

PALM BEACH GARDENS & JUPITER FLORIDA WEEKLY®

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RACHEL HICKEY / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Milton and Tamar Maltz led the drive to create a regional theater at what is now called the Maltz Jupiter Theatre. It opened in 2004.

Meet the Maltzes

Milton and Tamar Maltz are to receive Palm Beach County Cultural Council Muse Awards for civic leadership

BY SCOTT SIMMONS
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It is said that behind every great man is a great woman. But in the case of Milton Maltz, look at his history, and you will see his wife, Tamar, standing at his side and sharing in the important decisions that have led to the creation of radio and television stations across the country, museums in the North and a theater that bears their name in Jupiter.

They are unassuming, this couple. They generally do not give interviews.

"We believe in being leaders, not followers," Mr. Maltz says simply. And leaders they are.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Maltz Jupiter Theatre is in the former Burt Reynolds Dinner Theatre, at Indiantown Road and A1A.

SEE MALTZ, A7 ▶

Best offer over \$3.5 million buys private piece of paradise



COURTESY PHOTO

This oceanfront home in Hobe Sound offers plenty of privacy because no new construction is allowed on either side of it.

BY CHRIS FELKER
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There's a magnificent treasure hidden in plain view amid the enclaves of the rich and famous on Jupiter Island, and not only is it yours for the taking if you can pay the bounty — it would make the perfect Valentine's Day gift because it exudes romance. You'll have to hurry, though.

It's a private slice of paradise known as "Barefoot House" (even the name is sexy), and along its jungled beachfront,

a love affair could blossom. Think sunrise mimosas on the lanai, moonrise strolls amid the turtle tracks. Photos don't do it justice.

This treasure is a historic, classic Florida beach estate in Hobe Sound that's been in the same family for three generations, nestled in the middle of eight miles of private Atlantic beach frequented mostly by sea turtles and barefoot guests.

What's unique about this find is that

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DR. OZ IS NOW ON
WEEKDAYS
4PM



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BAREFOOT

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whoever buys this place, at 365 S. Beach Road, will never have to worry about someone building a McMansion to ruin the view. The home is "grandfathered" in: no new construction allowed along the beach in either direction.

And the best part, aside from the solid construction? It will be sold for the highest and best offer over \$3.5 million that's accepted before Valentine's Day. That minimum price has sunk like a shipwreck since the home went on the market for the first time in almost 50 years back in January 2009, when it was listed at \$7.9 million; the price was cut to \$4.95 million in September 2010.

Says the current owner, Joseph A. McChristian Jr., "It'd be a fabulous Valentine's Day present for somebody."

If lovebirds didn't alight in this beautiful beach house, however, it would be the perfect place for a big family. Mr. McChristian concedes: "The house needs a family to really bring it to life."

And he would love to see that happen, because he's ready to leave Barefoot House behind — thus the fire-sale offer. Mr. McChristian represents the tail end of three generations whose gatherings over half a century made Barefoot House sing with laughter.

He is the last in a line of military families who have called the place home, thanks to the foresight of a forebear whom President Harry Truman once called "the greatest general we have ever had."

Mr. McChristian bought the estate in August 2006 through "a rather complicated, internal family transaction."

He actually consolidated ownership in his own name by buying out other family members' interests and has been living in it full-time since then.

The offering price of \$3.5 million would be a bargain, though; Zillow.com estimates the parcel's value at \$4.2 million. In November 2008, according to McChristian, the property was appraised at \$7.8 million.

The home had been handed down in 1971 to his parents, Maj. Gen. Joseph A. and Dempsey McChristian, by his grandparents, Gen. James A. and Mrs. Van Fleet. It served as a family beach house over half a century, and Joe Jr. has been visiting or staying at the home off and on during that whole stretch.

Mr. McChristian related the history of how his grandfather amassed the land surrounding the house: "When President Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur, my grandfather was sent to Korea to take command of the U.S. Eighth Army from the spring of '51 until the Korean War was over in '53. During that time, my grandmother rented a home on Jupiter Island and fell in love with the area. When my grandfather returned from the war, she persuaded him to buy a home here on the island.

"The first property they bought in the mid-1950s had been known as the Gordon Estate. The land went from the ocean on the east, across the island and across the Intracoastal Waterway to U.S. Highway 1. Altogether, there must have been about 15 acres. The main house was built originally back in the 1890s. It is an Old Florida house, with three full stories and a full attic above that, 10 bedrooms, seven with balconies looking out over different parts of the gardens, and it was the place where a famous Broadway actor named Joe Jefferson spent a lot of his time. It was owned by a member of his family. Joe Jefferson was famous back in those years for his role on stage as Rip Van Winkle.



COURTESY PHOTO

ABOVE: The Barefoot House is built of Dade County heart pine and paneled in cypress.

LEFT: Palm trees flank the backyard vista of the Atlantic and a 337-foot private beach.

"The Barefoot House was not part of the Gordon Estate in the 1950s. Grandfather bought it separately in 1960, and it became the family's beach house from then on."

Tax records are unclear on exactly when the house was first constructed, Mr. McChristian says. "We have never found any official records of exactly when the house was built. The Martin County Property Appraiser's Office estimated 1945, but I've never seen any documentation to back that up. I had heard growing up that the house had been built as a wedding present for the daughter of the family that owned the main house on the estate back in the 1930s. Our best guess is that the Barefoot House was built in the 1930s."

