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A family designs a new life in Vero Beach

LIVING THE DREAM





Dr. Robert Snow on the scenic Windsor golf course



A Different Kind Of Snowbird

NEUROSURGEON DR. ROBERT SNOW
MAKES THE MOST OF HIS TIME IN BOTH
NEW YORK AND VERO BEACH

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Robert Snow enjoys traveling to Vero Beach every week to indulge in a few rounds of golf.

Dr. Robert Snow, an eminent neurosurgeon and resident of Windsor, has a two-pronged life. He practices medicine in New York City during a shortened week and spends long weekends playing golf in Vero Beach.

After 20 years of medical practice at Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, Snow has worked out a viable routine that allows him to live alternately in two places in the winter months. His formula is simple: His weeks are divided neatly into three and a half days in New York City and three and a half in Vero Beach. This way, he gets to indulge equally in his two passions: medicine and golf.

When questioned about an early medical mentor, Snow says, “In junior high, I looked up to an uncle who had a Ph.D. in academic psychology from Stanford University. Early on, I set my sights on that profession.”

With that in mind, after undergraduate studies, Snow enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago that combined geriatrics and psychology. Along the way, he taught academic psychology to students in a classroom and ministered to his aging patients in the hospital. He soon realized that he preferred dealing with patients in the hospital setting. After obtaining his Ph.D., he decided to enroll in medical school at

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– ROBERT SNOW

Stanford. A dividend for Snow while at the University of Chicago was meeting his future wife, Margaret, who was also getting a Ph.D. in psychology.

After graduating from Stanford University Medical School, he interned at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City in neurosurgery. He chose surgery as a discipline because he was attracted to the active physical nature of it. The internship was followed by six years of residency at Cornell University. Within a few years, Snow emerged as an associate professor charged with training student residents.

Initially, he practiced neurosurgery in three disciplines: brain, pediatrics and spine. Eventually he opted for spine as his specialty, with surgical consultation as an important component of his work. In the consultation phase, he encountered crucial decision making, such as the pressing need to decide if avenues other than surgery could help a patient. In lieu of surgery, a doctor might prescribe pain management with physical therapy, acupuncture, or epidural treatment.

Snow says, "In my opinion, a major part of being a good spine surgeon is knowing how to select patients for surgery. Who is an appropriate surgical candidate? Who can benefit from surgery and who cannot? This is equally as important as having superb surgical skills. I teach this important concept to the residents at Cornell. I only operate on about 10 percent of the patients who come to see me."

Snow's New York medical existence is highly programmed and disciplined. His three-day schedule goes like this: On Mondays, he sees patients all day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., usually without a lunch break. On Tuesdays, he operates on two to four patients in a specific operating room that is reserved for him every week. On Wednesdays, he sees patients all day, either in the office or recuperating in the hospital. The majority of his patients are ambulatory

about two hours after surgery, so very few need to stay overnight in the hospital. Typically, he sees about 15 patients a day, approximately half of whom are in for a consultation to see if an operation is appropriate for their condition.

During this brief mini-week in New York, Snow and his wife, Margaret, usually dine out at a neighborhood restaurant with friends or get takeout from a local spot. Fortunately, there are many nearby options for them to dine well and stress-free.

Snow is board certified in neurosurgical surgery. According to the medical dictionary, "Board certification demonstrates a physician's exceptional expertise in a particular specialty and/or subspecialty of medical practice." Certification by an American Board of Medical Specialties member board involves a rigorous process of testing and peer evaluation that is designed and administered by specialists in the particular area of medicine.

Snow's passion for golf started in his early 40s, after a medical colleague urged him to play the game and ushered him into the prestigious Deepdale Golf Club in Manhasset, New York. An avid tennis player, Snow already possessed keen hand-eye coordination that was an aid in golf as well. His work as a neurosurgeon probably didn't hurt in that department, either. He took a series of lessons from the highly respected professional Darrell Kestner and discovered he had a knack for the game. Soon, he was playing regularly and loving every moment.

Some 13 years ago, on a bleak day in January, the Snows decided to find a winter haven for golf, beach time and swimming. Like many before them, they visited dozens of golf clubs and communities throughout Florida and a few in Arizona. When Snow asked his respected Deepdale golf pro for

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The front gate of the Snow's home overlooking Windsor's award-winning golf course

“A major part of being a good spine surgeon is knowing how to select patients for surgery.”

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The Snows have lived in Windsor for 10 years. They enjoy the Florida lifestyle, but more than anything, the friendships they have made.

his opinion, Kestner was adamant that Windsor offered the best golf course for the Snows. They were sold.

Subsequently, the Snows visited friends in Vero Beach, who arranged a tour and golf at Windsor for them. Snow says, “It was a weekend of wretched weather, of a relentless cold, driving rain. We played golf wearing ski caps. But we both liked the golf course and Windsor’s special architecture. We returned the next weekend to buy a small cottage.”

The Snows have since built a larger, charming house overlooking Windsor’s challenging 13th hole. They’ve made many friends and can be seen at cocktail parties, lectures and benefits at the club’s various venues.

Thursday is the day the Snows travel back to Florida on an early morning flight. Upon their arrival in Vero Beach, they head for a golf course, either at Windsor or RedStick. The rest of the weekend, Snow plays with his male buddies, often in tournaments.

He says, “RedStick has been a wonderful addition to our lives. We have met fabulous couples who live outside Windsor, and I have an ever-growing group of male golfers.”

A unique feature at Windsor is that residents have their own golf carts and can set out onto the course in the early

morning or late afternoons on the spur of the moment. There are no tee times.

Snow says, “Occasionally, if I need to get back to New York in the afternoon on a Sunday, I’ll play an early round at Windsor and be finished and on my way to the airport by 10:30 am. Having my own golf cart in my garage facilitates this.”

Asked about the couple’s dining habits when in Vero Beach, he says, “We tend to stay on campus. Time is so precious and we’re very happy eating with friends at either Windsor’s main clubhouse or the iconic beach club. We’ve made many close friends here. We’ve had some wonderful golf trips with several couples. It’s been a great transition, as we knew no one when we came.”

In assessing his dynamic duo of medicine and golf, Snow begins, “My motivation in the practice of neurosurgery is to help my patients regain their quality of life.”

As for golf, when asked why he is such a fanatic, he says, “It’s too difficult to say why I enjoy golf so much. It’s addictive and it’s always a challenge. And it’s a fun way to spend time with friends out in beautiful nature, while trying not to take my score seriously. We all are definitely not playing the same game as the people we watch on television.” ❁

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