

Digging in the desert tops sitting on the couch

BY PATRICIA KASTEN | THE COMPASS

GREEN BAY — Which would you prefer to do in retirement?

Sit on the couch and watch soaps? Or clean toilets, replace flooring, paint windows and water mango trees? All in 100-degree heat.

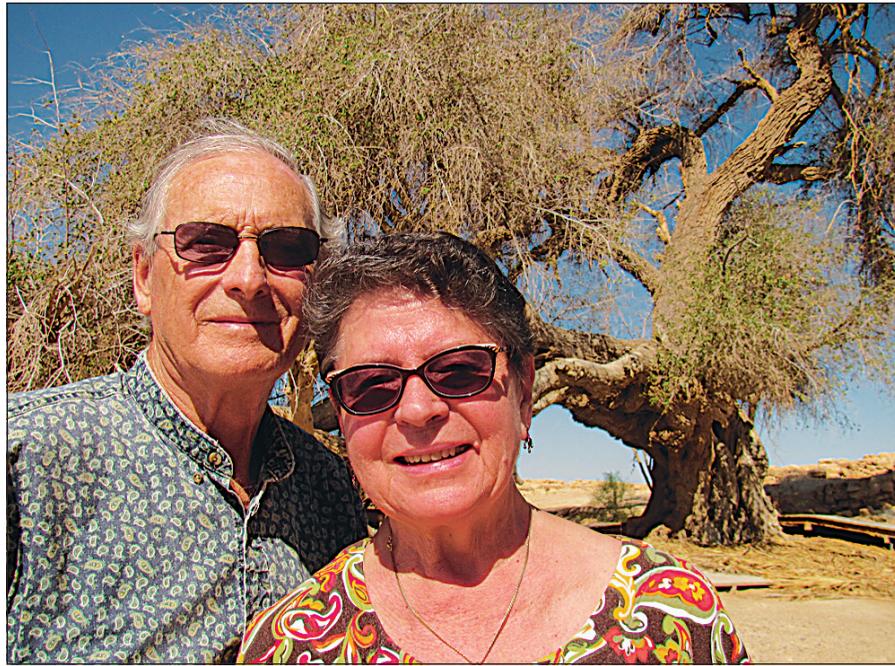
If you're Pat DeGroot and her husband, Jim Crumley, you aren't sitting home on a couch.

The couple, who were married this past December, belongs to Prince of Peace Parish in Green Bay. For the next two months, they will be in Israel, volunteering at Biblical Tamar Park, 30 miles south of the Dead Sea.

The ancient archaeological site dates to the time of King Solomon in the 10th century B.C. Solomon built a fortress there to control the trade routes coming from the south. Since the 1970s, Blossoming Rose (a non-profit organization based in Michigan), has worked with the Israeli Antiquities Authority to conserve and develop this active archaeological site into a national park. Currently, it is used for excavation and teaching — they have identified seven different periods of occupation, from Solomon to a 20th century Israeli bomb shelter — as well as tourism. Volunteers are welcome.

Pat and Jim found out about Tamar during separate trips to Israel: Jim in 2008 and Pat in 2007. Since then, both have volunteered at the site: Pat for four summers and Jim, a total of “eight to 10” times. They are required to work at least six hours each day and receive Saturdays and Sundays off.

Pat serves as Tamar supervisor. She explained her role as office work and contacts, “mainly so that, if anybody in the Israeli government wants a contact.” While she handles financial matters and guides tourists and visi-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jim Crumley and Pat DeGroot of Green Bay stand in front of an ancient jujube tree in Tamar, Israel. The couple volunteer each year at the archaeological site and biblical park, located 30 miles south of the Dead Sea. They met there and married this past year.

tors, there is also upkeep — such as painting buildings — and irrigation.

The park's 55 acres include a couple hundred trees, planted for beautification — date palms, olives, mangos — as well as cactus and bougainvillea. Because it's in the desert, every plant is connected to irrigation lines, with automatic drippers set to timed watering systems.

Pat uses a small 4x4 vehicle to travel around each day checking the drippers. She also pulls the weeds that spring up around the drippers and repairs any small problems.

“If there is a big leak, I fix it or call Jim,” she added.

