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Prescott couple builds *Heaven on Earth*

Photos by Larry Kantor



Nestled into lush surroundings in Prescott's Granite Dells, the home of Happy Oasis and her Beloved, John Light, is a treasure, a sanctuary for life of all kinds. They call it Heaven on Earth.

Just 18 months ago, the sanctuary that Happy spent nearly 25 years cultivating and nurturing, met tragedy. In March 2014, when John and Happy were wintering in their RV in Mexico's Baja California del Sur, the people renting their home subleased it to a group of young women, one of whom accidentally burnt the house down with the toss of a cigarette.

"We are non-smokers," Happy said, "but one cigarette changed our lives. We were shocked. Together, we lost about a cup of tears."

Almost a quarter of a century ago, Happy first fell in love with the Granite Dells just after moving to Prescott. She soon bought her home, then became an advocate for protecting the Dells, and was the force behind Prescott's decision to procure the track of neighboring wild land that is now home to the Granite Gardens Trails network.

When their home was destroyed in 2014, Happy and John weren't sure whether to sell the property or rebuild.

"For about a week, we were in constant prayer wondering what to do," Happy said. "Then I heard my inner spirit say, 'You cannot sell this land. You need to stay

"a sanctuary for not only wildlife, but also for cultivating a beautiful wild life inside the soul - to live in ever greater harmony with our highest self, with each other, and with nature."



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here and rebuild to protect this sacred land all around you.”

She listened, and in order to protect the trees and vegetation, Happy and John tore down the remains of their home by hand, then hauled away 39 tons of ashen remains. Happy called the process “extremely labor intensive.”

John gave Happy free reign to design her dream home, and his contractor’s skills—which he hadn’t used in years—quickly resurfaced. The demolition, removal, design, permitting and building of their new home, Heaven on Earth, took nearly 18 months.

This resulted in what Happy and John call “a co-created paradise.” They consider it “a sanctuary for not only wildlife, but also for cultivating a beautiful wild life inside the soul - to live in ever greater harmony with our highest self, with each other, and with nature.”

It was the couple’s architectural goal to bring the outdoors in, to create a joyous ambiance for indoor living rich with plants, including the fruit and nut trees Happy has nurtured for 25 years. Happy wished to encompass splendid views of nature’s grandeur by highlighting flowers, shrubs and herbs amidst the cliffs. To achieve this end, Heaven on Earth features as many windows as the structural engineer would allow.

Each window creates an artistic frame for a captivating natural scene, such as granite boulders surrounding the flagstone-rimmed pool, towering canyon walls lush with vegetation above the lawn and its shady fruit trees (apples, figs, plums and peaches to name a few) and an antique European stone fountain amidst the granite cliffs.

Because Heaven on Earth is tucked away inside a protected canyon aside a pond in the middle of the Granite Dells, its microclimate delivers moister, milder seasons than the rest of Prescott with verdant scenery year-round.

“We prefer to let the landscape grow somewhat wild to create a jungle-like effect,” Happy said. “Guests often say that it looks and feels as if they have

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been magically transported to Maui, Kauai or Thailand."

In addition to the natural landscape, Happy and John have planted gardens attractive to butterflies, birds and wildlife. Porcupines, raccoons, ring-tailed cats, foxes, bobcats, javelina, coyotes and mountain lions have all made appearances at Heaven on Earth.

"Rare" Arizona tree frogs are regular

visitors, too, convening to "sing the evening away in the pond and occasionally even dip into our swimming pool," Happy said with a grin. The pool is extremely low chlorine, so it's safe for critters who need a drink.

A variety of birds are residents or occasional visitors, too, such as Great Horned Owls, Mourning Doves, Quail, Roadrunners, Green Herons, Great



Blue Herons, Kingfishers, Poor Wills, Mallard Ducks, Wood Ducks, Canyon Wrens, Wood Peckers, Hummingbirds, Nuthatches, House Finches, Ravens, Scrub Jays and Red Tail Hawks.

The home's exterior features local pastel flagstone in tones of red, pink, and peach. Happy hand-selected it from a quarry a few miles north of Paulden. "Flagstone seemed to be the

"Guests often say that it looks and feels as if they have been magically transported to Maui, Kauai or Thailand."

- Happy Oasis





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most ecological choice,” said Happy, “not only because it is local, natural, and non-toxic, but also because it blends in perfectly with the environment of the Granite Dells and perhaps most importantly, it will endure for centuries to come.”

The 3400-square-foot home’s subtle lemon and light peach walls create a soft, soothing glow all day long. Swirled natural marble and rustic hardwood floors throughout the home provide a calming backdrop for the cherry cabinets, knotty-pine doors, and granite and marble countertops.

Visitors are greeted by French doors at the base of a tall cathedral wall of picture windows. Visitors then walk into a generous great room with high ceilings and an open floor plan. The kitchen features many windows plus a large, cashew-shaped, marble-top, peninsula dining area that sits to one side, with another dining table by a spacious window that overlooks the pool, seasonal pond, patios and decks. The living area sits opposite to the kitchen and dining spaces.

