

Some people begin to slow down at her age, but local author and Pine Island resident Martha Lou Perritti is just getting started.

“I’ve been told that I’m a great storyteller,” says Perritti cheerfully. “My books are a part of me that I’ve chosen to share with my readers.”

Perritti was 60 years old when she discovered her Cherokee ancestry and decided to write a book based on the family research she had done. Her first novel, *Crossing in the Rain*, was released in 1996 and followed the life of her father, who lived to be 101. “Others have been denied the knowing of their heritage,” Perritti comments. “I’m proud of mine and want others to feel the pride I feel.”

In her most recent historical novel, *Standing against the Wind*, Perritti explores her heritage through the personal stories of three great-grandmothers. She has tracked their lives and the context in which they lived by weaving historical facts into her writing.

The story of *Standing against the Wind* begins in 1813, when Perritti’s great, great, great-grandmother Polly was born in Cumberland Gap in the Appalachian Mountains.

“The hardest part about writing this book was going through the emotional experiences related to the events that took place at that time,” says Perritti. “When I write, it’s often an emotional roller coaster.” One woman even called her in the middle of the night crying when she read about Polly’s death.

When she’s not researching or writing, Perritti enjoys being out in public and promoting her books. She attends book signings, gives lectures on historical research to genealogy groups, and participates in book readings across the country. In March 2004, *Standing against the Wind* was even featured at the London Book Fair in England.

Standing against the Wind is available on Amazon.com, at several bookshops on Sanibel and Pine Island, or by visiting www.marthalouperritti.com.

– Debbie Hanson

A Story to Tell

Martha Lou Perritti



PHOTO BY RHONDA MANDEL

Martha Lou Perritti’s heritage provides inspiration for her books.



Treasures

Mark Loren

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK LOREN



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FIDDLESTICKS COUNTRY CLUB



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK LOREN

Pictured at top are pro golfer and Fiddlesticks resident Bobby Nichols (left) and Ft. Myers Mayor Jim Humphrey. Center are (left to right) hockey legend Bobby Orr, NCAA basketball coach Dean Smith, and baseball great Johnny Bench. At right is Mark Loren.

A beautiful piece of ancient Mexico met with contemporary techniques of jewelry design to help children in Southwest Florida.

In February, a necklace created by jewelry designer Mark Loren took \$18,500 at auction during the Nichols Cup Celebrity Pro-Am tournament at Fiddlesticks Country Club in Ft. Myers. Proceeds went to The Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida.

Loren, an award-winning designer in Ft. Myers, created the necklace from a silver Mexican Pillar Dollar, four quarter-carat diamonds, gold, and rustic-looking Spanish leather. Cincinnati Red and Major League Baseball Hall of Fame legend Johnny Bench auctioned the necklace.

"We're pretty selective about which charities we donate to. However, this was the second year we were involved with the Bobby Nichols tournament," says Loren. "We really wanted this piece to be a one-of-a-kind piece designed specifically for this event," he adds. "It's about helping the kids."

The Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Florida provides assessment services, treatment, and therapy to children who have been abused or neglected. "The proceeds we received from the necklace were of great benefit to us," says Phyllis Jacoby, director of planning and quality assurance for the center. "Since we are entirely grant-funded, we were able to put in a new exam room and have

recently taken over another building."

The Pillar Dollar used to make the necklace was crafted in Mexico and made its way to China, where it was eventually excavated by a treasure-hunting team. A laser welder was used to fuse the metals together, enabling the diamonds to grip the coin for a dramatic effect.

As a jewelry designer, Loren works with a variety of objects.

"We enjoy the challenge of taking ordinary items and turning them into unique pieces," he says. Most designs he does for donation take in 70 percent to 150 percent more than the value of the piece. "Since this piece brought in considerably more, and it was for a good cause, we were thrilled."

— Debbie Hanson

Value of Time Shared

Rhoades Lawton



PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTH SEAS RESORT



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LAWTON FAMILY

The extended family of Rhoades Lawton (back row, second from left) and wife, Linda (center left), has been vacationing at South Seas Resort since the 1970s, when they bought the first time-share.

Thanks to a fortuitous friendship, Rhoades Lawton bought a vacation home thirty years ago, along with a groundbreaking concept. His family was the first to buy a time-share unit at South Seas Plantation. Since then, family vacations there have become a tradition, and the time-share industry has taken on a life of its own.

