

THE INSID

From the blue-blooded pages of the social register to the express lane at Publix, a candid look inside this star-studded town

For all its extravagance and absurdity, Palm Beach is arguably the most fascinating place in the world. A resort community of less than four square miles, with a resident population of less than 10,000 and a median family income of \$100,000, Palm Beach defies comparison to any other city in the world.

Beyond the 75,000-square-foot mansions that remind us all that the rich are different, the people who call this dazzling stretch of real estate home give Palm Beach its true cachet. From Old Guard industrial families (Phipps, Whitney, Du Pont) and modern-day business leaders (Gosman, Lauder, Perelman, Fisher) to the enterprising and liberal nouveau riche.

"Palm Beach's Old Guard is somewhat endangered, and the prognosis for the survival of this species is bleak," writes venerated *Palm Beach Society* magazine publisher James Jennings Sheeran in his book, *Palm Beach Facts & Fancies, Wit & Wisdom* (Palm Beach Publishing Group). "The question has recently become—who carries more status in Palm Beach? Those born into the 'right' family, living without extravagance yet belonging to the

INSIDER'S GUIDE TO PALM BEACH

BY JUDY ALEXANDRA DiEDUARDO
ILLUSTRATIONS BY WAYNE MERCHANT

'in' clubs? Or those who through individual achievement now live in grand style?"

Some say that both ends of the social spectrum will always have a place in Palm Beach, dispelling any mystique attached to the Island's newly rich.

"I don't even like the expression *nouveau riche* because we're really talking about the affluent working class—many of whom were raised here," says long-time Palm Beach business and civic leader Jesse Newman, whose half-century of indefatigable leadership has earned him the title Mr. Palm Beach. "Now they are raising their families here and calling Palm Beach their year-round home."

Forty years ago, Palm Beach was a seasonal resort community where people came to relax and play. "Jack Kennedy, who was barely a senator, could be seen walking down the street in khakis and loafers. We had one streetlight and nine policemen and the busiest corner in town was (and still is) Royal Palm

Way and South County Road. There were only four charity balls (now there are well over 100), and the season ended in April, when the shutters went up and most of Palm Beach closed down," says Newman.

Although still very much a resort town, Palm Beach has a strong and growing residential community. "Just compare voter registration numbers from 40 years ago. They've quadrupled."

For all its differences, though, the rules of Palm Beach society are still much the same—even if the Old Guard and the newly rich play them differently.

So join us for an insider's look into this fabulous Island, from the parties and social clubs to the boardrooms and ladies' rooms. And while we found our sources tons of fun, many preferred the cloak of anonymity when it came to getting their names spelled correctly. No matter. They considered the chance to let their hair down reward enough, and invited us to call again. We will.

Image is Everything

No one knows Palm Beach better than the camera's eye. Just ask Lucien Capehart, the Island's consummate shutterbug, who has been photographing the world's visiting elite for nearly a quarter century. From royalty (Charles, Diana, Phillip) to celebrities (John and Yoko Lennon, Tony Bennett), Capehart's moniker has appeared on images sought by top magazines and newspapers throughout the world.

To Capehart and his contemporaries, Bob Davidoff and Mort Kaye, making sure the wrong person doesn't saddle up next to an unsuspecting subject is the job of every good photographer—especially in Palm Beach where wives, husbands and lovers are carefully woven throughout the social pages.

"Every good socialite knows to be careful whom he or she is having their picture taken with. And if they aren't, I am," says Capehart. "Sometimes a discreet wink in the right direction is all that's needed."

Blessed with a quick wit, smart wardrobe and youthful good looks, the affable Capehart is a welcome guest at every party. And when it comes to having their pictures taken, Palm Beachers aren't known to be camera-shy—especially the nouveau riche who are more publicity-savvy than their predecessors.

"The Old Guard only want their names in the paper when they



are born and when they die," explains one outspoken Palm Beacher in her 70s. "They aren't publicity seekers like the younger set, who live in big, flashy mansions. They prefer having parties in their home—away from the paparazzi. They viewed publicity as more of a social responsibility than a personal plug. It was the cost of doing business."

