

Charting Her Own Course

Up Close...

Pat Olson wouldn't call herself fearless. But her transition to the Gardens and the apparent ease with which she has become part of the community would indicate otherwise. Widowed for 16 years before she moved to the Gardens from Whittier, Pat was accustomed to charting her own course. But she is quick to acknowledge, "I challenged myself coming here, where I knew no one, and starting a new life. I wanted to make my own decisions."

"I felt in my bones that I just couldn't manage a house anymore," and she wanted to have a life centered around people. After touring retirement communities up and down the state, she settled on the Gardens. "I just had a gut feeling," she says, "that this would be an interesting place to live." She noted that the beauty of the campus, the genuinely happy people and their activities attracted her to the Gardens.

Once she'd made the decision, the next challenge was moving from a large home to a studio apartment. "To be honest, I wasn't sure about the space when I first looked at it," she says. Then her realtor, who had become a trusted advisor in this transition process, stated the obvious: Get rid of your stuff.



Resident Pat Olson practices a Yoga pose.

"I had accumulated 41 years' worth of belongings at my former home, and I gave most of it away." She'd decided early on that she didn't want possessions to be the focal point of

her life, so downsizing was fairly painless, and the move into her apartment quick. "My kids insisted on helping. We were finished in under two hours, and I had no idea where anything was because they'd put it all away! My son even brought groceries to stock my cupboards," she laughs. "I'm thinking to myself, 'Doesn't he know I'm retired and I don't cook?' At least I haven't since the day I arrived here!"

The next hurdle was getting to know people. Pat applied the same determination that landed her at the Gardens in cultivating new friendships "A smile and a 'hello' break the ice," she learned, and they masked any signs of the anxiety she initially felt. She quickly built friendships with the neighbors in her building and those she started to see regularly in the residents' walking group, in the yoga class, at vespers, and in the cutting garden, where she loves to spend time.

"I feel on my feet here. I've created new routines and I'm settling in." Her family, who was initially leery of her decision to move, loves to visit. "At first, I felt guilty about selling the family home, which was the place my

kids always enjoyed coming home to. But they all love the Gardens." The grandkids think of it as a resort with all kinds of things to explore on campus and fun things to do in the local community. "We do breakfast at Cable Airport, and The Claremont Colleges campuses are custom-made for scooters!" Her Whittier friends are enthusiastic as well. "Everyone has been over for a visit," she says, some already eyeing a future move to the Gardens.

"In Whittier, I lived in a nest of friends, whom I'd known for years, so this move was a gamble, she admits. Now that she's here? "I'm so glad I made this choice."



Pat enjoying the Gardens' resident cutting garden.

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To celebrate Harrison McIntosh's 100 birthday last fall, more than 200 well wishers feted him at a party at the Gardens. He and his work were also celebrated at the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, which hosted a retrospective of his work, and another birthday bash.

Touching the World

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concern for what sold or by prevailing trends. But the understated elegance of his work inevitably garnered increasing attention, when ceramics was just beginning to gain credibility as fine art.

Recognized as one of the craftsmen whose work defined California mid-century design, Harrison's ceramic pieces became highly prized acquisitions for private collectors and museums. Today, his work is in the collections of more than 40 museums, including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C., The Louvre in Paris, National Museum of Art in Tokyo, Boston Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, Calif.

His artistic renown also led to commercial commissions. He was the first American ceramist hired by Mikasa to design dinnerware, in collaboration with Marguerite, for the international tableware company. The couple spent 10 summers in Japan developing designs in the 1970s. "I never set out to make a mark," Harrison says modestly. "I enjoyed working with clay, and I always created pieces to please myself. The goal was never to become famous."



Shera Sheel Photo

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The New Leaf

February 2015

Touching the World

The New Leaf

Mt. San Antonio Gardens is a nationally accredited Life Care senior community in Claremont and Pomona, California.

The New Leaf is a newsletter for friends and family of residents, board and staff, as well as individuals who have inquired about life at the Gardens.

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Please join us for a look at the future and the routes we might take...

The Road Ahead

Tues., May 12, 2015

11 a.m. through lunch hour at Mt. San Antonio Gardens

Buffet lunch included

Reservations are required; please call (909) 399-1279

Please give names of attendees, your phone number, and mailing address.

Confirmation will be mailed within a week of your response.



The New Leaf

February 2015



President Barack Obama embraces Gardens resident Myrlie Evers-Williams in the Oval Office on June 5, 2013. They were preparing to commemorate the assassination of her late husband, civil rights leader Medgar Evers. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Touching the World

One of the great benefits of being a Gardens resident is getting to know and become friends with individuals with diverse interests and backgrounds. Another benefit is the freedom to pursue your passions. Here we feature three residents who, in the course of pursuing their passions throughout their lives, have touched people around the world in unique ways.

Civil Rights

The importance of community service was instilled in Gardens resident **Myrlie Evers-Williams** at an early age by the two women who raised her: her paternal grandmother and aunt. "Their words and teachings have stayed with me through life," she reflects. Nightly prayers always included asking God "to make me a blessing."

"To this day I say it every day. It just became a part of me," she says. Even now, on occasions when she is bone-weary, facing a rapt audience eager to hear her speak, "I get to the lectern and simply ask God to put the words in my mouth, and 'make me a blessing.'"

In her young years, Myrlie could not have imagined the influential role she would have in the civil rights movement, first at the side of her husband Medgar Evers, fighting for desegregation and voting rights in Mississippi. After Medgar's tragic assassination in 1963, as a single mother to three children, she struck out on her own in politics, corporate America and volunteer organizations,

advocating for equal rights for all people. In 2014, she stepped down from a 30-year role on the board of the NAACP, earning the honorary title of chair emeritus.

The year after her husband's assassination, Myrlie moved to Claremont, Calif., for the welfare of her children and for the college town atmosphere. She enrolled in Pomona College and completed her bachelor's degree while writing her first book (with William Peters), "For Us, the Living."

Her contributions to the country have been recognized many times and in many ways. Perhaps the most visible was in 2013 when she became the first woman and first layperson to deliver the invocation at the swearing-in of an American president when she took the stage at President Obama's second inauguration.

"If someone had told me I'd still be working at 81, I'd have said,

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Myrlie at home at the Gardens.



The Road Ahead
See invitation on back page.

