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**MESA**  
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MEET PHILIP  
& MARGARET

*Conran*

*"God, Family, Country"*





## MEET PHILIP &amp; MARGARET

*Conran*

BY CAMMIE MILLER

PHOTOS BY MINDY RAINEY PHOTOGRAPHY

When Philip and Margaret Conran decided to retire, they initially chose Niceville, Florida until the decision was made to move closer to family. Because their four children lived in different areas of the country, the choices were narrowed to Boston, South Florida, Oakland, or Santa Barbara. Phil shares, "The answer was simple: Santa Barbara."

Philip Conran is a hidden gem; he wears many hats as a husband, father, grandfather, Colonel, war hero, and president of the Vieja Garden's Home Owners Association. Phil graduated from Fordham University and New Hampshire College with a MBA. He married Margaret, a College of New Rochelle alumna, in 1958. From there, Phil entered the military as an Air Force Second Lieutenant. It was a dream of his since the age of six to reach the sky, and this dream became a reality 15 years later when he earned his wings.

A War hero, Phil earned the coveted Air Force Cross, the second highest honor a military member can receive. His decorated military career includes the following high honors: Air Force Cross, Legion of Merit (2), Distinguished Flying Cross (5), Airman's Medal, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal (4), Air Medal (8), Air Force Commendation Medal (3), and he retired with the rank of Colonel. He was a "command pilot with over 6,500 hours in single and multi-engine fixed wing aircraft and helicopters." He also served in the CT Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves prior to coming on active duty with the Air Force from 1958-1988.

Phil was nominated for the Medal of Honor, but was awarded the Air Force Cross principally because the action took place on a secret mission in Laos. That particular mission in 1969 took place after he was shot down while attempting to rescue four downed airmen. Upon exiting his helicopter, he led the ground operation for more than six hours by organizing their ground defense and calling in fighter aircraft to assist in silencing detected enemy forces. At sunset, non-lethal debilitating gas was used to allow for helicopters to rescue a total of eight American and 46 indigenous troops. During the

pick up, Phil noticed a fellow wounded crewman struggling to gain entrance through the helicopter door that was more than six feet off the ground. He immediately got down on his hands and knees to allow the man to use his back for a stepping stone even though Phil was also wounded by enemy fire. Congressional action is still being pursued by Congressman Salud Carbajal to have him properly honored with the Medal of Honor. He joined the Legion of Valor in 1970. Phil was recognized in 1971 as the Outstanding Young Man of America and earned the Silver Knight of Management Award in 1986. Phil is also on the Board of Pierre Claeysens Veterans Foundation and the American Historical Society.

Phillip and Margaret moved to Vieja Gardens, a Santa Barbara Jewel, in 2000.

Phil has managed the 108-unit homeowner's association for the past 16 years. He has made a significant difference in the community by his constant attention to the upkeep and happiness of the residents. You can see Phil walking the neighborhood everyday, checking up on the details of the lush landscaping and structure maintenance. If you have a



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concern about anything in the neighborhood, Phil solves it with ease. Everyone knows you can depend on Phil to take care of things. Phil is in constant contact with many homeowners and renters. Phil says, without exception, he "has received cooperative assistance and friendly conversation. In Vieja Gardens, we have both two great families and neighbors, so we are blessed." He and Margaret are active members in St. Raphael's Catholic Church Parish. Phil shared how he was an avid tennis player until last year when his "11 year old hip said no more." He continues to enjoy walks with Margaret daily. Phil and Margaret really enjoy working on puzzles together, their rule is if you pass the puzzle table you must add a piece.

Phil is a devoted family man. He and Margaret share four wonderful children, but sadly lost their son Shane to brain cancer a few years ago. Their daughter-in-law Donna, a UCSB graduate, and daughter Michelle lives in Vieja Gardens. Son Patrick Conran is an attorney living in Boston with his wife Suzanne. Patrick and Suzanne have three children, Cassie, Richard, and Liam. After graduating from Yale, Patrick played briefly for the New England Patriots in 1982. Phil and Margaret's daughter, Kelly Berlo, attended Bryant University on their first women's basketball scholarship. She has three children Matthew, Stephen, and Kristen. Kelly relocated to Vieja Gardens from Florida after the loss of her husband Paul. Son Michael graduated from Amherst College and lives in Oakland with his wife Mary Anne, and daughter Taylor.

Philip Conran is the kind of neighbor and friend you dream of having. He has devoted his life to his country, family, friends, and now his neighborhood community. He goes above and beyond for his community and is a quality person.

During his career he has lived, "throughout the United States and the world - Bermuda, Hawaii, London, UK, and Southeast Asia - to name a few places." And he concludes, "Margaret and I feel Santa Barbara comes out as number one."



  
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