On that count, not much has changed. Bucking up for publicity was—and still is—a standard requirement.

CAMERA TIPS

One Palm Beach socialite suggests perfecting your look by practicing smiling in the mirror.

"Find that one expression, commit it to memory and then put it on when you're ready for your close-up." Take a hint from grand dames like Audrey Gruss, Lois Pope and Tamara Newell, who always look their best.

Our source also suggests putting down the wineglass.

"Imagine being holed up at the Betty Ford Center while that photo of you is splashed across the social pages. Think ahead."

Fashion Statements: Dos and Don'ts

Good form and a reliable wardrobe are considered de rigueur in Palm Beach. There's no dashing off to the grocery store in curlers or sweats—even for more beluga. Smart casual, at the very least.

"You definitely have to think twice about your wardrobe even before going to Publix," says a former resident who now lives on the other side of the bridge. "No one goes there looking like a schlep. The jewelry is on, the Chanel suit, the hair—they are done. I could go to my [West Palm Beach] Publix in my underwear and a bathrobe and no one would even look."

Fashion "must-haves" for the Old Guard include: Nantucket handbags, anything by Lilly Pulitzer, Stubbs & Wootton shoes, Chanel, Bill Blass, Givenchy, Herrera—fabulous back-of-the-closet classics that may no longer fit but will never leave the family.

The younger set will likely have inherited mummy's "good" stuff, in addition to a sizable collection of their own. Essentials include anything Chanel (including \$750 jeans if you can find them), Armani, Calvin Klein—and Ralph Lauren for gardening or for going to Target.

"Everybody loves a bargain and Palm Beachers—young and old—are no exception," says one insider. "Just go to the Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard Target on a Sunday afternoon."

When it's time to fuel up the Bentley, the Old Guard will tank off the Island where it's less expensive, while the young-rich (driving their gas-guzzling Range Rovers) prefer the convenience of Testa's—especially now that it's self-serve.

The newly rich will also pay higher prices for their flowers and table decorations. Those with great taste agree on Worth Avenue florist Tommy Matthieu. He's also the most costly.

As for the Old Guard's preference in florists?

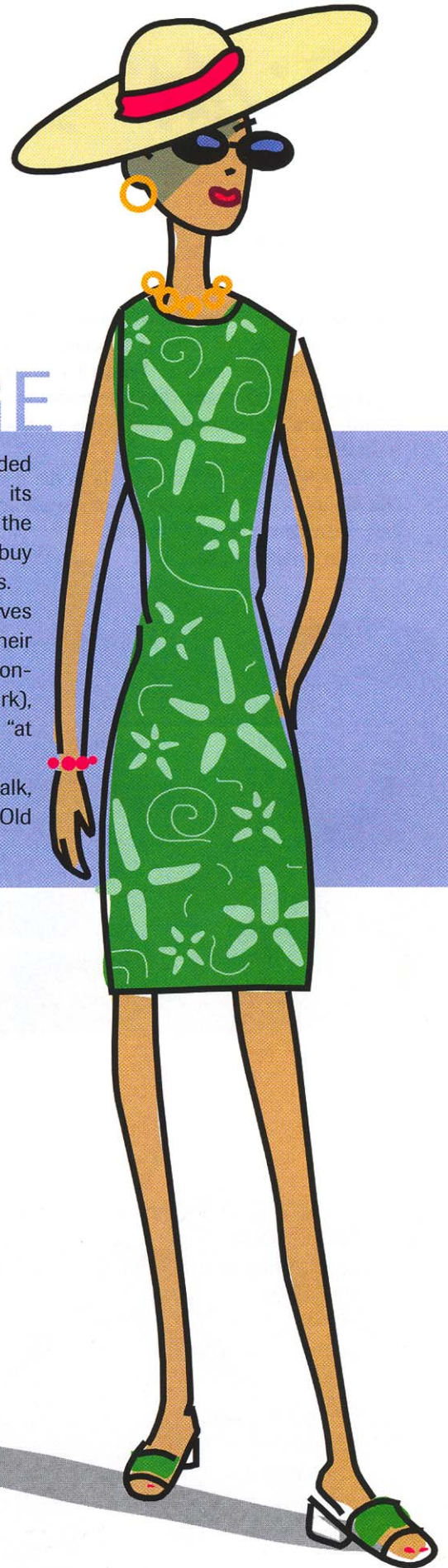
"They don't spend for big flowers. They all belong to the Garden Club. They find something at Home Depot or Target and stick it in a beautiful pot. Or they'll go to Mattern Floral Company, a West Palm Beach wholesaler, and get the flowers at cost."

