



Jim and Marta on
a rare vacation



Marta and Jim at
a charity event



Slim Aarons (photographer) - Licensed from Getty Images

From Then to Now ... Wow!

It was 1984...D. Robert Graham was the Governor...a buried 18th century cannon was discovered on Boca's beach, much to the delight of treasure hunters, renewing hopes that a Spanish ship wrecked off the shore would be found. Croquet was all the rage, with the likes of Zsa Zsa Gabor, Joan Fontaine, George Plimpton and Tova Borgnine coming to Boca for the Celebrity Croquet Gala benefitting the financially distressed NPR (National Public Radio)...in the midst of it all, Miss Gabor announced she was smitten with a gentleman she described as a Tunisian king who spoke Hungarian and looked like Omar Sharif with dimples. Liz Whitney Tippett, a wealthy American socialite and philanthropist, who was a champion horsewoman and prominent owner/breeder of Thoroughbred racehorses, arrived in her signature racing colors – a fuchsia pantsuit and infamous purple Rolls-Royce. Also in the news was "The Florida East Coast Thanksgiving Holiday Storm", which produced extensive damage, widespread coastal flooding, severe beach erosion, and the grounding of the freighter Mercedes I for several months along the coastal town of Palm Beach. It ended up on the beach up against the sea wall of Palm Beach socialite, Mollie Wilmot, thereby littering one of Florida's most expensive stretches of real estate. On the sports front, people still talk about the ad that many have called the greatest Super Bowl commercial of all time: Apple's "1984" commercial, the

one that launched the Macintosh and led Apple to more than \$150 million in sales in the first 100 days of the Mac's debut. The ad quietly ran in 13 markets around the country in the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl, including a station in Boca Raton for one very specific reason...Boca was home to IBM's PC division, and Apple, some said, wanted to poke "Big Blue" right in the eye. Oh, and let's not forget the movie "Where The Boys Are '84", directed by Hy Averbach (known for his smash movie "M*A*S*H"), that was released on April 6, 1984 and actually filmed in Boca Raton at the Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club. Truth be told, the film was a critical and commercial failure.

It is into this eclectic world that Jim and Marta Batmasian entered. Having established a successful real estate portfolio in Massachusetts, which they still own, they had moved from Boston to Boca Raton with the intent to "retire" and raise their two young boys. That idea lasted all of a couple of months.

