

Desert

November 2012

magazine



Welcome Back!

It's time to dress up (even if he wants to stay in the pool)

Returning flocks: Seattleites and Canadians

MIDCENTURY DELUXE

at Sunnyslands

4:10 p.m., Saturday
Setoril Pond and Allieg Romanov discuss going to the gala...
Pond de Rose estate, Palm Springs

Seattle's Finest

BY LISA MARIE HART



Beginning this month, Palm Springs International Airport will see throngs of Seattleites flying into the Coachella Valley for the season. Nearer than Maui, intensely social and warming to the body and spirit all winter long, the desert offers Seattle snowbirds a welcome reprieve from brisk, gray mornings. It's a respite that, for many, stretches longer and longer each year, much to our area's considerable benefit.

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ON HOLIDAY

"I can laugh now," she says, but a young Mary Maron's first experience in the valley with her parents and five siblings was "pure agony." Their summer vacation to Palm Springs meant six kids stuffed in a hot station wagon pulling a trailer. Major sunburns left the kids lying under wet towels for days to find relief. As they were leaving, the car overheated and the family had to pull over until the radiator cooled off.

As an adult, however, Maron and her husband, Howard, fell for the golf courses, restaurants, amenities and casualness of Bighorn Golf Club.

"It's so relaxing—more like one long vacation than a second home," she says. The couple appreciates Bighorn's no-tee-times-necessary policy which helps Maron be more spontaneous. "I also find time to take golf lessons, which I need!" she laughs.

Originally she pictured empty nesting in scenic Wailea on Maui, but it was just too far from her kids, grandkids and mom. "So I finally convinced myself that the waterfall into our pool sounds like the ocean."

Instead of heading north for a white Christmas, the Marons invite family to migrate south for a "snow day" at Bighorn. "The kids tube down the slopes and we all have a blast," she says. One Christmas, Maron hosted 47 for dinner.

While Maron found other clubs too stiff and formal, Bighorn feels just right. Couples they don't know often invite them to sit down at dinner in the Canyons Steak House. "On other nights, my husband puts our two dogs in the golf cart and goes down to pick up dinner from The Pour House. He'll even take them to the driving range. He can chip and putt while the dogs sit in the cart and get a lot of attention."

PLAY HOUSE

"This is our favorite house," says Michelle Strauss, the new CEO of the USA Pentathlon World Cup that is coming to Palm Springs this February. "It's our only one with a pool, so we shipped in a one-meter diving board."

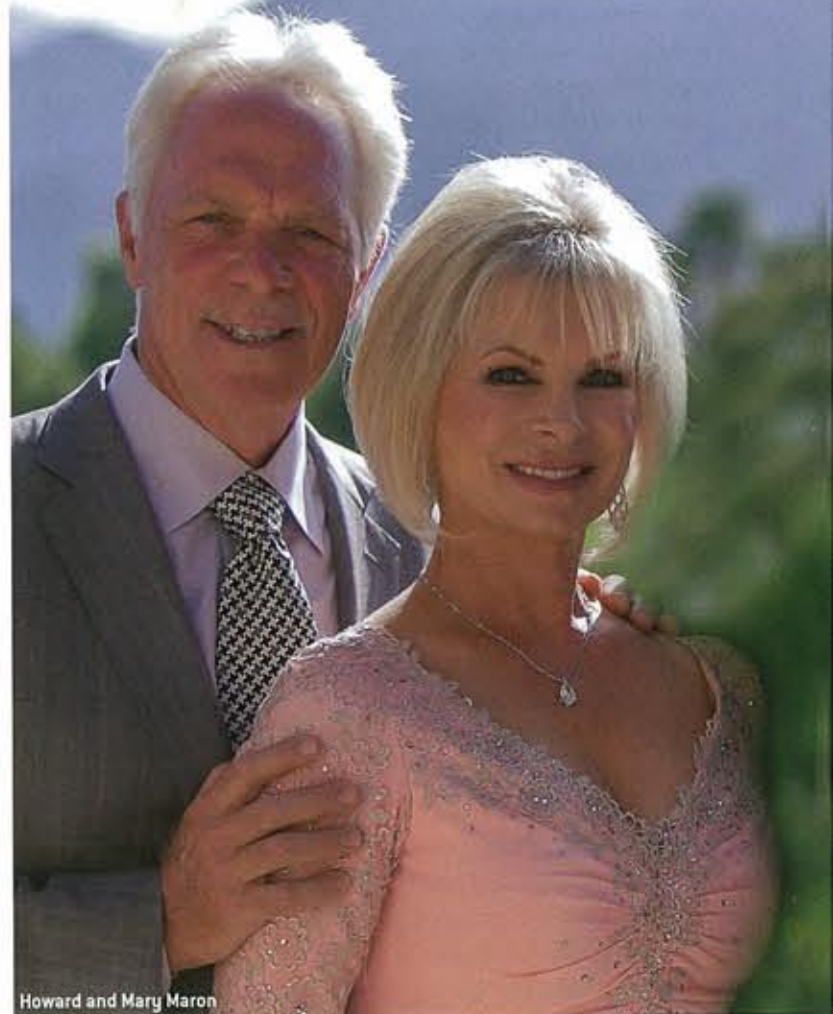
"When we first moved here in 1999, the house was a huge gymnasium for the kids," Strauss says. "I still find plastic or foam golf balls in our chandeliers. This is our playhouse. I just feel so comfortable here."