Deep roots in Florida

His family has deep roots in the area on both his parents' sides.

"The family had a cattle ranch over in Polk County, and citrus groves there, where my grandfather's father, William Van Fleet, pioneered Central Florida back in the 1870s. He built a log cabin in Polk County ... and with a partner, Alfred Parslow, built the first railroad across Central Florida and became the first president of what was then called the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railway. The family's been here in Florida on my mother's side since the 1870s; on my father's side, they moved to Miami Beach in late 1918, and the population of all of Miami Beach was less than 300 people."

His mother, Dempsey (Van Fleet) McChristian, is 93. His father, Maj. Gen. Joseph A. McChristian, died in 2005.

"He and Mother were still living here at that time," Mr. McChristian says, "and my mother continued to live in the house for a while, but it wasn't until 2006 that she decided there were so many memories, she really wanted to settle somewhere else, and that's when I consolidated ownership of the house in my name."

Mr. McChristian has made some improvements to the beach house over the past six years — he replaced the roof in 2006 with cedar shake, and three new air-conditioning systems were installed in November that year,

with 10 tons of cooling capacity and seven separately controlled zones. But he was working on a solid frame.

With swaying palm trees flanking the backyard vista of the wide Atlantic and a 337-foot private beach, the meticulously preserved, two-story, 3,665-square-foot home has five bedrooms, five-and-a-half baths, two separate guest suites and a framework nearly as hard as steel. It was built to last and to survive tropical weather, with a frame of Dade County heart pine, which becomes extremely hard because of the dense sap content.

The same wood was used for flooring throughout most of the ground floor and the whole second floor; the living and dining rooms and pantry have their original oak floors.

Walls, ceilings, doors and windows throughout are made of old Florida cypress.

The home has a complete set of aluminum hurricane shutters for all its openings that can easily be installed. A centrally monitored alarm system protects against intruders, and a new, hurricane-rated, automatic door was recently put on the two-car garage.

Sea turtle nesting spot

During summer, the beach frontage is one of the prime nesting spots in the world for endangered loggerhead, leatherback and green sea turtles.

The nearest neighbors are far enough away that bathing in the pool or ocean au naturel would be tempting. The closest house on the beach to the south is about 200 yards away, and it is more than a half-mile to the nearest home on the beach to the north. Closest public beach access is about 4 miles in each direction.

According to offering agent Ken Meierling of Engel & Völkers Jupiter Real Estate, there's been a lot of interest in the house.

"For the seller, having owned the property for a few generations, I think it was difficult for him to part with it. But now he says, 'I'm emotionally removed; I've decided to sell it, and I'm going to go through the process now. I'm ready.'"

Mr. Meierling gushes over the parcel, and not just because he's trying

to move it: "It's a gorgeous, gorgeous property on the beach, it's really magical."

The origins of the name

There's an interesting story about how the nickname "Barefoot House" came to stick. Back around the time that Mr. McChristian's father was given the house, in about 1970, the general was assigned to Army intelligence in Washington, and foreign defense attachés were accredited through his office and often given tours of U.S. military installations.

On one of those trips, his father arranged for a day at the Jupiter Island beach house to wind down a nationwide tour by a large group of those foreign diplomats. Mr. McChristian relates: "Mother had come down from Washington a few days early to open the house up and get it ready to receive everyone. And all these diplomats had always seen her at diplomatic functions in Washington, dressed elegantly, but when she met them here at the house, she'd put on a plain cotton house dress, she put her hair in pigtailed, and she was standing at the front door barefoot, wanting to welcome everyone, make them feel relaxed and go down on the beach and have a completely relaxing and enjoyable day.

"And as some of them came through the front door, they didn't recognize my mother. Some of them thought that she was the housekeeper, and they were asking where Mrs. McChristian was. After they realized who she was, that she was the hostess — and with her standing there barefoot and so relaxed, it just broke the ice, it made everyone relax and start having a good time. It had such a wonderful effect of putting people at ease and enjoying the comfort and the informality of this corner of paradise on the beach, Mother decided, 'Well, we should call it the Barefoot House!'"

Mr. McChristian has a son and daughter and a few grandchildren who used to visit often when they lived in Florida. Now, though, his son is in Tennessee and his daughter in Los Angeles.

"When they were all close by and other family were here, the house came alive. It's the type of house that when the kids are in the pool or down on the beach fishing or playing games, and ... there's plenty of room in the house for people to do different things simultaneously. It was fabulous. But now, with some grown and moved on and my children in other parts of the country, I'm living here as a bachelor."

"I could not have picked a worse time in our economy or in the real-estate market to try and sell the house. And yet there are other events in life that guide where you go and when you do it, and it's time I move on to some other things that I want to take care of, and I can't as long as I am staying here and looking after the house.

"About a month and a half ago, I thought I had it sold. As we were in the midst of negotiating with the buyer, the terms of it were being worked out, and unfortunately the buyer's wife became ill ... and he had to withdraw from the negotiations. I had already planned on moving, so I told my broker, Ken Meierling: 'Let's move it. What do we have to do to move it quickly?' So the price basically dropped from \$5 million to best offer over \$3.5 million, and I said, 'by Valentine's Day.'"

Mr. Meierling said at press time that several interested parties had made inquiries, but there were no offers. The deadline was the end of the day Feb. 14. ■

For more information, contact Ken Meierling of Engel & Völkers Jupiter Real Estate at 602-4333 or 744-8488, or at ken.meierling@engelvoelkers.com.