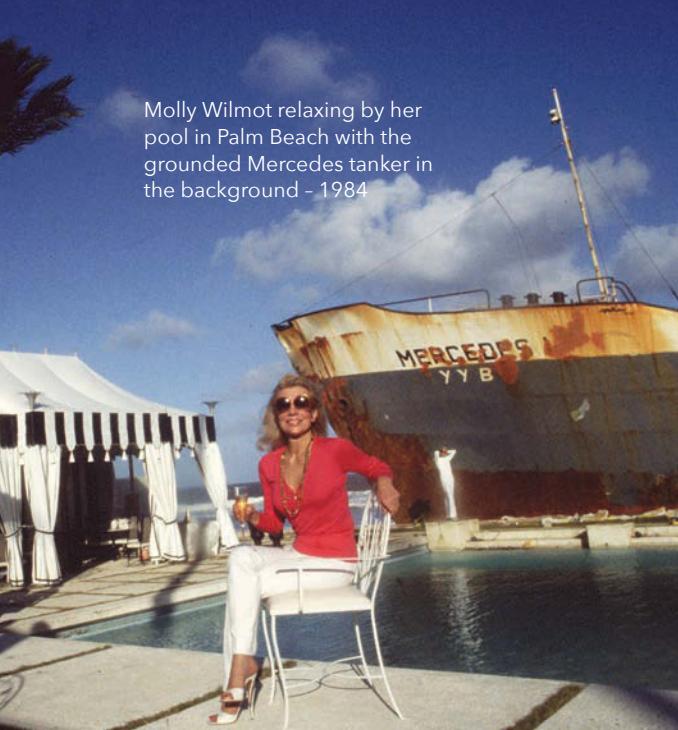
In the 1980's, because of an explosion

of development to the west of the center of the city, eastern areas began to decay, including the Downtown corridor...the old Boca Raton Mall was experiencing higher vacancies and was occupied by borderline tenants, mostly due to the opening of Town Center to the west. IBM had canceled a planned \$50 million expansion because of Florida's disputed new unitary tax. Jim and Marta came, saw, realized how much potential Boca Raton had, instinctively knew what the future could be like for this beautiful little town of just 60,000 people, and absolutely wanted to be an integral part of that. At a time when many of the coastal communities were being overlooked by serious investors – seen as nothing more than spring break retreats and havens for retirees – the Batmasians had the foresight to begin investing in local shopping centers and residential properties (buying more than 36 within just their first 33 months here). The operation of their real estate has been driven by a simple but successful



Marta painting during the Women Build Habitat for Humanity event
in Boca Raton - 2019

Molly Wilmot relaxing by her pool in Palm Beach with the grounded Mercedes tanker in the background - 1984



Alan Oxley (photographer) - Licensed from Getty Images



Zsa Zsa and Jolie Gabor at the Boca Raton Celebrity Croquet event - 1984

philosophy: to make each of their properties the most compelling and best place to shop/work/live that it can be. They have continued to add to their real estate portfolio...another 36 properties in just the last 36 months... and are among the largest landowners in the city.

In just the last six months their company, Investments Limited, has leased more 200,000 square feet of retail, office and warehouse space to a wide variety of businesses: restaurants, salons, spas, women's, men's and children's boutiques, yoga and ballet studios, fitness centers, tutoring academies, jewelers, art galleries, interior design and décor, physicians and other medical specialists, law firms, financial advisors, and much more.

How have they kept the momentum going? It's all due to their remarkable vision all those years ago.

Jim and Marta have reinvested in virtually every property they have acquired, benefitting entire neighborhoods and the city as a whole. One has only to look at the significant improvements along Federal Highway, Dixie Highway, Fifth Avenue Shops, Shops at University Park, and Palmetto Park Road all the way from Federal Highway to A1A, to see just how much of an impact they have had on the landscape of Boca Raton.

Their vision for Boca Raton, however,

extended far beyond just real estate. Marta loved Boston so much that, the day they were leaving, she was crying. "What about my museums? What about my theaters?" and Jim said, "We'll start our own".

True to his word, they started supporting many of Boca Raton's cultural and educational institutions upon their arrival and looking for other opportunities to help in their new home.

The Children's Science Explorium is one of the organizations Marta is best known for founding, in 1986, at Royal Palm Place, as a way to enhance the educational curriculum and make learning about science fun for kids. It subsequently moved to Sugar Sand Park in 1997.

The Children's Science Explorium presents its own hands-on science exhibits all year long. These exhibits are usually designed in-house and offer a fascinating variety of interactive components for guests to explore and investigate at their own pace. The Children's Science Explorium also hosts traveling exhibits from national and international science museums, in the fall and spring of each year. As originally envisioned by Marta, all exhibits are intended to spark a child or adult's natural curiosity about how and why things work as they do.

Jim and Marta's support of the Theater Lab at Florida Atlantic University, which they started three years ago, continues to enable the famed Founding Director &

Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Arts, Louis Tyrrell, to bring contemporary and inaugural world premier works of the playwrights to the University and the Community. Established in 2015 on the Boca Raton campus, Theatre Lab's mission is to inspire, develop, and produce new work, audiences, and artists for the American Theatre. In addition to the mainstage productions, the Theater Lab offers the Playwright's Forum and Master Class Series, play readings and other cultural activities in a picturesque setting, facing the lake and easy parking access. Jim and Marta see this venue as a multipurpose facility to have other cultural and community-related activities to serve the needs of faculty and students showcasing their talents.

