

PALM BEACH PEOPLE

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Palm Beach People

Photograph by Harry Benson
Text by Hilary Geary Ross

Published by



To be released: **November 2014**

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PREFACE

by Hilary Geary Ross

Hello again,

Our first book, *New York, New York* whisked you through the city that never sleeps. Now come join me on a magical journey to another fabled island. This time, let's travel to the most idyllic of places, Palm Beach, Florida. On this grand and private tour, seen through the eyes of the legendary photographer and gifted artist, Harry Benson, CBE, we have captured the very essence of this exquisite island. It is Harry's quiet confidence, good humor, impeccable manners and relaxed demeanor that disarms his subjects and thus presents images of the lives and personalities that inhabit the island. His enormous creativity and vast experience make this book come alive and draw the reader behind the scenes of this tropical paradise. The fairy tale setting, a barrier island on the Atlantic Ocean, 16 miles long with white beaches, turquoise water, dazzling private residences, immaculate golf courses, pristine tennis courts, museums, cultural centers, sophisticated clubs and restaurants, and sunny weather provides the glorious and glamorous backdrop for Harry's portraits of the fascinating people who live here and truly make Palm Beach unique.

So how did this fairy tale start? Well, once upon a time, in early winter of 1878, a 158-ton Spanish barque, *Providencia*, sailed the storm-darkened waters off the southern coast of Florida. Her captain, perhaps giddy with Madeira wine, stood at the helm en route from the West Indies to Barcelona carrying a heavy load of hides, logwood, wine, cigars, and most importantly 20,000 coconuts. At some point that night, the ill-fated vessel foundered on the barrier island we now call Palm Beach. It was those thousands of coconuts, or so the legend goes, that were either sold by the surviving

sailors to the natives or more romantically just scattered, and sprouted into palm trees of such a density they gave rise to the island's current name.

In time this oasis caught the eye of the Standard Oil magnate Henry Flagler, who decided it was the most perfect spot in the world to realize his dream to build a grand resort. The tycoon expanded his railroad FEC (Florida East Coast Railway) further south to ferry guests to his newly built and very grand Royal Poinciana hotel. Opening in 1894, it was the largest and most glamorous of its type on the lake. He also built the Palm Beach Inn that was later reborn as the Breakers Hotel, a world-class resort which sits on a vast acreage still privately owned by the Kenan family. The quote "Build it and they will come" certainly could be applied to Palm Beach, as they came in droves, and this was the beginning of the island's definition of a resort. Over the years, Palm Beach became synonymous with a heavenly climate, beautiful beaches, and fascinating people. It did not take long for this sparkling little oasis to attract Colonel Edward Bradley, a businessman and philanthropist of Irish descent who opened up the storied beach club where members would not only dine royally but gamble too. F. Scott Fitzgerald even dubbed the casino "Bradley's House of Chance." His popular casino, with tables of chemin de fer, roulette, and black jack added glamour and sophistication to the evening hours on a par with any international resort. The "Colonel" loved horses and developed a thoroughbred-racing stable "Idle Hours Farm" in Kentucky with a barn filled with champions: five Kentucky Derby winners, three Preakness, and two Belmont winners! All his horses' names started with "B."



The Coconuts, 2011.

Left to right:

1st row, Oliver Quinn, Alexander Fanjul, Chris Meigher, Wilbur Ross, William J.C. Surtees, Rodney J. Dillard, Girard P. Brownlow III, Harold C. Paull, Jr.

2nd row, Percy Steinhart, Blakely C. Page, Will Matthews, W. Blair Meyer, Jr., Richard C. Cowell, Jr., George E. "Peter" Summers, Leonard Lauder, David Ober.

3rd row, Paul L. Maddock, Jr., Michael McCarty, Troy W. Maschmeyer, Jr., Daniel A. Hanley, Jon A. Ylvisaker, Robert P. Leidy, John Mashek, David Koch.

Absent, George Merck.



Hilary Geary Ross and Wilbur Ross.

I have deep roots in this wonderful resort, as my grandfather, the novelist Arthur Somers Roche, penned his mysteries in his Maurice Fatio house on Via Bellaria. What's more, my mother Patricia Ney came here as a youth with her parents Jeanne and John Murray who were great pals of the famed Colonel Bradley, affectionately called "uncle Ed" by my mother. In fact, the colonel named two thoroughbreds after my

mother and her sister. "Brown eyed Pat" for my mother and her sister Jeanne Vanderbilt dubbed "Beanie M." My mother would often head down to where you could find them racing at Hialeah, where Bradley had partnered with George Widener to develop a track just a tad south of Palm Beach. In time, travelers from all over the world have found their way to settle in this sophisticated environment with its easy way of life, bright sunny days, and entertaining evenings.

