

MIRABEL

SHINES AS A GREAT PRIVATE CLUB

Three Mirabel couples share why they love the private club lifestyle and their decision to live it now.

By Marcia Lusk

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA is as renowned for its world-class golf clubs as its sunny climate and incredible natural beauty. Mirabel, one of the rare debt-free, member owned, operated and controlled private clubs in North Scottsdale, will truly take your breath away. It offers a Tom Fazio-designed course; a 34,000 square-foot warm and inviting

Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced Desert Lodge Clubhouse; a complete fitness center; four Har-Tru tennis courts; gorgeous spa treatment facilities; and an Art Deco resort-style pool complete with luxurious cabanas. The dining is award-winning and the membership is notoriously friendly and welcoming.

In *Executive Golfer* you regularly read about many stunning clubs, amazing golf courses and incredible tennis facilities. However, sitting down and getting real members' viewpoints at Mirabel, one of our favorite clubs in Scottsdale, was a new experience. What sets this Club apart became very apparent in an up close and personal round table interview with a great group of people who have made Mirabel their home.

Interestingly, even in these challenging economic times, Mirabel's membership continues to grow faster than planned. In the words of Mirabel members Jerry and Gina Glover, Dan and Julie Hendrickson and John and Chris Suppes, here's why Mirabel stands to shine on in the years to come.

Mirabel members, standing: Jerry Glover, Dan Hendrickson, and John Suppes; seated: Gina Glover, Chris Suppes, and Julie Hendrickson.



OVER 60 MIRABEL MEMBERS VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME AS CLUB AMBASSADORS TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS TO THE CLUB.



"THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY WILL HAVE MANY WINNERS AND LOSERS THIS DECADE. MIRABEL HAS POSITIONED ITSELF TO BE ONE OF THOSE WINNERS."

— TOM FAZIO, GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT

"OUR MOVE TO MIRABEL"

Julie and Dan Hendrickson moved to Scottsdale in 2010 from Michigan. They both work and are raising three daughters. "We missed the sun," Dan remembered. "Although we wished business was better, we took a leap of faith and moved cross country." Dan is an architect and developer with projects as far reaching as redevelopment of a brown field industrial site in the Midwest. "You can't plan everything in life, and we wanted to make the move to Arizona while we were young," he said.

Julie admitted to being more hesitant because of the economy but she, as well as the Glovers and Suppes, smiled as Dan continued. "I love to play golf," he stated. "At Mirabel I can play all year. There is real value to being a member here. In Michigan, I had to pay 12 months of dues, but could only play six to eight months per year.

"I'm quite sure we picked the right location to put down new roots," Dan Hendrickson went on. "I wholeheartedly believe, when the real estate market starts appreciating, Scottsdale will be one of the first markets to strengthen."

Chris and John Suppes seemed to agree. "We were darned lucky with our timing," said Chris. "John and I kept saying to ourselves, 'Why can't we do it now?' So in 2005, we moved from Illinois to Arizona. It was risky for us to retire at 49. But because of that we placed our savings into

less volatile investments so our portfolio didn't take as much of a hit when things changed in 2008."

"Of course, we felt an impact," added John, who was in the metals business before he and Chris moved west to Mirabel. "Probably our best decision was hiring a financial planner to help us safeguard our savings. On the other hand, we built our house at the peak of the market."

"We are fairly new members," Gina Glover joined in. "Like just about every club, Mirabel adjusted their initiation fees to market conditions. We jumped at the chance to join after we sat down with one of the Club's board members to assess the health and vision of the Club."

Gina nodded as husband Jerry offered, "Frankly, we've been surprised how open Mirabel has been about its financials. Our Club back in St. Louis never showed the books. It was almost secretive."