Today, the Batmasians support well over 60 cultural, educational, nonprofit and recreational organizations, and all with a view to providing healthy, thriving environments that benefit citizens and businesses alike. Pet projects include their program for at-risk youth, which they started in 2002, that virtually stopped the gang movement in Boca Raton dead in its tracks and reduced crime and drug dealing in the young black community. The nearly 3 year old program to eradicate homelessness in our area has resulted in an estimated 50% of the homeless being taken off the streets.

Their philanthropic efforts go beyond the borders of Boca Raton. The day after Hurricane Michael hit, Jim and Marta announced that they would be donating to recovery and relief efforts for those in the Gulf Coast region who were significantly affected by devastating Hurricane Michael and, as always, they made good on that

continued on page 196

zerodowntime | zeropain | zeroside-effects



The Only FDA Approved
Laser for Body Contouring



Reveal

Your True Shape Naturally
with Zerona Z6 the world's most advanced
non-invasive fat loss laser

Contact us today to discover a
holistic approach to your goals
for reshaping your body.



AARON APPLEBAUM D.C., P.A.
1050 NW 15TH STREET • SUITE 209A
BOCA RATON, FL 33486
561-367-9009

CALL FOR
FREE
ESTIMATE



WWW.SUPERIORTINT.NET

LICENCED & INSURED



**10% OFF
ANY VEHICLE WRAP**

**20% OFF
AUTOMOTIVE TINTING**

- AUTOMOTIVE • BOATS
- RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL
- GRAPHIC DESIGN AVAILABLE

- HURRICANE SAFETY FILM
- CUSTOM AUDIO INSTALLS
- 3M WINDOW TINTING

561-338-7711
3201 N. DIXIE HWY., BAY #1
BOCA RATON

OPEN 6 DAYS
MONDAY - SATURDAY
8:00AM - 6:00PM

561-660-5253
1023 OLD OKEECHOBEE RD.
WEST PALM BEACH

continued from page 107

promise. It was not the first time that they donated to recovery and relief efforts in the wake of natural disasters. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, they relocated well over 30 families from New Orleans to South Florida. These families had absolutely nothing left, and nowhere to go. Jim and Marta, gave them rent-free housing, furniture, clothing, food, etc., and helped them find jobs, get their kids in school and virtually rebuild their lives from scratch.

Jim and Marta live comfortably but, despite their success, are not comfortable with all the trappings of wealth, and much of their social life revolves around business and charitable groups, rather than the stereotypical "Boca Is the Beverly Hills of Florida" crowd. Proud grandparents to three beautiful little girls, Victoria, Gabriella, and Juliana, their recreational activities revolve predominantly around family. Very health conscious, Marta does her own grocery shopping, all the family cooking, especially Armenian cooking, practices meditation and yoga, regularly works out to a variety exercise tapes, and dotes on her precious Maltese, Tamar, who comes to the office with her every day.

The Boca Raton people see today is home to tropical Florida beaches, historic buildings, college universities, upscale shopping centers and parks, and residents and tourists alike enjoy the coziness and intimacy offered by Boca Raton's small city atmosphere and Mediterranean style architecture; here one finds palm-lined streets, fountains, buildings adorned with balconies and patios, colorful awnings and a wealth of restaurants, specialty boutiques and art galleries...perfect for strolling, shopping and the always fun pastime of people-watching. Rich in arts & culture, live entertainment and special events take place throughout the year. In short, it is a "lifestyle destination" that is attractive to tourists and residents alike.

Glamour, elegance, and sophisticated tastes...Boca Raton is a feast for the eyes and a mecca for businesses and families, just like Jim and Marta Batmasian knew it could be.

Croquet anyone? After all, it is a sport of strategy, skill, and tactics that can be enjoyed by young and old alike and, last we checked, the Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club had 2 full courts.

Want to know more about what Boca Raton was like "back in the day?" For more information and photos of Old Boca check out Old Town Hall, which was restored to its original architectural design by the Boca Raton Historical Society in 1984 for use as a local history museum and archives. **stb**