Strauss and her husband, John, travel extensively, but are essentially half-and-halves. They bought their Victoria Falls home so that their then-grade-schoolers Bogart and Simone could seriously pursue tennis and golf. "We wanted to give them the best environment in which to excel. I was recovering from breast cancer treatment at the time, too, and I needed to feel good and feel alive," Strauss says.

The desert accomplished both. The kids graduated from Palm Desert High School, competed in junior golf tournaments in Washington and Southern California and have since become full-time residents here even though their parents remain snowbirds.



Michelle Strauss



Howard and Mary Maron

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Though the couple adores Maui where they were wed, Strauss notes that "without a doubt, Seattle is our home. The desert, however, will always be our salvation." Her role as CEO of the USAF Desert World Cup, allows her to "give back to a place that healed me and gave so much to my family," she says. "And the desert deserves my gratitude."

MAGIC MOUNTAINS

Thirty-five years ago, Stacy Lewis received a phone call from her husband, Cutler, who was visiting Palm Springs on business. Surrounded by mountain views from his room at the former incarnation of The Riviera, he called with an important message: "You really have to see this." Hawaii had been their go-to spot for years, but thereafter they began escaping to Palm Springs twice a year. "Every time I was here, I wanted to stay longer," Stacy Lewis recalls. In 2000, they bought a modernist Wexler condo in The Rose Garden and now tip the snowbird scales toward spending nine months in the valley.

Lewis appreciates meeting other Washington folks through the Coachella Valley Hiking Club and also the way house guests can effortlessly explore the area on their own. Classes at Pilates Palm Springs boost her strength for long desert hikes (including the tram) and both now attend classes at Urban Yoga to improve their balance.

The couple heads north solely to see their two grandchildren, and Lewis admits that they shivered with cold on their vacation to Hawaii last May. "The desert is such

a healing place, with a lovely feminine energy. Seattle has none; it's very masculine," she says. "Here, it's creative, softer and, for me, very spiritual. I really feel a power with that mountain. I love being around it and being on it."

TWICE BLESSED

Linda Goodrick has been making the trek down here since her parents bought a new house in Marrakesh Country Club in the 1970s.

Linda and her husband Michael Goodrick now drive down with their two cats to spend four months each winter in the same home, heading back only for Christmas. "We kind of grew into loving the desert," says Linda, who never got used to holidays here as a kid.

These days, she finds a matured appreciation in following the sun, savoring the pleasures of gardening and eating breakfast on their patio in winter while enjoying fresh-squeezed orange juice and grapefruit off the trees. "Now I feel I belong here," she says. "I'm glad that I'm a part of the desert and the desert is a part of me."

Being among a number of second-generation owners at MCC, Linda says is a testament

to its welcoming community and timeless charms. The lollipop topiary trees and Hollywood Regency homes by John Elgin Woolf act as an equalizer. "Marrakesh attracts people who appreciate the architecture," she says. "It takes a unique person to live in a pink house."

TENNIS STARS

Back in the mid 1950s, Walter and Esther Schoenfeld nested at the Tennis Club when their children weren't with them, and at the Racquet Club when they were. "The Tennis Club had dinner games but didn't allow children to play," Esther explains. "But the Racquet Club was the center of the world."

The couple befriended a number of well-known names

Walter's cousin was one of eight original owners at Mission Hills. When he persuaded them to come out for lunch, the couple drove for miles along the dirt roads. Clubs had traditionally delivered golf or tennis; suddenly, here were both. "We couldn't believe our eyes," Esther says. "Yet we also couldn't believe how they were so crazy to build such a facility in the middle of nowhere!"

Three months later, they still love life at Mission Hills, along with their membership at Tamarisk Recreation aside, the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center has been an important part of their desert stints, where Walter has served on the board for 25 years. Esther says on their behalf, "It's emotionally fulfilling to help these abused children and watch the center grow."

SNOW AND ROSES

Beginning her fourth winter in the desert, Jean Viereck calls herself a "newbie." Born and raised in Seattle, she's now a complete convert to settling half-time in Rancho Mirage. A delightful, upbeat lady who generously supports many local causes, Viereck can't get enough of the desert. "If I had to go back to work, I'd work with the chamber of commerce," she says. "I love it that much."

After heading up an enormous push to build a new hospital on Maui that ultimately failed, Viereck sold her Hawaiian oceanfront home of 43 years. Short flights from care drew her here. Panoramic vistas, an exciting events calendar and an easier life

"We meet people from all parts of the country and it enriches the whole cultural scene. Everyone brings something different to the party."

—Faye Sarkowsky

and had a ball accepting invitations around town. "We would watch Liberate at the Chi Chi when Ella Fitzgerald would come in. Then we'd go see Frank over at Ruby Dunes. Early friendships we developed with us through the years."

The Schoenfelds now enjoy traveling as well as their home on Mercer Island in addition to the four or five months they spend in the desert in their longtime home community.