PARTY PRESTIGE

Exclusivity is what gives any Palm Beach party its gilded cachet. That's what gave the International Red Cross Ball its elevated status for the past 40 years. The same was true of the Young Friends of the Red Cross gala. But now that you can buy your way in (\$350 and up), attendance is not as prestigious.

"The nouveau riche don't care about exclusivity," observes one self-proclaimed member of the Old Guard. "And their events aren't too hard to distinguish from the more traditional ones." The Do At The Zoo (Palm Beach Zoo at Dreher Park), the Glitz At The Ritz (March of Dimes)—anything that has "at the" in its title—can be considered a nouveau event.

"If there are men in tight bathing suits strutting the cat walk, and if Freda Payne is singing, you can be sure it's not an Old Guard event."



Making the "Right" Social Connection

Joining a club on Palm Beach is vital to one's social standing. And thankfully there are several to choose from, with Palm Beach Country Club, the Bath & Tennis Club and the Everglades Club topping the list. Memberships are traditionally enjoyed by the Old Guard, while the younger set tends to flock to Donald Trump's front door.

"The Mar-a-Lago Club appeals to the nouveau set because the Old Guard would never dream of spending \$75,000 to go where they were once a guest when Marjorie Merriweather

Post lived there. Even if the food there is divine."

The club's interior draws mixed reviews. Although palatial and stunning in places, tastemakers agree that Ivana's idea of redecorating (taking everything into the garage and spray painting it with gold radiator paint) is nothing short of horrific.

"She should be shot for what she did to that beautiful house," says one Palm Beach designer, who preferred anonymity since many of his clients are members there. "It's just as well the Old Guard remember Marjorie's place before Ivana loaded up at Sherwin-Williams."

Trump's place is also prime for those not accepted at any of the major Palm Beach clubs. That is, if you have the right clothes.

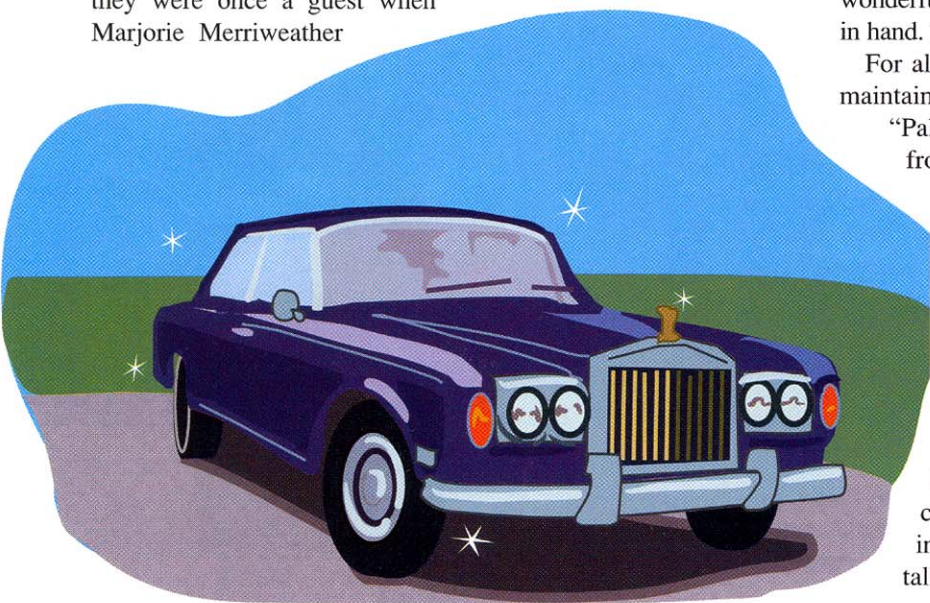
"While khaki skirts and sandals are acceptable at the Bath & Tennis Club, at Mar-a-Lago you'll see Chanel suits, big jewelry and enough makeup for all the Rockettes," reports one insider who celebrated his birthday at the Bath & Tennis one day and at Mar-a-Lago the next.