People for generations have enjoyed spending a week or two vacationing on Sanibel and Captiva. In the 1970s, Bob Taylor and Allen Ten Broek made those vacations possible for many more people, when their Mariner Group started offering time-share units at its South Seas Plantation.

Rhoades Lawton worked for AT&T, where he made friends with Taylor and Ten Broek. So when Ten Broek invited him to Sanibel for a vacation, Lawton accepted.

“We first stayed at the Moorings

condos,” Lawton says, “and Al suggested we come out to South Seas and take a look at the very first time-share units they were building at the time.”

The time-share industry, also referred to as “vacation ownership” or “interval ownership,” was in its infancy then, with Mariner as one of the pioneers of the concept. The company was offering one-week increments of time for sale. Buyers could lock in the same vacation week each year for as long as they wished to own it, knowing that they wouldn’t have to pay escalating prices for their vacation accommodations in future years.

The Lawtons loved what they saw, and became the very first buyers.

“We bought two weeks of time in Plantation Beach Club thirty years ago for around \$4,000 or \$5,000, I think,” Lawton explains. “Now I wish I had bought twenty of them.” Although the Lawtons and their large extended family live all across the country, one thing has become a family tradition: two weeks on Captiva at the end of March and beginning of April.

“Our family—kids, grandkids, everyone—has literally grown up vacationing at South Seas. My wife, Linda, and I knew that we could always count on that time for our family get-togethers. Even when we lived in California, we always looked forward to our time on the islands. We have a two-bedroom unit right on the beach. We absolutely love it there.”

Mitch Moore, who has been selling time-share vacations since the 1980s at South Seas and other properties owned by Mariner and its successors, says the Lawtons were pioneers in what was then an unproven commodity.

“We are now building what will be our last time-share offering in our latest building, the ten-unit Harbourview Villas. A week there now goes for an average of around \$30,000, and we sold out entirely during our preconstruction phase.”

For Rhoades and Linda Lawton’s family and friends, a decision long ago has provided a great getaway spot and established a tradition their family treasures.

— Kelly Madden



Joanne Ricciardiello is putting art to work, raising money for children through Gators Galore, which she co-chairs.

Great Gators! Joanne Ricciardiello

A “friendly” alligator? Could it be? Just ask Gators Galore, Inc. co-chairperson Joanne Ricciardiello. Under her direction, twenty-five life-sized fiberglass alligators took up residence around Collier County over the winter, created by sculptor Kathy Spalding and brightly decorated in all types of getups by local artists. The result was a community art display of eye-catching designs whose goal was to benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Collier County, which Ricciardiello represents, and the von Liebig Art Center.

Response was overwhelming, with “gator tours” taking place via Naples Trolley and a treasure hunt in January held by a local radio station.

“They gave clues to some of the alligators, and the prize was a cruise to the Caribbean,” says Ricciardiello. It all

wrapped up in March with an auction of the gators generating more than \$100,000, with added money from sponsors who were given first option for the sculptures. This slightly smaller version of Gators Galore follows the highly successful event in 2002, when seventy-two gators were auctioned, raising more than \$800,000.

“Ninety percent of the money raised goes directly to children and programs,” says Ricciardiello. “It raised much more money for the von Liebig than we had anticipated.”

The idea stems from a similar event held in Zurich, Switzerland, called the Cow Parade, says Ricciardiello. “They manufactured life-size cows, had local artists decorate them, and then auctioned them. It first happened here in Chicago in

1998. From that time, it’s been copied all over the country with lots of different animals. I did all the research and got it going here.”

It’s never too late to get in on the fun. The gators can be viewed online, where miniatures and photo books of the series can be bought.

Ricciardiello is optimistic about the future of Gators Galore. “We’re hoping that we’ll be doing it in other locations in Florida next season. Through the Boys and Girls Club and other art organizations, we will be contacting those communities to see if they might be interested in doing it.” She adds that Palm Beach County has already come on board with huge success.

For more information, call 239/435-6385 or visit www.gatorsgalore.com.