The Glovers expressed the same concerns as their fellow members about the economy but are also positive about their decision to live at Mirabel. "I am more optimistic," shared Gina. "Home sales were up where we lived in St. Louis and we sold our house for 10 percent more than we purchased it for in 1997. We added a lot of upgrades," she confided. "Of course we wish we could have sold our property for more, but we were able to afford a bigger house at Mirabel than we could have four years ago." *(continued)*



WE LOVE MIRABEL AND ITS FRIENDLY, PRIVATE CLUB CULTURE

While these three couples are fairly diverse in professions and backgrounds, one theme certainly emerged when the conversation turned to the value of belonging to a private club. As individuals and couples, they all agreed the social interaction with other members was the biggest selling point for belonging to Mirabel.

"All clubs have parties and get-togethers but the social programming at Mirabel goes a couple of steps further," smiled Gina Glover. "On the last Friday of every month, the Club has 'Finally Friday Happy Hour.' We celebrate all the holes-in-one that were made during the month. The bar is packed and it is one of the 'can't miss' evenings for us."

"Those Friday happy hours are one of the reasons we purchased a house and decided to move 'on campus,'" joked Jerry.

Dan Hendrickson couldn't help laughing while telling how much he and Julie enjoy summer cooking classes at the Club. "It's fun to put on a tall, white chef hat and experiment with cooking," he grinned. "It's a hands-on lesson and there are always leftovers to take home. Julie is the gourmet cook in the family. I am the gourmet eater! Maybe that's why we get along so well," he teased.

"When I pass through the gate, I know I am in a good spot," beamed Jerry, and Chris and John Suppes identified completely. "The membership is an outgoing group. When we joined the Club we didn't know a single family. Within the first four months, out of the blue, we received six dinner invitations from members wanting to welcome us to the community." Everyone at the table agreed as Jerry concluded, "Mirabel has a warmth and casual atmosphere you don't find at many Midwestern or East Coast golf clubs."



That was a great note on which to end our two hours of camaraderie and some really intriguing insights. This gracious group of Mirabel members was very open about the value they place on their private club membership and the reasons they remain pleased about their decision to join.

A MEMBERSHIP SURVEY AND SOME GREAT RESULTS
Now it was time to interview the Club's membership source. It was a pleasure to talk with Gary Ireton, membership marketing director at Mirabel, and hear his well-informed take on the strong points of this beautiful Scottsdale private club.

"I think being member owned and operated has been a big sales point for us," Gary explained. "The Club has been able to control its own destiny." While today's mentality seems to be 'cut, cut, and cut' more and more services, Gary proudly pointed out that, "At Mirabel, we have kept our promise to our members to stand out from the pack of golf communities in Scottsdale by offering the very best private club experience possible."

Unlike many other private club communities around the country, Mirabel is financially sound, has no debt, and a membership roster that is growing.



Since the Club became member owned, it has become a top priority to get membership feedback on at least an annual basis. "We surveyed our membership asking their likes and dislikes," Gary reported. "In order of preference, our research showed that dining, golf, and fitness are the three most important services our Club offers." Ireton continued, "It is the job of our operating team to 'fill in the blanks' in those three categories and according to our survey results, we have exceeded in all."

As a result of the survey, Gary shared some additions to the Club's offerings. "We are always trying to enhance the membership experience and as such have woven some educational aspects into many of our social activities. Our members are willing to share their expertise with other members. For example, we have members teaching photography lessons in the clubhouse."

He continued, "We have found 'success breeds success.' As more members try new hobbies and activities

with their friends and neighbors, it leads to an even more vibrant social atmosphere. Participation in almost all of our events is way up. Even our tennis program, often a weak spot at private clubs, expanded from 20 active players to 90 last season.

"We had a 97 percent member satisfaction rate when we tallied our latest membership survey in 2011," Ireton stated. Then he turned his final comment to the game we all love. "I am excited to announce that we are only 50 golf memberships away from reaching capacity." ■

For more information on membership opportunities, call Gary Ireton, Membership Director, at (480) 437-1506, or e-mail him at gary.ireton@mirabel.com.

For more information on real estate opportunities, call Bob Lomax, Director of Sales at (480) 595-2545, or e-mail him at bob.lomax@mirabel.com.

