

Victoria's SECRETS

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I feel like a journeyman, flying from Palm Beach to Orlando, to Seattle, and then back to Palm Beach to oversee our newest publication, **Dan's Papers Palm Beach**.

Each leg of the trip was filled with memories for a lifetime.

As I returned to southern Florida via Alaska Air, my mind was filled with the images of the genius **Dale Chihuly's** paintings and glass sculptures. I met the "master" in his **Boathouse** workrooms thanks to a trip organized by **Rabbi Marc Schneier**.

But let me go back in time.

Last summer, **Mona Sterling** and her husband **David Sterling** announced to the **Hampton Synagogue** congregation that their family had purchased the block across the street from the synagogue on **Sunrise Avenue** and planned to endow a children's campus in memory of her dad **Jack Gora**.

It is named **Jack's House** and will include the **Barnet Family Children's Chapel**, a gift from **Michelle and Stephen Barnet**.

Jack's House will also include a pool, a basketball court, a softball field and a Mikveh, ritual bath prescribed by ancient Jewish law for the rite of purification. A day camp for 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds will be launched this summer.

Let's get back to the chapel.

Rabbi Marc, along with Board President **Carol Levin**, collaborated with the Gora family to design a building with 750-square-feet of glass on the front facade. With the help of Rabbi Marc's mother, art dealer **Donna Schneider**, who knew the great Chihuly, the idea was

An extraordinary experience with a genius



Donna, Marc and Brendan Schneier

East Coast, where they maintain homes in Westhampton, Manhattan and Palm Beach, three areas that I refer to as the "golden triangle," where **Dan's Papers** are distributed.

I had never experienced a Staypineapple hotel, which I found out was named that because, as a kid, Michelle's siblings made fun of her blonde tresses piled up on her head, which they said made her look like a pineapple!

She never forgot that and chose to use it as the name of the company she founded and now runs with her husband.

I've traveled around the world and I've never received such hospitality!



David and Mona Sterling (c.) with Leslie Jackson Chihuly (l.) and Dale.

As I entered my room, awaiting me was unique down and feather bedding and an embroidered pillow with the words, "Sleep With Me," written on it. Greeting me were two stuffed doggies, because the hotel is dog-friendly!

The yellow silk and terry robes were lush around my body, as were the thick and fluffy large towels.

As with any hotel, the biggest factor is service. I am pleased to say that the hotel gets 5 stars for that!

From the 5 a.m. bellhop getting my bags, to the helpfulness of the concierges at the front desk, to the manager who saved my day by getting me a piece of luggage (with their pineapple theme) to relieve my large piece of luggage that I had an overweight charge of \$100 — the staff was truly remarkable!

The Barnets also own hotels in San Francisco, San Diego, Portland, Boston, Chicago and the Chelsea section of Manhattan. Look out for their brand!

As our tour bus pulled up to the Boathouse where Chihuly's masterpieces are created, I was filled with excitement to see the



With Carol Levin at Chihuly Garden and Glass

windows the "master" created for Jack's House and the Barnet Family Children's Chapel.

There before me were large luminous glass flowers adhered to a mockup of the wall where the windows will be installed. I was struck by its beauty and felt tears well up in my eyes as I saw the glass flowers and the Chihuly-designed eternal light which will be part of my community in Westhampton Beach.

We were all sworn to secrecy with our embargoed photos because the formal installation is in late spring and the official dedication on July 3 must have a majestic unveiling!

We had poached salmon lunch with Dale and his passionate and powerful CEO and wife **Leslie Jackson Chihuly** overlooking the waterfront. The 88-foot dining room table is made entirely from a tree trunk that has been reclaimed and restored.



Patti Kenner with the Chihulys.

Hanging over the stunning table were deep, rich-colored and enormous glass Chihuly chandeliers, one after another. The beauty of the scene took my breath away!

The real treat was sitting across the table from Dale. We chatted and talked about his future plans now that he's 80. To my delight, he told me he has many projects in the works!

He's taken up painting and oversees — and still designs — his glass projects worldwide. Some installations, like the one

recently unveiled at the New York Botanical Garden, and sales to private clients purchases still get his approval.

I think of myself as a "colorful" person, so I think Dale's use of color ignites my soul. Meeting him and seeing his work was worth the journey!



Chapel donors Michelle and Stephen Barnet with Dale

Reconnecting with friends **Carol and Jerry Levin**, **Sandy and Stewart Cahn**, **Mona and David Sterling**, **Tovah Feldshuh**, **Patti Kenner**, **Donna Schneider** and **Michelle and Stephen Barnet** offered all the fun of a "camp" reunion! We shared the precious hours with Dale and created memories that will be remembered forever!

We later visited Dale's museum, **Chihuly Garden and Glass**, as well as the **Space Needle**, where I got a sky high view of the city. We also stopped by the **Frank Gehry-designed Museum of Pop Culture!**

But nothing compared to seeing the creative genius Dale Chihuly and his work!



Jenny Shliozberg, Ann Neuman and Sandy Cahn atop the Space Needle.

And so, I was off on a three-day visit with other members of the congregation. I flew from Orlando after a fun-filled week with my children to Seattle, where I stayed at the **Maxwell Hotel**. It's a division of the **Staypineapple Hotels** owned by Michelle and Stephen Barnet, who are also members of the Hamptons Synagogue and endowed the new children's chapel.

The dynamic couple won my respect and admiration — not just for their outstanding hospitality but also for their devotion to the synagogue on the



Tovah Feldshuh with the "master."