"The Bath & Tennis is also very understated. Lunch is served cafeteria-style—sort of like Morrison's Cafeteria—which is why it's so wonderful," he says. "Some people think that rich and fancy go hand in hand. They are the ones who thought that 'Dynasty' was real."

For all the formality synonymous with this landmark island, it maintains its share of absurdity.

"Palm Beach has no memory," says one insider who hails from a very accomplished Palm Beach family. "They ask for no credentials. That's why every year there's some major con artist who comes through. I think the belief is that if you're on Palm Beach turf, then you belong here. You can be a murderer in Palm Beach if you have a tuxedo and know which fork to pick up—and you'll be a welcomed guest next season."

Another observer who attends numerous A-list gatherings at some of Palm Beach's most coveted estates adds: "At one event, I sat next to a woman with a bazillion dollars worth of diamonds, solid gold handbag, sable coat over the back of the chair, who passed out face down in her soup. "Everyone at the table continued eating and talking as if nothing were wrong."



THE COST OF LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

Sailfish Club

(established in 1914)
1338 North Lake Way
Members: 500
Initiation Fee: \$10,000

Everglades Club

(established in 1919)
356 Worth Ave.
Members: 1,100
Initiation Fee: \$35,000

Bath & Tennis Club

(established in 1926)
1170 S. Ocean Blvd.
Members: 750
Initiation Fee: \$25,000

Palm Beach Country Club

(established in 1954)
760 N. Ocean Blvd.
Members: 350
Initiation Fee: \$100,000

Beach Club

(established in 1969)
755 N. County Road
Members: 900
Initiation Fee: \$8,500

Mar-a-Lago Club

(established in 1995)
1100 S. Ocean Blvd.
Members: 300
Initiation Fee: \$75,000

Palm Beach's Changing Face: Real Estate

"Palm Beach is starting to look more like Beverly Hills each day as these wonderful old Fatio homes are coming down in favor of oversized rebuilds," says long-time antique dealer Peter Werner, whose eponymous West Palm Beach firm is a favorite among collectors of antiques and 20th-century treasures.

"The gentle beauty of Palm Beach's grand estates is slowly being replaced by mega-mansions perched on land that was never designed to carry houses that big," he says. "It's one more vulgar thing after another."

A similar story is told of the contents of these grand estates. Just peek inside any of the Old Guard houses that, although dated, are filled with the kinds of fabulous old family treasures that money just can't buy.

"The only new things these Old Guard families are buying are a slipcover every decade—whether they need it or not," chides Werner. "It's the newer-money people who are buying these days."

Palm Beach homes run the gamut from the little, Bermuda-style vacation homes built in the '40s and '50s to the 60,000-square-foot mansions "built for the wow factor," says *Palm Beach Post* Home Editor Ava Van de Water.

"The north end of Palm Beach, where I grew up, looks like one big demolition derby as homes are being torn down to make way for bigger ones," she laments.

Van de Water says that changes in housing codes may account for a portion of the trend. "If you improve a house more than 50 percent of its assessed value, you have to bring the house up to current standards. The work involved is often so extensive that it sometimes makes more sense to tear down the existing structure and begin anew.

