

It's African wildlife that most appeals to Monterey Bay Aquarium Retail Buyer Barbara Reuther

One might not think that a California-born girl would have such a love of Africa to the degree that Barbara Reuther has. Rather, one would think that as a first generation American, she would have more of a love for Germany, where her father was born, or Canada, where her mother was born and raised.

However, a horseback riding safari in Kenya was a life's dream for Barbara. From childhood, she has had always wanted to go and see the animals of Africa. "Seeing everything from horseback made me feel like part of the environment," she said, "It was an extraordinary time. I learned more about wildlife sitting on top of a horse. I saw

things I couldn't believe, such as a lone bull elephant only yards away and hyenas following the horses like domestic dogs. We would ride for hours and not see anything man-made like buildings or fences. We would ride to a different camp each night, and our guide didn't carry a map, compass or gun." Barbara added the trip was well

worth eating broccoli and rice for a year in order to save the money needed for an adventure of this magnitude.

Since that first trip to Africa in 1996, Barbara has returned three other times. On one trip in 2002, she participated in a shark research project off the coast of South Africa. She would go out on a small boat looking for white sharks, which are the world's largest known predatory fish. She claims it's spectacular to see a 20-foot, 2,000 pound shark breach completely out of the water at sunrise.

Another African trip included a safari to the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

A recent trip to South Africa may become the most memorable trip to



On one visit to South Africa, Barbara enjoyed the views from Table Mountain, which is a flat-topped mountain in southwestern South Africa, overlooking Cape Town and Table Bay.

Africa of all. She took her boyfriend, Brad. It was his first trip - and Barbara claims it won't be his last!

What made the trip special was not only the sights and animals, but Brad asking her to become his wife. Brad has always known of Barbara's passion for Africa and wanted to pop the question somewhere memorable. Brad proposed to Barbara at Cape Point, which is a very scenic location at the extreme southwestern tip of the African continent that overlooks the powerful Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Barbara shared that on the day Brad proposed, he seemed nervous during their trip through the Capelands wine country on their way to Cape Point, but she didn't stumble on to what Brad had planned and was quite surprised.

With her love of Africa, it shouldn't be a surprise that Barbara's favorite book and movie both focus on Africa.

Her favorite book is *West with the Night* by Beryl Markham. Markham was born in England and was taken to East Africa as a



From childhood, Barbara has had always wanted to go and see the animals of Africa. This lazy leopard photo is one of her favorite safari memories.

youngster by her father who transformed a stretch of wilderness into a working farm. After apprenticing as a trainer and breeder of race horses, she became the first woman to earn an aviator's license in Africa. She chronicled her many adventures in her memoir, which was not that popular when it was published in 1942, but gained popularity in the early 1980s.

Out of Africa is Barbara's favorite movie. This 1985 film, which received seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, describes events of European settlers and the native people of Kenya during 1914 - 1931 era. The

movie was adapted from book written by Danish Baroness Karen von Blixen-Finecke, who lived in East Africa during the same period as Beryl Markham.

Her favorite African mammal is the elephant - an interesting choice for a person who works for an aquarium.

It was interesting to learn that Barbara's dream vacation is NOT a return trip to Africa, but a road trip throughout Alaska. When she has saved a few weeks of vacation time, she would like to visit the U.S.'s largest state with its 3.5 million lakes and millions of acres of forests

and wilderness. This dream vacation may not be a stretch for Barbara as she enjoys hiking and camping when she has time.

Another favorite past time is enjoying wine tasting in northern California. As a native of Marin County, she's familiar with the outstanding wines and wineries of Sonoma and the Napa Valley.

Barbara's career

In 2008, Barbara celebrated her 10th anniversary as a retail buyer at the Monterey Bay Aquarium where she is currently responsible for selecting books, jewelry, art, stationery, toys and plush items to sell in the aquarium's gift shops. She laughingly shared that af-



SSA Executive Vice President Tim Brantley and Barbara have worked together for four years.