— Julie Clay

Visitors' Views

An introduction to a few of the many remarkable visitors to Southwest Florida

Making a Fashion Statement Graham Tabor

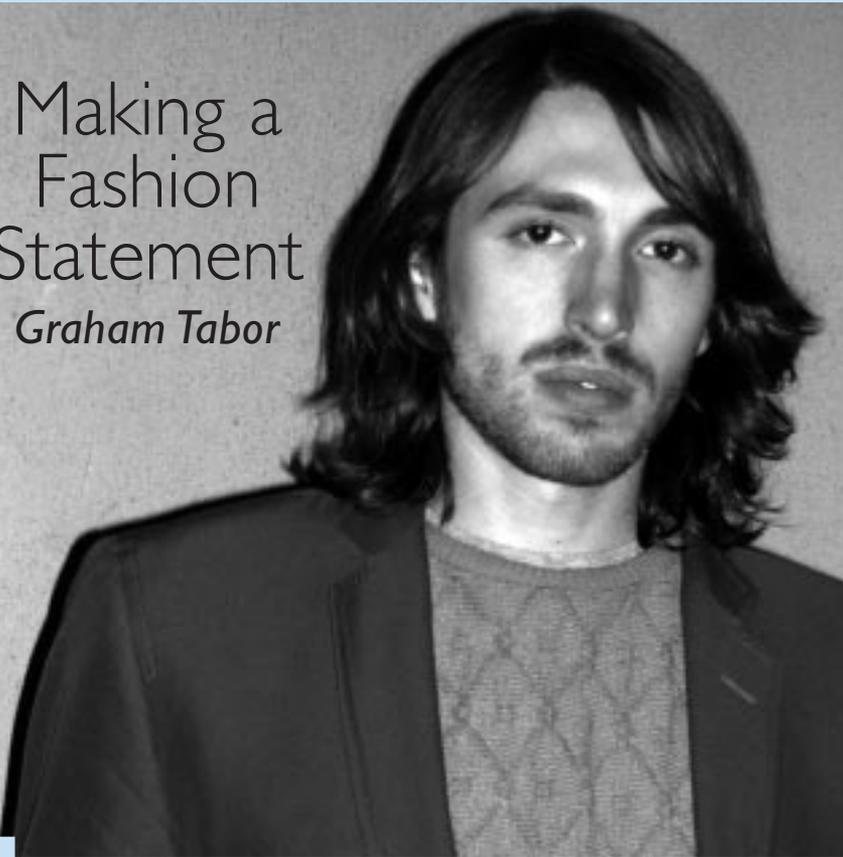


PHOTO BY ANDREA THOMPSON

Ever wonder how a successful fashion designer gets his or her start? Getting to know Graham Tabor may provide the answer.

We caught up with Tabor, the 23-year-old son of Sanibel resident Doug Tabor, on his most recent visit to Sanibel and Captiva, where he's been vacationing since childhood. "I have childhood memories of being carried to the car early in the morning, as we were checking out of Jensen's," he says.

Tabor's life has been an eventful one, even at his young age. He resides in New York, working on Egami Design, his own line of men's and women's "fashion-forward" clothing.

He recently learned that Egami had been selected as a finalist in the menswear category for the prestigious Styles 2004 fashion award from Gen Art, an art foundation based in New York. The finalists show their entries in a runway show and party at Hammerstein Ballroom in Manhattan.

"Basically, it's really amazing press for all of the finalists even if you don't win, as

everyone hears about the finalists, and about 1,500 people attend the thing at the Hammerstein Ballroom," he says.

Tabor laid the groundwork for his fashion career at Johns Hopkins University. "I didn't go to art school because I feel it's really important to any artist to have intellectual training. The majority of them don't, and I feel their work suffers for it," he says.

While studying there, he explains, "A friend and I had been approached about launching an in-house T-shirt line for a bunch of boutiques in Michigan. The project never materialized for the store," he says, but they completed the design and Tabor spent a summer taking classes at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan. And then he cast his eyes toward another international fashion capital.

"Johns Hopkins encourages people to go abroad, so I moved to Paris for a year," explains Tabor. Already fluent in French, he enrolled in the University of Paris. Tabor took full advantage of Paris' many educational opportunities, studying photography at Spéos Paris Photographic Institute and

figure drawing at École du Louvre.

He found Paris addictive, and he sent résumés to French fashion designers. Sébastien Meunier hired him instantly.

"I was his right-hand person," says Tabor. "It was a tiny company—himself, his business partner, and the production manager. It was perfect, because he was a really high-profile designer. He had won the biggest fashion award you can win in Europe, and with the first collection he ever made." With that prize from the Festival d'Hyères, Meunier was chosen to show his work in Men's Fashion Week in Paris, so Tabor kept busy helping to pick out fabric, meet with patternmakers, music people, a model-casting agent, and doing fittings.