"Besides, if you're going to pay \$3 million for dirt, you want to maximize the view."



WHO'S LIVING LARGE?

Palm Beach Post Home Editor Ava Van de Water took to the T-square to determine who's been adding what to the Palm Beach Monopoly board. Here's what she found:

Robert B. and Harriet N. Cohen

34,200 square feet
North County Road
Built: 1926

Jerome and Anne Fisher

35,000 square feet
North Woods Road
Built: 1997

Abe Gosman

64,000 square feet
North County Road
Built: 1990

Irwin and Terry Allen Kramer

37,100 square feet
South Ocean Blvd.
Built: 1995

Nelson Peltz

46,700 square feet
North County Road
Built: 1965

Ron Perelman

33,000 square feet
South Ocean Blvd.
Built: 1923

Lois Pope

27,100 square feet
South Ocean Blvd., Manalapan
Expanded in 1994

Mel and Bren Simon

35,000 square feet
South Ocean Blvd., Manalapan
Built: 1929

SCHOOLS RULE

As the Island's living rooms are expanding, so are parents' choices of where they'll send little Johnny or Suzie. No longer are boarding school-age kids shipped off to mom's or dad's alma mater: Many are finding Palm Beach a great place to educate their kids.

"Forget Miss Molly's Boarding School for Girls or the So-and-So Military Academy for Boys," says one Palm Beach parent who broke with family tradition and kept his kids close to home.

"Benjamin, Cardinal Newman, St. Ann's and St. Andrews are getting a lot of our kids because they are great schools. The fact that they are local is just a bonus."

Social Studies: The Charity Ball

Knowing one's way around Palm Beach takes more than a road map. It requires cash, connections and a keen desire to play the game, of which many of the rules are unspoken.

"Make a mistake by offending the wrong people and you may spend the rest of the season—or your life—digging your way out," says one A-list hostess. "Charitable involvement is the key vehicle to social success. And getting aboard requires having the right credentials."

The honorary chairperson is the most prized of all stations on the charity circuit, requiring cash (plus an average net worth of \$10 million), connections and social status.

Citing Betty (Mrs. Edward) Scripps, who inherited the chairmanship of the prestigious International Red Cross Ball last year, one social observer noted: "Sure, she was in line for the job and has more money than God, but she paid her dues. There's nothing 'lite' about today's Palm Beach women, who are more than social housewives: Some run Fortune 500 companies."

Bottom line: This invitation-only role is bestowed upon those who can raise the most money for a given charity. After all, money is the goal.

"Being asked to fulfill this role isn't about being personally heralded. The honorary chair is the bait that's selected to attract the biggest fish. Choosing the right person can mean the difference between raising \$40,000 versus \$100,000 for your cause." Lastly, the chairperson (often a husband-and-wife team) must attend the event. "Lest one forgets this vital rule, they won't be asked again."

A truly fabulous chairwoman

abides by a few basic tenets, says one observer: "She doesn't sit down until every guest is seated, and she is quick to put the focus on her committee, not herself—unlike one Palm Beach hostess who has a predilection for singing her rendition of "New York, New York"—whether her guests want to hear it or not."

Role-model A-listers include: Lois Pope, Bren Simon, Betty Scripps, Audrey Gruss, Carolyn Dreyfoos, Patricia Cook and Hillie Mahoney, among others. This role may also be filled by celebrities.

"If you live in a \$2 million house instead of a \$10 million house, it isn't likely that you'll ever be asked to be an honorary chairperson. You need the right cachet."

One of the most daunting tasks faced by any chairperson is the seating list. Do it well and you'll make millions for your event. Make a mistake, and next year your charity will pay dearly, our insiders advise.

"A good chairperson knows who needs to be seated where. Example? One very prominent Palm Beacher who gave \$5,000 to an event was inadvertently seated next to a florist who gave \$2,000 worth of centerpieces.

Major faux pas. You never mix a paying benefactor with a lay person."