Barbara has not limited her travel to the African continent. She has also visited Vienna, the largest city in Austria and where art and culture have had a long tradition.

ter ten years, she can no longer give fish related

Barbara said she likes the team effort and camaraderie of the SSA team.

items as gifts to family and friends.

She has worked for SSA for four years. Barbara said she likes the team effort and camaraderie of the SSA team. "There's a spirit of cooperation, and a network of experienced buyers to learn from and share with," she added. Barbara graduated from San Francisco State Uni-

versity with a bachelors of arts degree in design and marketing. "I am proud to say I use everything I studied while in college in my career today," she said.

Barbara shared that her dream job would be working for a wild animal sanctuary or a wildlife rehabilitation facility in Africa. And if she entered politics, she said she would want to focus on how land is sanctioned for national parks.

Barbara's life outside of work

After getting engaged in South Africa, Barbara

spent her time planning for her October 2008 wedding in Hawaii. She considered getting married in Africa, but realized the logistics and expense could prove to be a challenge.

Her husband, Brad, works for a Canadian company that specializes in printing high-end art and coffee table books. He and his company recently received an international award from a South African paper company – and he and Barbara were honored to attend the award presentation in Shanghai, China. Barbara said that a trip to China was not on her radar, but she enjoyed learning about the culture of one of the world's oldest civilizations.

Along with her passion for wildlife, Barbara has a passion for music. “I enjoy all types of music, but am partial to 80s music as it takes me back to a fun, memorable time in my life,” she said. Even though she loves music, Barbara jokingly said she can't sing without embarrassing herself, and it's a talent she wishes she had.

One of her hobbies includes photography. Bar-



Barbara at an overlook along the Garden Route, which is a popular and scenic stretch of the southern coast of South Africa. Various bays along the Garden Route are nurseries to the endangered Southern right whale as well as white sharks.

bara has combined this hobby with her creativity and assembled photo albums for many of her trips over the years. “If I need to cheer myself up and smile, I look through my albums,” she said. “They are some of my most treasured possessions.”

Another hobby involves cooking. Cooking is her current creative outlet. “I try to experiment at least once a week with a new recipe,” Barbara said. She added that Brad also enjoys cooking. “It's a good balance.” This skill comes in handy as they enjoy hosting small dinner par-

ties with close friends and family.

And one would certainly want to be invited to dinner at Barbara's house as she currently lives next to an eight-acre lavender farm called Purple Pastures. Even though it's only 18 miles from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the small house is isolated as it sits at the end of a two-mile dirt road. Mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes share the outdoor space. Brad and Barbara initially lived by the water, but felt it was getting too crowded. They also grew tired of the constant dampness

and fog during the summertime. They found this house to rent next to the lavender in the sunshine, and decided to see if they would enjoy the country

lifestyle. They do.

Barbara describes herself as an independent, hard-working person with an adventurous spirit. Based

on the travel adventures she has experienced over the years as well as her career achievements, it's an accurate description.

Barbara's favorites

Food – anything spicy and ethnic... Mexican, Asian, etc. She particularly likes sushi as she enjoys the color, presentation and healthful benefits of eating fish. And by working at the aquarium, she has learned what fish are the best to responsibly enjoy!

Holiday – Thanksgiving. She said this holiday is based on getting together with family and friends for a traditional meal. It's all about sharing food & stories in a relaxed setting.

Sport – enjoys watching hockey. She enjoys seeing live games in San Jose or Vancouver. In her opinion, nothing beats the intensity of watching hockey in Canada.

TV show – enjoys most of the series seen on HBO or Showtime. In watching TV programming or movies, she enjoys good writing and a surprise ending.

Childhood toy – drawing pencils and markers.

Magazines – all types, including travel, home decor and fashion. She said magazines are a great resource for identifying trends and new products. As a buyer, one needs to stay current or ahead of the curve when it comes to products and trends."