FROM THE EDITOR



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IN SPEAKING WITH financial journalist and CNBC Markets Editor Patti Domm about her story in this issue on the housing crunch in Cape May, she mused "If you can think of anyone personally affected by this that I can talk to, let me know." My knee-jerk response was "Me."

As I write this, I don't know where I'll be living six months from now. If you're a regular reader of this column, you know I moved here from Pennsylvania in 2002, when my husband and I bought a single-family home in North Cape May for $150,000. When the marriage ended, I found a rental in North Cape May, courtesy of a former colleague who leased it to me at a discounted rate. Do I consider her a guardian angel? Yes. Have I embarrassed her over the years by crying when I run into her? Also, yes. But I digress.

After one year there, we found The World's Best Apartment in the city of Cape May and have been happily ensconced here for over 10 years. When I first looked at it, the landlords, who lived there, told me that they were moving "up the road" as we say around here, so their children could attend Upper Township schools. The plan was to move back in after their kids were out of school. It was a true win-win, and a great place for me to raise my children at an extremely reasonable rent.

Well, our time is nearly up. As of now, they're looking at October-ish as a vacate time frame for my family. And, as I've become painfully aware since the pandemic, the options for year-round residents here are extremely limited. Buying in Cape May proper has never been feasible for me, but that has spread, as you'll see from Patti's story, throughout the county, and is a nationwide phenomenon in resort areas. As purchase prices have skyrocketed, year-round rentals are evaporating in favor of vacation rentals. Even the few year-round rentals I've come across in recent months have been out of reach. I was recently forwarded a link to a one-bedroom, one-bathroom Villas rental for $2,000 a month, more than I pay now for my 3-bedroom, 2.5 half bathroom place. (Yes, I realize that's a true anomaly and I've been very lucky.) The kicker: no pets, which would displease Steve, the cat who runs our household, to a dangerous degree.

I'm exploring option after option, but the reality is that moving back to Pennsylvania may likely come out on top. Cape May has a massive piece of my heart, and I have made lifelong friends here; two of my three siblings also followed my lead and live here now, too. But the reality is that I can pay a mortgage just a couple of hours up the parkway in Pennsylvania for around what I'm paying now in rent, and that's a tough reality to ignore. Fortunately, my career is one that naturally lends itself to remote work, and I'm lucky to report that the number of people in my life who would happily host a visiting me—even on a weekly basis—are many.

Despite challenges, I lead a charmed life in many ways, and that includes living for 23+ years in Cape May. Whether that streak continues or the path diverges remains to be seen. I will keep you posted!

Also in this issue, we have a lovely photo essay depicting the charm of the county's remaining classic beach cottages by Anne and Jim Walsh; a profile of inspired-by-the-sea local painter David Macomber by Kathleen Hayes; and a discussion of the stories of African Americans in Cape May which led to an update in the city's historic designation by Pip Campbell.

Welcome to summer in Cape May, and we thank you for reading *Cape May Magazine.*