Giving recognition where it's due is equally vital. "Forget to make a simple 30-second public thank-you at the dais to a \$50,000 corporate giver and you'll spend the rest of your fund-raising life regretting it. There are too many people vying for that money."



SIX BLUE-CHIP CHARITIES

(THAT ARE GOOD FOR THE SOUL AND YOUR REPUTATION)

American Red Cross: Living in the hurricane belt has gone a long way to keep this venerable disaster-relief charity at the forefront of Palm Beach altruism. The annual “Young Friends” New Year’s Eve party is outrageously good. Great (sometimes naughty) party toys.

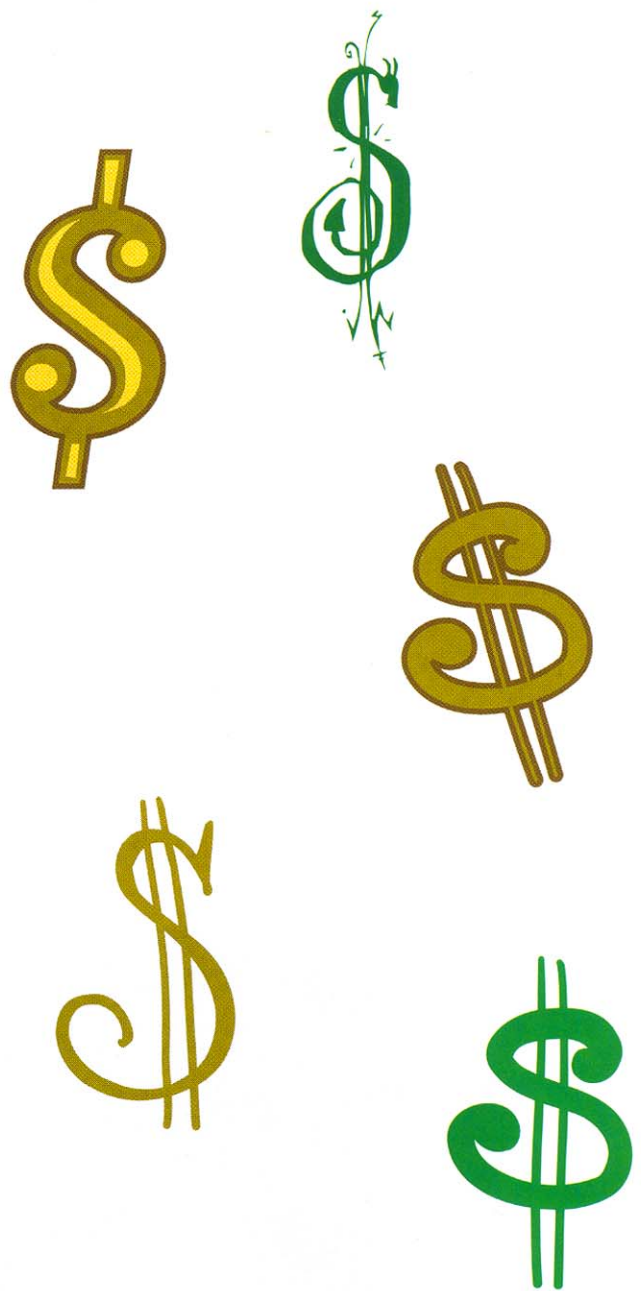
Salvation Army: Where social service “enlists” high society—and throws memorable parties along the way. Was among the first fund-raising charities invited inside Trump’s Mar-a-Lago.

Hospice Guild of Palm Beach: Draws Old Guard leadership while maintaining nouveau-riche appeal—a solid pick for “trophy-hunting” volunteers building their social resumes.

Comprehensive AIDS Program (CAP): Earning high marks for its humanitarianism and equally passionate about its parties, CAP knows how to show gala-goers a good time—even if no one can remember the next morning.

Animal Rescue League: Simply the cat’s meow.

Intracoastal Health Systems (Good Samaritan and St. Mary’s hospitals): A gathering spot for A-listers, strutting territory for accomplished social mavens and “role-model heaven” for up-and-comers.