A master suite and a guest suite (which has its own kitchen) extend from the interior of the great room, and the downstairs features yet another spacious guest suite.

The bed in the master suite faces windows that overlook a vertical column of granite boulders down which waterfalls flow after it rains. The room is laid out so that the flickering flames of the wood-burning stove can be seen from the bed, the desk and the corner bath tub.

The tub, a deep oversized haven of its own, has a story behind it: As an adventure anthropologist and ardent explorer, Happy said she lived in India for more than a year when she visited many ruins of Queens’ Baths. She decided to incorporate one into a particularly viewy corner of the master suite.

Happy carefully selected brass faucets and crystal knobs to place throughout the home because, she said, “Gold

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and crystal elevate the spirit which is why these materials are featured in cathedrals and other holy places.”

“Heaven on Earth also features arched entrances and arched alcoves for statues and flowers,” Happy said. “To heighten a sense of cozy serenity, we built many meditation nooks, private patios and hidden decks throughout the premises.”

The home features an abundance of skylights and sky tubes to enhance the natural light, thereby reducing the need for artificial lighting.

Despite the arduous challenge of losing one home and rebuilding another—and living in an RV with an outhouse for 15 months—John and Happy are more in love than ever.

Though they are creative hermits by nature, they are also community people. They occasionally host educational and inspirational gatherings, to which they invite neighbors and friends.

In addition, Happy now leads international visitors from her home along spectacular hiking and bicycling trails that lead through the surrounding canyon forest to nearby streams, peaks and lakes.

“It’s a wonderful way to earn a living,” she said. “For many years, I’ve been inwardly cultivating a dream of being ‘The Granite Dells Guide.’”

This summer, they enjoyed sharing Heaven on Earth with visitors from around the world including: Bali, Haiti, Iceland, Denmark, Canada, France, Australia, Maui, California, Colorado, the Midwest, New York, Australia, Jamaica and England.

At the same time, the couple prefers to live simply, quietly and close to nature. “This area should have been a national park,” Happy said. “Since we live here, we feel it is our joyous duty to protect the other species with whom we share this special land.”

“We designed our home and gardens as a reminder to us all that living in heaven on earth is possible. It is a conscious choice that requires effort. Our home also serves as an inspiration to us as poets, authors, musicians, artists, naturalists and athletes,” Happy said.

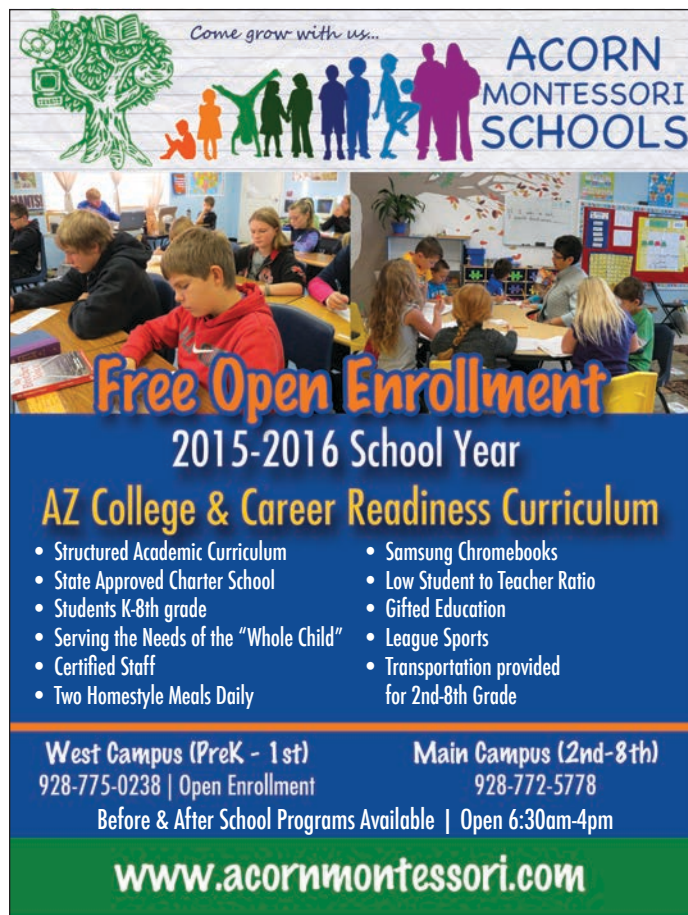
As Happy and John return to their nomadic lifestyle, they wish to share Heaven on Earth with a selective long-term guest or two. They envision hosting guests who treasure beauty and serenity, those who are seeking a creative haven, a spiritual sanctum, a health enhancing residence or a restful retreat.”

Happy said, “It’s a quiet place to dream, to ponder about what is possible.”

Learn more at HappyOasis.com or email Happy at Happy@HappyOasis.com.

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