

## Reasonable opposites

**The Tilestons' long marriage has accommodated their political differences, and a new award celebrates the art of compromise**

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At first glance, it seems a match made in a very hot place. Like, if you held their resumes side by side, they'd burst into flames.

Which explains the new award named in their honor.

First, a little background:

Peg Tileston, 76, is the greenie type, a pioneer of Alaska's environmental movement and recipient of the Alaska Conservation Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jules Tileston, 75, is the hard-hat type, a resource development guy and former director the state Division of Mining and Water Management.

When the topic of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling comes up, they don't even speak the same language.

To Peg, it's "the Arctic refuge."

To Jules, it's "the 1002 area."

And the Pebble Mine? Don't even go there.

Imagine the dinner conversations in that house.

"You want to have a lively discussion, throw out one of those hot topics and kind of sit back and watch," daughter Nancy Tileston said of her parents. "Oh, it was fun. In fact, it still is."

The Tilestons often get asked how they do it. Live under the same roof. Not get into food fights at the dinner table.

It requires a certain amount of "selective listening," Peg says.

"There's absolutely no selective listening," Jules says. "She just doesn't hear me."

"Ditto."

They're kidding. Kind of.

It helps that they have so much respect for each other, and always have, even back when she was a Democrat and he a Republican and their votes cancelled out each other. (Both are Democrats now.) It also helps that neither is an extremist.

"I've always looked at mom as a middle-of-the-road environmentalist and dad as a middle-of-the-road developer," Nancy Tileston said. "Both have a solid understanding of why the other side is important, even if they don't agree."

These two have been married for more than half a century; they obviously worked this out long ago. There were going to be areas of disagreement, they agreed. But they've always shared a love of the outdoors. Canoeing, sailing, fishing, hiking. Watching birds, spying on bears.

The couple's ability to avoid seeing issues as black or white -- and to make an implausible union work for 53 years -- inspired the creation of the Peg and Jules Tileston Award.

There's nothing quite like it.

The award is being offered jointly by another couple you might expect to see in divorce court -- the Alaska Conservation Alliance and the Resource Development Council. Just as with the Tilestons, things are not as they appear with these two.

The Tileston Award is neither a green award for the business crowd nor a business award for green crowd. "It's its own flavor," says Kate Troll, executive director of the Alliance.

A press release from the two groups describes the award as honoring "organizations, individuals and/or businesses that create solutions and innovations advancing" both environmental and development goals.

(The prize brings no money, said Troll, just "special recognition at an event hosted by both organizations," date yet to be determined. "We also anticipate giving the winner a piece of art and a certificate.")

"I've worked with Jules and I've worked with Peg and found them both to be very

reasonable, roll up the sleeves, let's get practical when dealing with the issues," Troll said. "When someone comes at it from that perspective, you may end up not agreeing, but you walk away with respect for where they're coming from."

## TESTY TIMES

Jules and Peg grew up in nearby small towns in Indiana, where their families had known each other for years. Jules remembers the dress Peg wore the first time she caught his attention -- "it was yellow with flowers" -- but they didn't start dating until they were juniors at Earlham College, a Quaker school in Richmond, Ind.

As a favorite family story goes, after announcing their engagement, a professor caught Peg before she'd had her morning coffee and asked how the two of them met.

"We're cousins," she said.

"My stepmother and his grandfather were second cousins," Peg explained. "So it's convoluted."

"But it stops a conversation," Jules said.

"Very rapidly," said Peg.

Peg was teaching junior high school when Jules' work with the Department of the Interior brought them and their three young daughters to Alaska in 1972. They were going to stay two years. That was the life span of Jules' project, heading up Wild and Scenic Rivers studies, one of many leading to passage of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Those ANILCA years were the testiest of times. Dubbed by developers as the biggest land lockup the world had ever known and by environmentalists as conserving Alaska for future generations, ANILCA created more than 100 million acres of new national parks, refuges and other protected areas.

At the time, Jules was with the Bureau of Land Management, which would lose many of its prime holdings. Peg was on the board of the Alaska Center for the Environment, which had no problem with that.

Of the many lessons Peg learned from those days: "Don't write to the secretary of the interior while I'm working for the secretary of the interior," Jules said.

But hey, James Watt really ticked her off.

And then there was the time Jules was heading up environmental impact studies for a trans-Alaska liquefied natural gas pipeline while Peg was on the national Sierra Club board. And the Sierra Club was involved in a legal fight over the project. Technically, they weren't supposed to even talk to each other.

Both the Tilestons' resumes seem to list the work of several lifetimes: She as co-founder of Trustees for Alaska. He as special assistant to the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. She as a founder of Alaska Common Ground. He as co-author of the Implementing Reclamation Reform Act of 1982. She as editor of What's Up, a natural resource and environmental calendar distributed by e-mail. He as a board member of the Alaska Society of Outdoor & Nature Photographers.

And that's just a taste.

What is each's favorite accomplishment by the other?

For Peg, it's Jules' Wild and Scenic Rivers work.

And for him?

"It's very simple," he said. "She's tolerated me for 50-some years."

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Find reporter Debra McKinney online at [adn.com/contact/dmckinney](http://adn.com/contact/dmckinney).

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PEG AND JULES TILESTON AWARD: Nominations are due by March 31. The forms can be found at

[www.tilestonaward.com](http://www.tilestonaward.com)

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