SHOW ME THE MONEY

It takes more than money to make it in Palm Beach. Consider Donald Trump. “Sure, he’s got the money, but he brings too much controversy with it,” says one social observer. “As a rule, though, if you have the right amount of money and the right credentials, you have to be a real jerk to get bounced from this town.”

So how much does it take to “make it” in Palm Beach?

- \$5,000 is considered a starter donation that will open doors and put you on the scorecard. It’s up to you to earn your own grade. The giving goes upward from there, usually in \$5,000 increments.
- \$25,000 is a well-respected donation and will put you near the A-list. All the right invitations will appear in your mailbox.
- \$50,000 as an annual gift to any charity will put just about

anyone on the A-train to the A-list. As a grand benefactor, you’re afforded the best seats in town—from the Kravis Center to Cafe L’Europe.

- \$100,000 secures you A-list stature (this season, anyway) and provides you entrée into Palm Beach’s rarefied by-invitation-only crowd.
- \$1 million will have you walking on water while your headline-worthy largesse reaches the newsstands. Firmly ensconced in your new circle of friends, you won’t need glasses to glimpse local (and visiting) celebrities any more: They’ll be walking through your front door.
- \$5 million? Like it or not, you and your banker will never be alone again.

In Good Company: The Escort

Women are the moving force behind Palm Beach, unlike other cities where men rule the roost. The Island is based on a matriarchal system whereby women control the social leverage. And if the husband hasn't been excused to the golf course, the library or his cell phone, he'll be the compliant-looking chap following her in tow.

Most of the time, however, even the most happily married of ladies will have a "walker" at her side: an attractive man, oftentimes gay, usually much younger and usually a tad more light-in-the-loafers than her companion, explains one observer.

"He may even have come from a very good family and amassed all the required accoutrements but, failing to manage his money, was banished from the Inner Circle. Serving as a walker is his ticket back."

Contrary to a paid escort (look for a ruffled shirt tucked beneath a rented tux), walkers receive no compensation for their long hours—nor are they asked to "perform" beyond the specter of the public eye. Enjoying the fruits of high society—on someone else's tab—is payment enough.

Not surprisingly, most walkers are prone to occasional lapses in memory as to who is escorting whom. They may even believe that, although riding on the coattails of their client, they have somehow retrieved their lost pedigree. But the fantasy is short-lived, as any good social maven will be happy to remind him.

"No matter how good his studs are, no matter how correct his tuxedo, if she paid for the tickets, he's a walker."



A Cotillion By Any Other Name...

Traditions are an integral component of one's rite of passage through Palm Beach society. But even those that have been carefully woven into the fabric of this fairy-tale island are subject to change.

The annual debutante cotillion is a thing of the past, much to the disappointment of Sunny Miller, former chair and long-time proponent of the traditional coming-out party for young Palm Beach ladies, ages 16 to 22. After nearly 30 years of presenting rosy-cheeked teens to Island society, one of Palm Beach's most celebrated floor shows came to a grinding halt in 1994, when Palm Beach came up short on doe-eyed beauties.

"We literally ran out of girls," says Miller, who attributes its collapse to a low birth rate, among other factors. "It takes at least 10 girls to stage a proper cotillion, and we were only able to gather up a few that final year. At one time, we had as many as 28!"

The cotillion allowed parents to formally introduce their daughters to their friends and society as a whole. "It says that she is now ready to receive her own invitations and to become active with charities and other organizations," explains Miller, who chaired the organization from 1980 until its demise following the 1993 gala.

"Every time I go the Venetian Ballroom at The Breakers, all I have to do is close my eyes and see all the girls in their lovely white gowns," she says wistfully. "It was an extraordinary time for us all."



