

COBB LIFE

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**Digging into
Cobb's best**

BBQ

Bocce in Marietta

DK GALLERY'S DONNA KRUEGER

Dismantling DiMaggio

ANTIQUE GUN RESTORATION

Cobb Playground guide

CONTENTS

Volume 6, Number 5



features

- 14 PERKS FOR POP** Here's a guide to what dad really wants on Father's Day
- 18 CANVASSING CLASS** Up close with dk Gallery owner Donna Krueger
- 22 HE JOLTED JOE** Looking back on the Marietta resident who halted DiMaggio's streak
- 34 FROM KSU TO CANOPY** North Georgia's newest attraction springs from Kennesaw inspiration
- 38 PARKS GUIDE** A rating of Cobb parks for kids by a Smyrna mom
- 44 HAVING A BALL** Marietta couple and their passion for bocce ball
- 48 TRAVIS TRITT** The country star plays the MHBA in June
- 68 BULLETS AND THE BLUE SKY** Acworth artisan restores antique weapons
- 78 PLANTING AND POTENTIAL** Sope Creek special needs class partners with parks

departments

- 28 WINE** Our expert matchmaker gives you great pairings
- 50 SPICE** Casing Cobb for great BBQ
- 74 BLOOM** The daylily duo and their wonderful creations

in every issue

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 8 FROM THE DIRECTOR | 84 HIGHLIGHTS |
| 10 NEWS AND NOTEWORTHY | 88 SCENE |
| 82 FROM THE WEB | |

ON THE COVER: Ribs from Dave Poe's BBQ.

74



28



44



68



TENNIS?

GOLF?

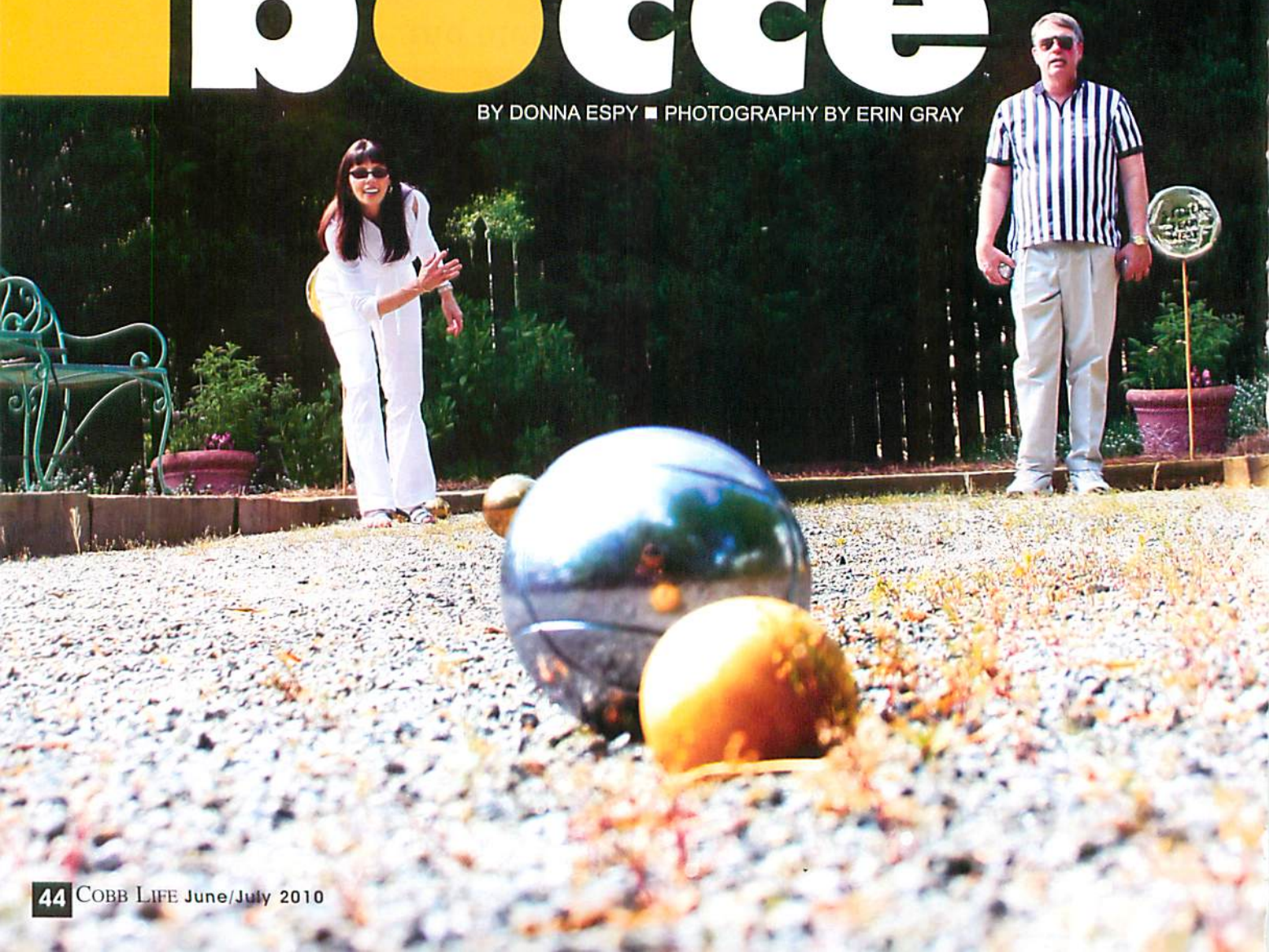
BOWLING?