This fabled history of glamour, elegance, and ease unfolds in the present day as the storied architecture and castles by the sea continue to astound, and as newcomers are drawn to the island for all of the same reasons that attracted its original champions. So come with me on this private tour and we will take you inside beautiful houses designed by legendary architects such as Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, Marion Sims Wyeth, Howard Major, John Urban, John Volk, and newer stars such as Tom Kirchhoff, and Jeffrey Smith, with landscapes by Mario Nievera, Jorge Sanchez, and more.

Join me and explore the beautiful celebrations that have become staples of the social life in Palm Beach. We will step out to the Preservation ball, the Four Arts dance, and sip champagne at private fetes such as at the Coconuts New Years Eve dance. That ever popular dance was started years ago by 24 bachelors wanting to repay their hostesses' hospitality for entertaining them all year long.

So come along with me and I am sure that you will enjoy the visit! As the Alan Jay Lerner lyrics go, "In short there's simply not a more congenial spot for happily-ever-aftering than here in Camelot." Or Palm Beach!

Hilary Geary Ross

INTRODUCTION

by Harry Benson

The first time I visited Florida was in February 1964 I flew into Miami with the Beatles for their second appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* which was to be broadcast from the Deauville hotel. Beatlemania was everywhere. Seeing Florida for the first time the turquoise water, the clear blue sky it was wonderful and in such contrast to the cold winter we had just left behind. And although I didn't get to Palm Beach on my first trip, I fell in love with Florida.

It was cold in New York in February 1974, and I was happy to be headed to Palm Beach along with celebrated Hollywood writer Sheila Graham for a story we were planning on notable residents of the idyllic island. Also arriving for the week were Dolores and Bob Hope who would add a bit of Hollywood glamour. It was all very festive with loads of parties, which I have learned over time is the norm for February in Palm Beach.

Since then I have visited Palm Beach many times, each time staying longer and longer until now my wife Gigi and I have become residents of Palm Beach Polo in Wellington.



And Palm Beach seemed the quintessential follow-up to writer Hilary Geary Ross and my first book, *New York New York*. No one is more qualified than Hilary to write about Palm Beach as she has been coming here all her life and was the perfect person to collaborate with on this book. She knows everyone. It has been great fun working on this book with Hilary and watching Hilary and Gigi edit the photographs.

In all my years of working with a colleague on a project, Hilary has been the best she gets it done quickly and then on to the next. It could not have been better.



Gigi and Harry Benson, photo by Hilary Geary Ross.



Estée Lauder, the cosmetic industry legend who built a beauty empire and loved her time spent in Palm Beach. Here she poses for a portrait by artist Marion Pike, 1974.



Brooke Shields, the actress, has spent much time staying with her family sailing, sunning, and enjoying life in Palm Beach, 1980.

Vera Wang, the famed dress designer, makes a chip shot at the Trump International Golf Club, 1983.



Opposite: Marie-Josée Kravis, chairman of the board of the Museum of Modern Art and wife of famed investor Henry Kravis, takes a spin on her bike on the lake trail in front of her house. She has been coming to Palm Beach for over five years and loves "her garden and the calm," 2012.



Tomas Maier, the famed clothing designer, and Andrew Preston "love the ever-changing beach in front of their house" and have been coming to Palm Beach for over ten years. Tomas is creative director of Bottega Veneta and Tomas Maier, 2012.





Melania and Donald Trump photographed at Mar-A Lago, the former house of Marjorie Merriweather Post, the Palm Beach heiress and mother of actress Dina Merrill. Donald bought the house in the 1980s and turned it into a club that hosts many charitable events throughout the season. He recently added a beach club and ballroom to this storied property. Donald also developed a golf club nearby - Trump International Golf Club - a top rated course, and extremely popular, 2013.



Dr. Mehmet Oz, the famed doctor, syndicated TV host, best-selling author, and his wife, Lisa, in the double-height living room at their family abode Casa Del Padre, designed by architect Jack S. Willson in 1926. Lisa's grandparents, the Asplundh family, started visiting Palm Beach in the 50s and eventually bought a house. Lisa and Mehmet love "walking on the beach, and our friends," 2014.



