. Mike loves collisions and the sparks that result from them.



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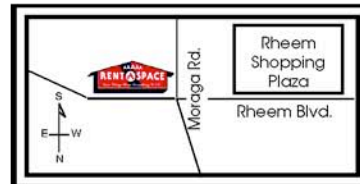
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