



THE FEMALE FACTOR

These Palm Desert Mother-Daughter duos inspire and delight

Text: Linda Mears-Hardie

Sooner or later, most women arrive at that moment—whether it's a look in the mirror or the realization that you've just uttered one of those time-worn homilies you swore you'd never say to your own kids—when they grasp the idea that they are becoming their mother after all.

For some, it's a shock. For others, like Gina Gribow and Lisa Vossler, it's a gift.

The Palm Desert women are happily following in the footsteps of their two high-profile mothers, not because of any mandate, but because it suits their respective natures. Call it genetics if you like, but both mother-daughter pairs say it's not necessarily so.

THE GRIBOWS

This year the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce presented its Citizen of the Year Award to Patti Gribow, a tribute to an individual dedicated to better the way in which we all live and do business.

Gribow is president of the Women Leaders Forum, a group that provides educational workshops and scholarships for high school coeds and will, with the International Alliance of Women, host its global convention in the desert next year. She co-founded the Ophelia Project, an undertaking of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation that supports young women in their quest of self-realization, and she is active with Trojan League of the Desert and the Palm Springs Chapter of Women in Film. She was recognized with the Athena Award last year for the city of Palm Desert.



Patti Gribow with daughter Gina.

WHAT'S A DAUGHTER TO DO?

While Patti was a musical theater major at the Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, Gina, 20, continues as a junior business major, with a minor in gender studies, at the University of Southern California in the fall.

GRIBOW MISCELLANY

- Patti met husband Dale Gribow, a local attorney, on a blind date at a Tholians meeting in Beverly Hills. She credits him with encouraging her to become involved in philanthropies.
- The dancer/singer worked with "The Dean Martin Show" off and on for 13 years, quitting when she was two months pregnant with Gina. She worked with Milton Berle, Jerry Vale, Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra and performed at President Ronald Reagan's second inauguration.
- Of Dean Martin she says: "He was a wonderful man and gave me some of the best advice ever. 'It's so easy to be nice and so hard to be mean.'"
- She is reputed to be an amazing cook. "I'd have to say it's my hobby," Patti says, "Our family dinners are sacred to me."
- On Palm Desert, where the family has lived for 13 years, she says "It has all the attributes of a larger town, but it really is a small town...Kids don't grow up as fast here."
- A new TV show is in the works, to be filmed at CBS before a live studio audience and airs on Time-Warner in the fall. Called "Strictly Speaking," it will be edgy, Gribow says, featuring local unsung heroes and community leaders with their stories and tips for success.

ON THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER CONNECTION

Patti: I never pushed her in any one direction, but I'm thrilled with what she is doing. Gina has her own mind and we've always said, "Just do the best you can do." The thing I admire most about her is that she is an unbelievable friend. She's forgiving when someone hurts her. I'm not so much that way.

Gina: I love watching her perform. My mom is happy, energetic and always positive. She always makes me feel better about life. It means a lot to have someone like that in your life.

While Patti ditched the halls of academia in her junior year to audition for, and land, a spot in Dean Martin's "Goldiggers" television show, Gina is in Washington D.C. because she interviewed for, and landed, an intern post for Senator Dianne Feinstein. She earned the honor by writing an essay on abortion, but considered submitting a paper she had written for her gender course about legalizing prostitution as it applies to the role of women in China and then followed it up with an essay on abortion, which made the cut.

Following in her mother's footsteps? "Yes. It's about women's rights," says Gina, who was named after Dean Martin's daughter.

As to career plans including politics, Gina isn't making any decisions at the moment. "The future is all open."

THE VOSSLERS

This could sound like a rubber-stamp story, but it's not. The paths are different; the results, however, are similar.

Judy Vossler moved here with her daughter Lisa, now 36, from Norman, Oklahoma, in 1980. She was a single mom whose first "real job" was in her father Ernie's golf shop at Quail Creek Country Club in Oklahoma City.

She moved to La Quinta to join the Landmark management staff of La Quinta Hotel after attending Oklahoma State University and completing a retail merchandise/management training program with the JC Penney Company.

Since then, she has made an indelible mark on the desert communities through community service.