New York City's former mayor, and presidential candidate, Rudy Giuliani and his wife Judith, both avid golfers, just after finishing a round of golf at The Breakers golf club, 2012.



General Alexander Haig, 59th secretary of state under President Ronald Reagan, formerly lived in an Everglades Island house in Palm Beach, before moving to a house in Phipps Estate.

Andrea and Steve Wynn are now building a house in Palm Beach and they love “that we have wonderful friends here and spend time with them in a relaxed and beautiful environment.” Here, they take in some of that Florida sunshine with their German Shepherds Zita and Damo on the deck of their boat *Aquarius*. They are devoted to numerous charities, but a priority is the Stephen A. Wynn Institute for Vision Research, 2014.





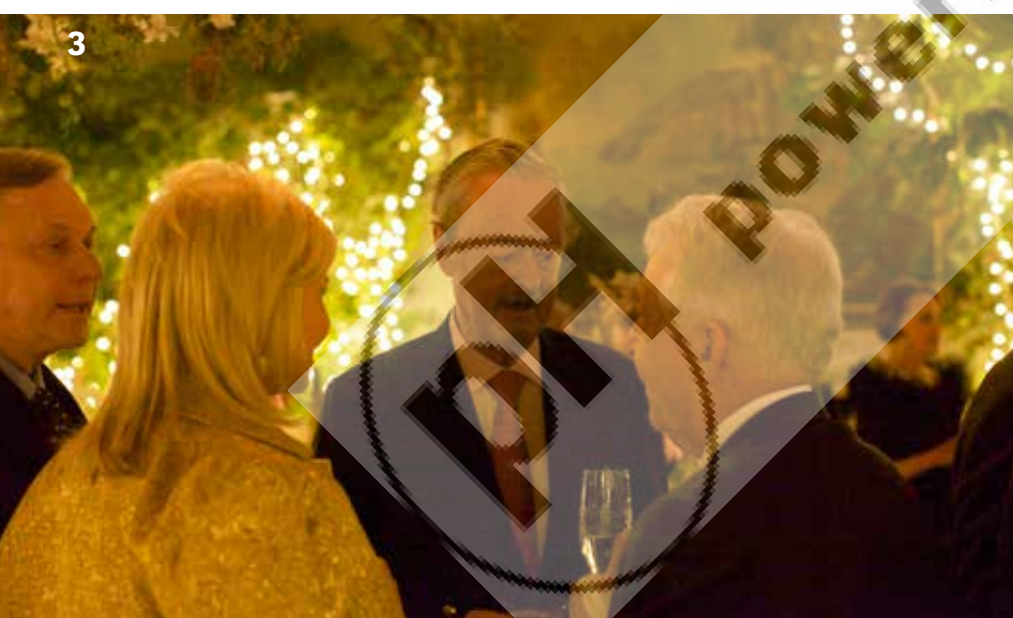
Ann Coulter, best-selling author and columnist, who has been coming to Palm Beach for over a decade, poses at the Breakers hotel and “loves being in the same town as Rush Limbaugh,” 2013.

Allie and Lee Hanley, with their daughters and grandchildren, at their Maurice Fatio house, decorated by Keith Irvine, which serves as base camp in this tropical paradise for this third and fourth generation Palm Beach family, 2012.