The oddest part of the job of getting ready for a runway show? "It's fifteen minutes and you don't even see it because you're backstage," laments Tabor. "You get to see the video four days later."

But the experience, he says, was "way better than college."

Tabor worked for Meunier for an entire collection season—April to August—and the collection was well received; the opening look received a full-page article and photo in *Vogue Hommes International* magazine.

Tabor graduated from Johns Hopkins with degrees in art history and international relations, and then worked a second fashion season for Meunier. He moved in March 2003 to New York, where he ventured into video art while he studied at Pratt Institute. He styled wardrobes and served as art director for independent films, which led to a wardrobe position for a music video. He also worked for an avant-garde couture house in New York, helping run its show during New York Fashion Week.

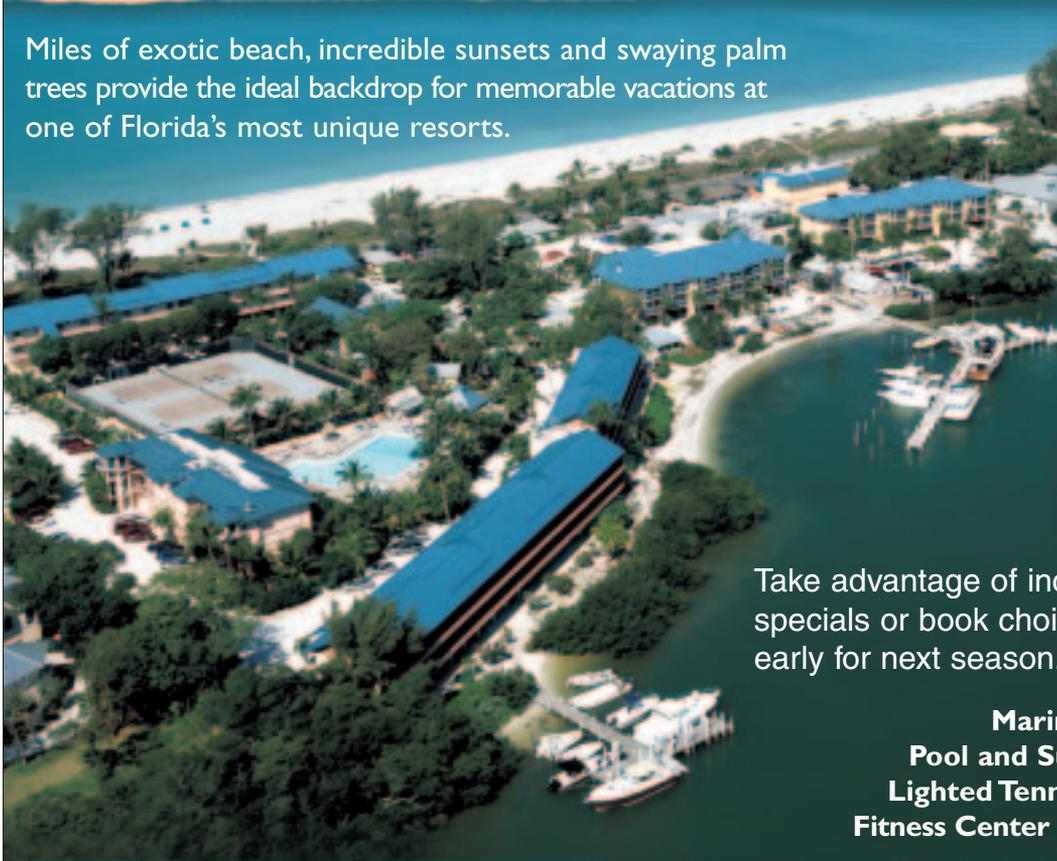
Tabor enjoyed his latest visit to Sanibel, and even found a way to do a bit of work island-style. Perhaps you saw him, pedaling down Periwinkle, dressed in a smart lightweight jacket, computer satchel slung over his shoulder.

"I'm looking for department stores and buyers for the Egami line," he explained one sunny afternoon, hunkered industriously over his computer. "I just found a whole new Web site with great contacts in Japan."

— Libby Boren McMillan

The Last Word In Island Resorts

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3 Restaurants/Lounges



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