NOPE.

MARIETTA COUPLE SAYS

BRING ON THE
bocce

BY DONNA ESPY ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIN GRAY



TRIAL BY BOCCE NO APPEALS	
PLAINTIFFS GREEN SILVER	DEFENDANTS RED GOLD
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JUDGE MATT FLOURNOY PRESIDING

Bocce, anyone?

No, not tennis. No, not golf. It's bocce, (pronounced bah-che), a sport that is thousands of years old – and still played in the backyard of one prominent Marietta attorney.

Matt Flournoy and his wife, Joanne, built a lighted bocce court 25 years ago in the backyard of their Marietta home. They have enjoyed entertaining a wide variety of groups and educating them on "the game."

"We thought it would be fun to have a bocce court in the backyard – not a swimming pool," says Flournoy, an attorney for 25 years with Flournoy Law Firm. "We found bocce to be a good group game and great icebreaker for parties."

Flournoy said he first saw the game played in Italy and France while he was a communications officer on the USS John Rodgers, a Naval destroyer in the Mediterranean. "I watched the natives play and they were having lots of fun," says Flournoy.

He left the Navy in 1981 and entered law school at the University of Georgia. The couple married in 1982 and Flournoy passed on his love of bocce to his new bride. They have traveled to Florence, Italy, Southern France, California and New York to watch bocce in action.



Above left, Joanne Flournoy adds a point for herself onto the scoreboard. Above, Matt Flournoy keeps his eyes on the ball while tossing it down the court.



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Their beautiful backyard gardens have a bocce court front and center.

It measures 60 feet long and 12 feet wide and is made of granite dust. Their gardener of more than ten years, Joe Ivey, works his magic each spring to transform their yard into a beautiful garden setting, says Flournoy.

"I have a deal with Joe that, if he won't practice law, I won't garden," Flournoy says with a grin.

Joanne, a legal assistant at the Flournoy Law Firm for 23 years, says she likes the way the game is played in two teams. "The game teams people up and we usually break couples up and put them on separate teams," she says. "By the end of the game, they are no longer strangers and they feel like they know each other because they played a common game."

A variety of groups have enjoyed the Flournoy's hospitality, including members of the Georgia Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association, First Baptist Church of Marietta Sunday School classes, and the Marietta Kiwanis Club (they gave member Matt a new set of bocce balls for his 50th birthday).



Joanne Flournoy throws her ball down court while trying to take the lead from her husband.

And what about all those balls? The large balls weigh about two pounds each and are thrown gently (and skillfully) on the court to try and hit the "palino" or small, lightweight ball. The closer, the better. And the Flournoy "Rules of Bocce" are, like the law, very strict:

Wear all white when playing (a nod to the U.S. Navy white uniform that Matt wore, but Flournoy says players also photograph better at night in white);

No heels allowed. Players can wear flats only, because heels dig into the granite dust court surface.

A list of rules and a detailed description of bocce can be found on the Flournoy Law Firm Web site at www.fmslaw.net under "Interesting Info" – including instructional and past party videos.

Although the Flournoy's have enjoyed the game as a couple, they also enjoy introducing it to others and the great fellowship that follows. "It has been a blessing to us," says Flournoy of this international game that looks a little like American bowling.

And what does "bocce" mean? "It means 'kiss' in Italian, because you want the large ball to 'kiss' the palino," says Flournoy. Now that's amore. ■

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