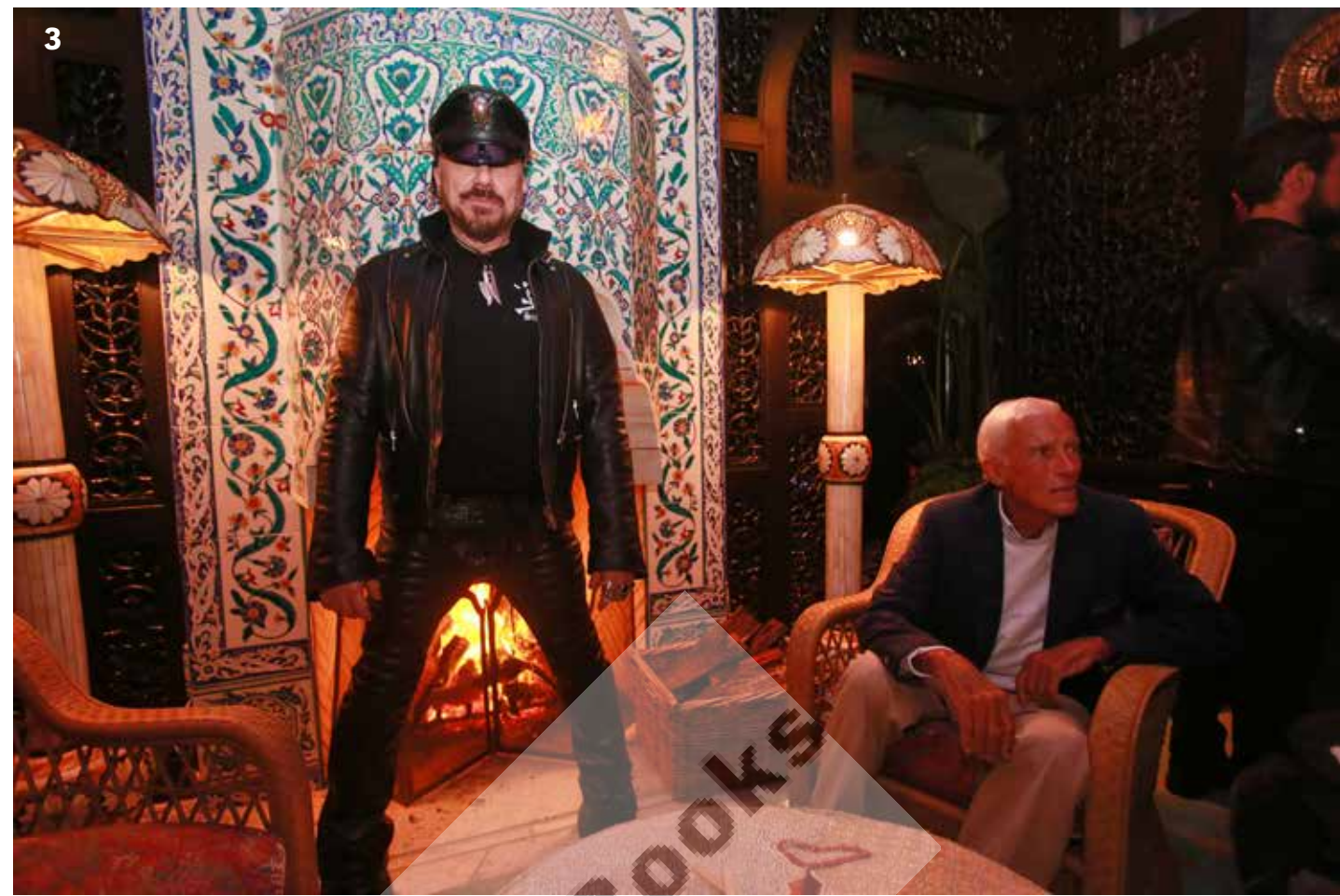
Left to right: Ashton Curtis, Merrill Hanley Curtis, Callie Curtis on Allie Hanley’s lap, Force Mellon on Lee Hanley’s lap, Nicole Hanley Mellon, Matthew Mellon.

Georgina Bloomberg, equestrian, novelist, and youngest daughter of Susan and Mike Bloomberg, former mayor of NYC, at Wellington, the horse world's enclave, a short drive from Palm Beach, 2012.





Darcy and George Gould Dinner for the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough
1. Kit Pannill
2. Bill Pannill and Felix Mirando
3. Duke "Sunny" of Marlborough
4. Topsy Taylor and Gigi Benson
5. Darcy and George Gould hosting a dinner party for the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough with tables decorated by florist Bill Beers. George was undersecretary of treasury under Ronald Reagan's administration and Darcy is a decorator. They moved to Palm Beach about five years ago, 2012.