Jim serves as handyman. “I do

building maintenance and repairs,” he said, admitting that he's done everything from floor and roof replacement to remodeling the donated caravans that serve as guest facilities.

“I just help to keep the place operating for people to see,” he said.

Not bad for retirees: Jim is 77 and Pat is 78.

Jim said he “retired specifically to volunteer fulltime. When I turned 71, I determined that God had blessed me enough in my lifetime, that I should donate the rest of my life to him.”

At that time, this former airline employee was living in Austin, Texas. A speaker came to his church to tell about her trip to Israel. He was so

intrigued that he decided to travel to Israel himself.

“I had had free flights available from working for the airline for years and it never struck me to visit to Israel,” Jim said.

He was so intrigued that he hired the speaker to be his guide, “so I would have more time than just a tour itself. So my first trip was 21 days and it was life-changing for me.”

Pat had been with the School Sisters of Notre Dame until 1978, and her entire career had included serving as a teacher and principal, pastoral associate, pastoral leader and a spiritual advisor. In 2006, she retired from her position as pastoral leader (then called parish director) at St. Anthony Parish, Oconto Falls, and St. Patrick's, Stiles. She and her first husband, Dale Spiegelhoff, were married for 30 years; he died in 2012.

After retirement, Pat continued working and traveled. Her first visit to Tamar had been in 2007. Several years later, while doing office work at St. Norbert College one Sunday, she suddenly saw an ad from Blossoming Rose asking for volunteers.

“I went to church and the first reading was God telling Abraham to “Go forth, where I will tell you, to a new land. And it hit home.”

Her first year working at Tamar was in 2014 and she spent three months, along with her sister, Mary Verhaag. Jim had first volunteered at Tamar a few years earlier and often served twice a year at the park.

Pat and Jim went forth separately — like Abraham — into an unknown land, into the desert. And it brought them together. In 2015, Pat was supposed to volunteer at Tamar with

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A man enjoys a glass of chilled water from a martini glass. Summer dehydration is a risk for anyone, but especially for seniors. Water is the best preventative.

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Getting your proper summer hydration

BY DEB GUENTERBERG, RDN | SPECIAL TO THE COMPASS

GREEN BAY — As the temperatures rise, so does the need to stay fully hydrated. This is especially important for seniors, who may be vulnerable to dehydration.

An easy way to check if you are fully hydrated is the “skin-pinch test.” Pinch the skin on the top of your hand and see how quickly it returns to its natural state. If it stays in “pinched” and doesn't seem elastic, it can be a sign you are not fully hydrated.

A second way to check is the color of your urine. Dark, yellow urine is an indication that you are not drinking enough fluids. (Some supplements cause discoloration of urine, too). Your goal is to drink enough fluids so your urine is pale yellow or clear. Be patient with yourself as you increase your fluids, as you may have to make extra trips to the bathroom.

How much water do you need on a daily basis?

You are probably most familiar with the recommendation to drink eight, “eight-ounce glasses of water each day.” However, since weight, age and activity levels vary among individuals, you may be better off drinking enough water to equal half your body weight in ounces. For example, a 180-pound person would aim to drink 90 ounces of water each day. (Be sure to talk to your doctor if you are taking a diuretic or other medicine for fluid status.)

The fluids you choose to drink are just as important as drinking enough.

■ Water is your best choice. If you choose to use a flavoring packet, make sure it is natural with no chemical additives. Herbal teas or decaffeinated black coffee are also good choices.

■ Caffeinated beverages can be counter-productive to hydration.

Zero-calorie beverages are best, so limit your daily juice intake to four ounces of 100 percent juice.

■ Sports drinks and energy drinks are not good choices for basic hydration due to the amount of sugar they contain. Sports drinks are more appropriate for those who work out for longer than one hour in duration, since they do provide needed electrolytes.

■ Alcohol should be enjoyed only in moderation. Remember that one drink equals one bottle of beer, five ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor. If you choose to enjoy an alcoholic beverage, it is recommended that women not have more than one drink a day and men not more than two a day.

Cheers to proper hydration this summer! It is key to staying healthy and feeling energized.

Guenterberg is a registered dietitian nutritionist at Prevea Health in Green Bay.