

# From Fort Bend to Washington D.C.

See Why Pete Olson is Sweet on Sugar Land

*Written by Melanie Kiser*

The first time Pete Olson ventured to Sugar Land, he was a young kid on vacation with his parents. Back then in the 1970's, the city's population was below 8,000, less than one-tenth what it is now, and the refinery was the most remarkable part of the skyline. "You can still see it, but there's a lot more now," says the U.S. Congressman, who represents District 22 and took office in January 2009.

## Returning to Run

Although life has taken him out of Texas for many years - 2008 primary opponent Shelly Sekula-Gibbs labeled him a "Washington insider" - Olson has strong roots in the lone star state. He moved to Texas in the fourth grade and stayed through high school at Clear Lake, went to college at Rice University, and attended law school at the University of Texas. He spent nine years after law school in the U.S. Navy as an aviator and then served as a naval liaison officer to the U.S. Senate, where he was slowly drawn back to his roots.

Olson, 47, and his family moved back to Texas during the summer of 2007 to run against Democratic incumbent Nick Lampson, who won the seat after Tom Delay dropped out of the 2006 race amid allegations of campaign finance violations and money laundering. After exploring all five counties in the district, Olson and his wife, Nancy, felt drawn to Sugar Land. "[We] really became enamored with the Sugar Land area, because of the incredible quality [of] life, great schools, great activities, and the phenomenal people," he says.

## Upholding Principles

For the next nine years preceding the big move back, Olson worked on Capitol Hill as an aide to Senator Phil Gramm and Senator John Cornyn, both members of the Texas delegation whom he says taught him the importance of principles. "There's a lot of politicking that goes on up in Washington, but at the end of the day, if you stand up for your principles and you're true to your principles, you cannot move," he says.

Olson points to his predecessor, Delay, as an example of a representative being true to his principles, working hard in his district, and making sure his constituents know where he stands on issues. When the House seat in the conservative district went to a Democrat as a result of Delay dropping out of the race and being replaced with a write-in candidate in 2006, Olson jumped at the chance to move back and run for office, noting that people in Texas "just have a courtesy about them and a caring that is unequaled in America."

## Texas Proud

Olson considers himself a proud Texan. "Sugar Land is a part of Texas, and we're a proud group of people who work hard and take care of our neighbors," he says, citing Hurricane Ike as an example. "We were out working water lines, food lines the next day, and it was Texans out helping Texans. Nobody was complaining - people were just working hard. It was a sunny day, and all anyone wanted to do was help their neighbors. Nobody was looking for Washington, D.C., to come take care of them. I've got my fellow Texans here, and that's what I'm most proud of, what I most love about Sugar Land."

Olson credits the state's attitude towards state government and infrastructure for how well Houston and surrounding areas have weathered the recession. "We have low taxes. We have an environment that encourages businesses to come to our state and take chances to invest their money," he says. "The other thing is that our economy is very diverse. We have a lot of petrochemical oil facilities, we have a port that's a national economic driver, we have a fantastic medical center. I'm very proud that we have the world center of human space flight down at the Johnson Space Center. All of these serve to create great jobs for the Greater Houston area."

## Staying Connected to Family

Olson still spends most of the workweek - at least Monday through Thursday - in Washington, D.C., but he says cell phones and Skype video chatting helps him stay in touch with his family when away. Not everything can be solved with a webcam, however. "You want to go see the games and be a part of their lives..." he says. "Grant hit his first homerun in baseball this past spring, and he was so proud of himself and I was so proud of him. But if I could have seen that - that would have been awesome."

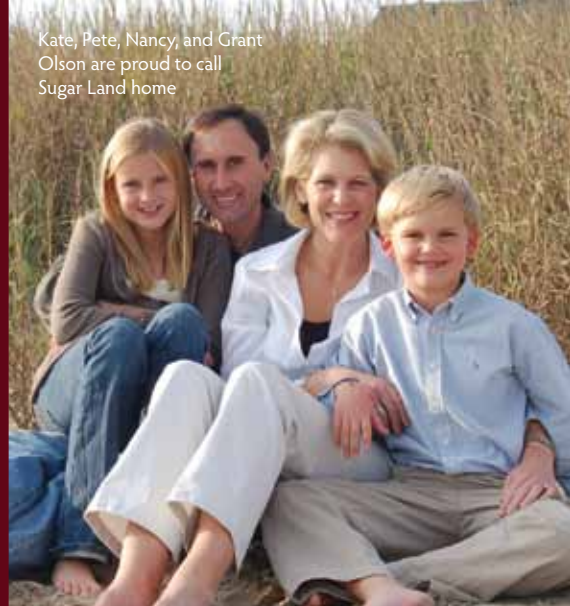
When he is home, Olson's first priority is spending time with his family and enjoying the local community. He can frequently be seen at Sugar Land Memorial Park with his dog, Riley. His neighbors and constituents, in the meantime, have had one pressing question for Olson. "People have been asking me if I'm going to be on *Dancing With The Stars*, and the answer is no," he says. "You don't want to see me dance." If you know of an inspirational person you'd like to learn more about, email editor@sugarlandmagazine. SLM

*MELANIE KISER is a Sugar Land native attending Arizona State University and planning to graduate and return to Texas in 2010.*



Pete and Nancy Olson love Sugar Land's great schools, activities, and people

Kate, Pete, Nancy, and Grant Olson are proud to call Sugar Land home



Olson served as a U.S. Naval Aviator for nine years



Olson began his career in the U.S. Navy the day he completed the Texas Bar Examination



Olson takes pride in working hard to care for his fellow Texans