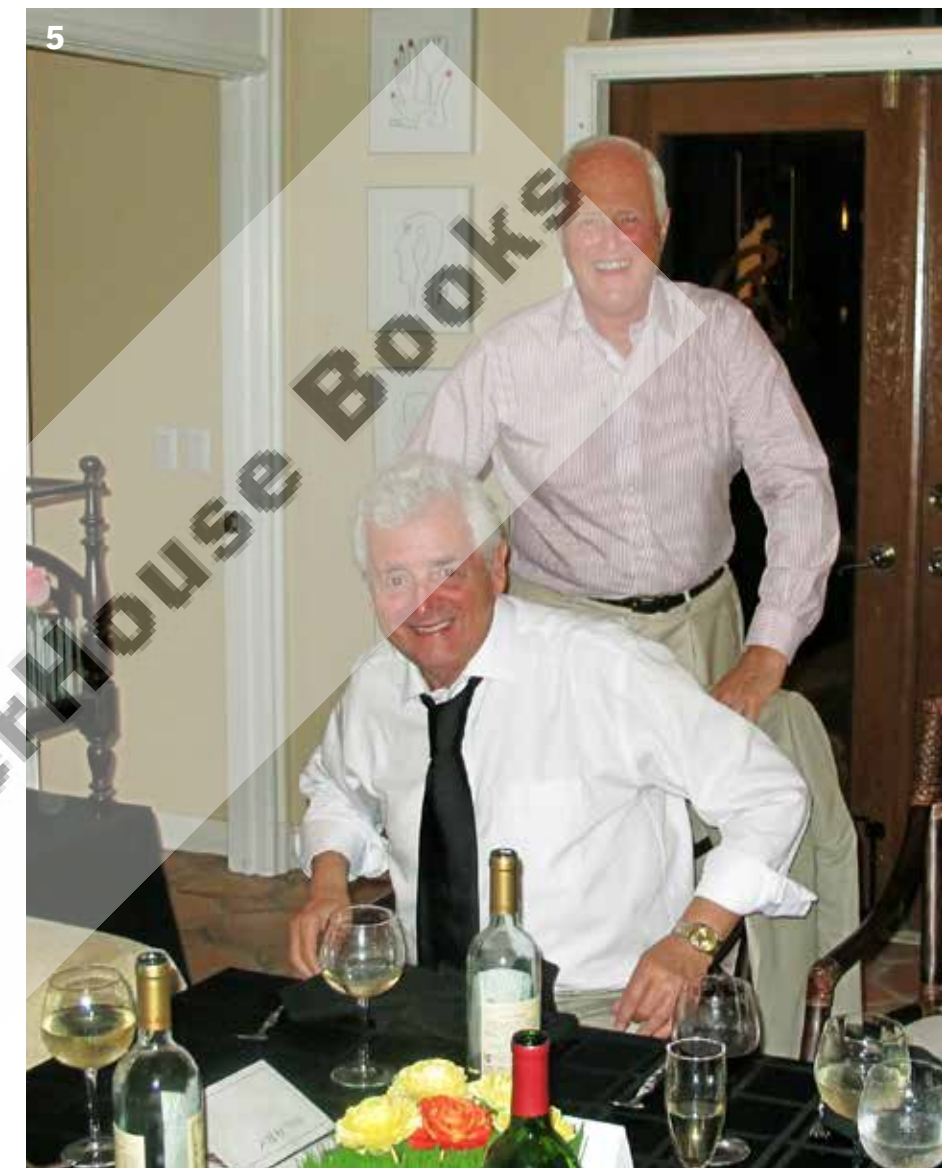


Edwina Sandys and Richard Kaplan Hosting Birthday Fetes



Kathy Rayner celebrates her husband Billy's new book *Notes and Sketches*

- 1. Wilbur Ross and Virginia Burke
- 2. Robin Hambro and Peter Marino
- 3. Peter Marino and Peter Pulitzer
- 4. The dining tent
- 5. The pool
- 6. Hans Kertess, Susan and Tim Malloy
- 7. Peter Marino and Kathy Rayner



- 4. Harry Benson with Confrey Phillips at the piano
- 5. Harry Benson and Winston Churchill
- 6. Gigi Benson, Billy and Kathy Rayner
- 7. Sharon Lehman Sondes and Goeffrey Thomas
- 8. Rena Blades, Harry Benson, John Blades
- 9. Susan and Tim Malloy
- 10. Edwina Sandys and Richard Kaplan



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Published in the United States by powerHouse Books,
a division of powerHouse Cultural Entertainment, Inc.
37 Main Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201-1021
telephone 212.604.9074, fax 212.366.5247
e-mail: info@powerhousebooks.com
website: www.powerhousebooks.com

First edition, 2014

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014942950

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-57687-714-2

Printed by Toppan Leefung Printing Ltd

Book design by Patricia Fabricant

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in China

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