The Dinner Party: Then and Now

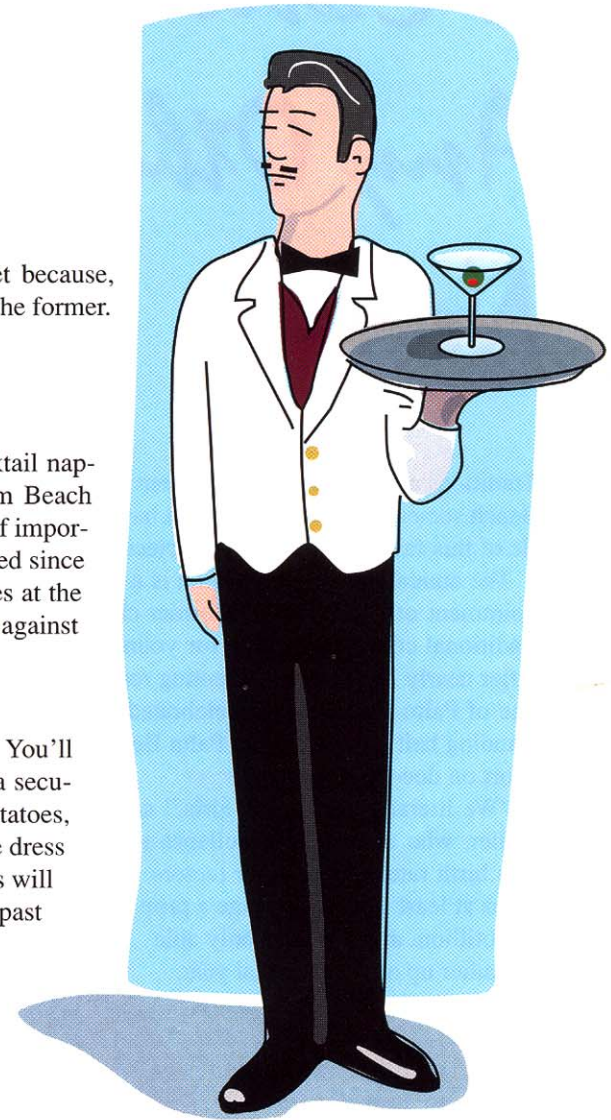
It shouldn't be hard to tell an Old Guard party from one thrown by the younger set because, chances are, unless your family came from Palm Beach, you would never be invited to the former. Just in case, though, we offer the following:

You know you're at a party thrown by your young and/or newly prosperous neighbors when:

- The house is in excess of 30,000 square feet and house maps, printed on little cocktail napkins, are distributed by the valet. The evening will be catered (Cristafaros or Palm Beach Catering), and the food will be trendy—unrecognizable but good. There will be lots of important jewelry at the table, and the drinking will be light. (The drug scene has diminished since the '80s: "I remember how packed the rest rooms were at the New Year's Eve parties at the Flagler," says one observer. "When you did get in, all you could hear were the metal against metal sounds of cocaine being chopped on top of the toilet paper holders.")

You know you're at an Old Guard party when:

- It's a medium-sized house with the same decor that it had when it was first bought. You'll see lots of family heirlooms and fabulous art—none of which may be protected by a security device. The food will be "normal" homemade American cuisine (pot roast, potatoes, veggies), served by a wait staff that dates back to when the home was purchased. The dress will be very casual to accommodate a cocktail hour that will be quite long. The guests will all know one another: They should. They've been coming to the same parties for the past 40 years.



PALM BEACH PRIMER

FROM SHOPPING AND EATING TO DANCING AND PRAYING

LUNCH:

Club Colette (members only, please), Cafe Casablanca (Bogart would find plenty of good company—in the smoking section, of course)

DINNER:

Amici, Jean Pierre, Bice—to see and be seen; Galaxy Grille (our own Planet Hollywood, you may have thought, when model Rachel Hunter danced atop a table for her hubby last year)

DRINKS:

Ta-Boó (for those who know how to nurse a drink); E.R. Bradley's Saloon (great "on-the-way-to" detour or meeting place); Chuck & Harold's (serious drinkers only need apply)

CLOTHING:

Worth Avenue; the Esplanade (need we say more?)

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