



# Home Sweet Home

By Sherri Balefsky

NESTLED ALONG THE VIBRANT AQUAMARINE COASTAL WATERS ON THE NORTHERNMOST TIP OF KEY LARGO IS A QUIET, SECLUDED COMMUNITY, WHERE LIVING IN PARADISE ISN'T A DESIRE, IT'S A REALITY.

Intigued? We thought so. Welcome to the beautiful Ocean Reef Club, a residential community in the Florida Keys, full of history and heritage. What started as a modest fishing camp has evolved into one of the most remarkable clubs in the world. Located against the only living Coral Reef in US waters, the 2,500 scenic acres include a variety of waterfront estates, private homes, and condos, along with 175-slip marina, two pristine championship golf courses, private beach, and saltwater lagoon. For more than sixty years, generations upon generations of families have come together to live in the quiet serenity of Ocean Reef's natural surroundings.

Mary Lee, Ocean Reef's premier real estate agent, has been devoted to the selling of the club's assorted luxury properties for years.

As an associate of Russell Post Sotheby's International Realty, her current listings include a 63-acre private island, several waterfront properties, and some of the club's most lavish condominiums. Mary has also been a resident of Ocean Reef for more than 25 years and is an active club member; she is one of the founding families of The Academy at Ocean Reef and is on the board of Grayvik Animal Care, a wonderful facility with an on staff veterinarian to look after the hundreds of members' cats and dogs – all testaments to her genuine love of Ocean Reef and the community.

Not only does Mary boast a first-rate real estate office in the heart of Ocean Reef, but she also recently launched her signature Waterfront Real Estate Boat Tours. The idea





VINTAGE WEEKEND 2010



BROAD KEY, KEY LARGO, FL  
63-ACRE ISLAND  
OFFERED AT \$ 20,000,000

is simple, yet genius; she takes potential buyers onto her boat, "Reef Explorer," and provides mini-excursions around the property. The tours have proven to be both innovative and effective in marketing the Ocean Reef's properties. She also has an exceptional website, [www.maryleepresentsoceanreef.com](http://www.maryleepresentsoceanreef.com), which features information about Ocean Reef, her boat tours, and photos of all her exquisite listings.

Mary is also responsible for organizing several events at Ocean Reef every year. Most recently, she hosted a very special Vintage Dom Perignon dinner in celebration of Vintage Weekend. The 16th Annual Vintage Weekend brings together some of the world's finest classic and antique yachts, planes, and cars which are on display throughout the Ocean Reef property. Ocean

Reef is one of the few destinations that offers a private airport, world class marina, hotel facilities, restaurants and a Cultural Center able to host this outstanding event. Specifically, Vintage Weekend is one of the most important classic yacht shows in the entire United States. This year, they hosted a special Rybovich reunion that brought together a selection of vintage sporting yachts from Rybovich & Sons Boat Works. Mary and her husband John also own the Legends Invitational Golf Tournament, ([www.legendsinvitational.com](http://www.legendsinvitational.com)) one of the most prestigious invitation-only golf events in the country.

Regardless of special events and the scenic boat tours, Ocean Reef on its own can sell itself. Not only is it one of the most luxurious clubs in the world, but also the

safest, boasting its own Public Safety Department responsible for the coordination and management of all security, police, emergency medical, and fire services in the Ocean Reef community.

Other unique amenities include a private airport, spa, fitness center, two pools, library, movie theater, and more than a dozen restaurants, lounges, and bars. Ocean Reef also has its very own Medical Center that is staffed by four doctors available 24/7/365, an Academy that teaches grades pre-K through 8, and a state-of-the-art Cultural Center that has brought in performances from the likes of Liza Minnelli and Tony Bennett, and speakers like Rudy Giuliani. The club also has what Mary calls "clubs within the club" that include an Art League of more than 800 members, yacht and sailing clubs, croquet and tennis clubs, kids club, and limitless recreation opportunities for children of all ages. In addition, Ocean Reef Club is debt free, something that is unheard of at most other private club residences.

And while the glittering property and unparalleled amenities might reel you in, it's the close-knit and outwardly friendly community that will get you to stay. Mary feels strongly about the fact that Ocean Reef would not be what it is today if it weren't for its people. "Our most important asset is and always has been our members," she says. The 4,000-members are a diverse mix of laid-back, extremely generous, kind-hearted people, where generations of families continue to come back year after year. "We have more than 800 Legacy members (these are children of existing members when they turn 23), many of which purchase property here," Mary explains. "The stories are countless, but the underlying theme is that they have traveled the world, been to every club, and have decided to make Ocean Reef their home." ■

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