

BY LAUREN VARGA KING

ON LOCATION

KEY LARGO, FLORIDA: A SIMPLE FISHING CAMP

TWELVE MILES AND A SINGLE-LANE, the road leading to the northern tip of Key Largo, Fla., may be long and narrow, but at its end is a community with a wide range of amenities and wide-open ocean views.

Surrounded by three sides of water and positioned on the last living coral reef in all of the U.S. waters, **Ocean Reef Club** was no more than a mere fishing camp at its inception. Today, the club pays homage to its modest beginnings while thoughtfully growing the property's amenities.

"Ocean Reef has steadily matured from an island of mangroves and natural hammock to what you see today — an opulently landscaped community of multi-million-dollar residences, three golf courses, medical and cultural centers, et cetera," explains Ocean Reef Club Member John Schaeffer.

When Schaeffer struck up a conversation with me one morning in Reef Treats, he mentioned that his mother built and furnished a home at Ocean Reef in 1969 for \$92,000. Now, waterfront residences here are fetching up to \$15 million.

"The member experience at Ocean Reef Club and the exclusivity that a private club offers will ensure that property values will ultimately grow," says Bobbie

Watson, president of Ocean Reef Club's Central Listing Service.

Traditionally a community devoted to fishing, golfing and relaxing, the club has held on to this perception. And, as tradition would have it, Ocean Reef celebrated its 26th annual sailfish tournament — known as Reef Cup — in January.

Whether you take part in the Reef Cup, or are a regular spectator, head to The Raw Bar for a back-to-basics dinner. Walk in and scribble your name on the chalkboard — most likely under familiar names from around Ocean Reef. When your party is called, don a lobster bib — they are in vogue here — and enjoy a succulent seafood dinner complemented by a fisherman's tale.

With a strong camaraderie and ties to tradition, it's no surprise that in addition to the time-tested activities shared on the Reef, giving back to the club is a favorite pastime. Whether carefully expanding and updating current community buildings and residences or the organizing of "Clubs within the Club" — a program dedicated to special interest groups formed and run by members of Ocean Reef — the "unique way of life" on the Reef today can be attributed to each member's dedication to this one-of-a-kind fishing camp.



Real estate agent Mary Lee offers real estate and membership tours on her boat, Reef Explorer, which is the finest way to represent Ocean Reef waterfront properties.

BACKGROUND AND TOP TWO PHOTOS COURTESY OCEAN REEF CLUB

Out of the 56 residential transactions recorded since the beginning of the year at **Ocean Reef Club**, 85 percent have been on the water with dockage.

Some of Ocean Reef's "**Clubs within the Club**" include an art league, yacht and sailing clubs and a flying club.

For more on Ocean Reef Club, visit **oceanreef.com** and see pages 52-53 and 101.