After a decade as general manager of the La Quinta Hotel, during which she was involved in the remodel and expansion the property from a 76-room winter-season hotel into a year-round 640-room-world-class destination/convention resort, she worked for KSL Recreation Corporation developing community relations and real estate marketing. She has been a vice-president of Landmark Golf Company since 1999.

It is Vossler's community involvement that makes the big difference, though, and earned her both the Citizen of the Year award from the La Quinta Chamber of Commerce, the Palm Springs Athena Award and the Gamby Service Award from the La Quinta Historical Society.

Vossler actively serves on the boards of directors for Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs Art Museum's Museum Associates Council, Palm Springs International Film Festival, Boys & Girls Club of Coachella Valley, John F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation, Indio Chamber of Commerce and the La Quinta Historical Society.

Because she still has a few minutes left in the month, she is involved with the Desert Town Hall lecture series in Indian Wells, served as the chair of the Hospitality Industry & Business Council for the Palm Springs Desert Resorts Convention & Visitors Authority and recently served on The Desert Sun Editorial Board.



Judy Vossler with daughter Lisa.

WHAT'S A DAUGHTER TO DO?

Lisa graduated from Indio High School and attended UC Irvine, where she earned a degree in urban planning.

She is now head of the Museum Associates Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum, one of eight support councils at the museum with nearly 400 members who raise more than a half-million dollars each year.

"I've been coming to the art museum since I was in elementary school in Palm Desert, and I remember looking forward to weekend trips 'downtown' with my mother and grandmother, who used to take painting classes here.

"I became involved with the museum as a member of the Architecture and Design Council and I came to work here after several years of participating as a volunteer (with my mom, who is also a MAC board member) at MAC events and the Gala."

As to the future, Lisa says that if she were dreaming big, she would like to plan renowned philanthropic events that would benefit the Palm Springs Art Museum as well as the entire desert community.

VOSSLER MISCELLANY

- As a single working mother, Judy says her decade as general manager at La Quinta Hotel turned out to be an advantage, both because she and Lisa had a one-on-one relationship and because they lived next door to Judy's grandparents with her parents close by. "When Lisa was old enough she also went to work with our 'La Quinta family' and was surrounded with wonderful role models."
- During that time Judy met lots of celebrities. Her most memorable was Robert Wagner. "The 'Hart to Hart' pilot was shot at La Quinta and I had always had a crush on him, so I was thrilled when I finally got to meet him. Then, when we needed to do a promotional video I called him and he did it for us. We're still friends to this day."
- On Palm Desert, Judy says, "After Lisa moved into her own life (they lived in La Quinta for 20 years), I moved to Palm Desert to be close to long-time friends and live within walking distance of shops and restaurants. I love living in the mid-valley, and I have confidence that the City of Palm Desert will maintain the older, quainter parts of the community as they make decisions for progress and growth in other areas."
- After living elsewhere for 12 years, Lisa says she's happy to be back. "The unique aspects of the area and opportunities that abound have evolved so much. It's no longer the sleepy little resort community that it was when I was growing up, but it's still a welcoming, beautiful, relaxing and enjoyable place to call home."

ON THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER CONNECTION

- "I encouraged Lisa to always make her own decisions, listened to her thought process, help her think things all the way through, ask the important questions and then support her decision," says Judy. "Maybe the biggest influence I had on her was providing a consistent environment."
- Lisa says her mother has undoubtedly been the biggest influence in her life. "She worked around the clock, every weekend and holiday and still made quality time for me. I marvel at how she managed everything, made it look so effortless and still made time to be a supportive and involved parent."
- About the similarities and differences between them, both say they are alike in many ways because Judy was a young mother and she and Lisa grew up together. But, Judy says, "Lisa is far more adventuresome than I. Because of her own experiences in life, she has developed a comedic side. I tend to be too serious."
- "One of the things we both love in decorating could be called 'girly-eclectic-campy-retro-chic' things...think prisms, plastic pink flamingos and leopard-print décor paired with glittered costume collections, disco balls, vintage jewelry, brightly painted furnishings and crystal chandeliers," says Lisa. "I am not like my mother in a few things—and I shouldn't admit it—but I love junk food, karaoke and trashy reality TV...things she takes no part in."