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STYLE EDITION**

Lunch, like Tim Dutton, was straightforward and unembellished, a medley of simple and healthy foods. In deference to my Passover dietary restrictions, my thoughtful hosts, Tim and his wife, Carol Butera-Dutton, steered clear of leavened products. We ate at the dining-room table of their remodeled 1920s bungalow, brightened by colorful accent walls showcasing paintings and sculpture collected during their three years living in Deschepelles, Haiti, where Tim ran the Albert Schweitzer Hospital. The genial conversationalist, who is currently executive director of SCOPE (Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence), likes to convene neighbors and friends he and Carol have embraced during their 13 years in Sarasota, in this casually inviting venue.

Tall and slim, with fashion-forward black glasses, Tim comes from a small, rural town in Ohio, but looks quite hip. He stays fit running 5K races and enjoys riding his sporty motorcycle up in the Panhandle or outside of the state where the roads are curvy and "a lot more interesting." The trouble with Florida, he says with a sheepish smile, "is that the roads are all straight and flat." Tim likes the speed of his Yamaha, but can't feel the wind in his hair since he shaves his head bald.

Tim studied history at **Ohio Wesleyan** and earned a master's in economics at Wright State University in Dayton. He was executive director of the Health Planning and Development Council in Wooster, Ohio, and president of Shelby Memorial Hospital, before, he quips, "the finger of Zeus came down on me in the mid-'80s." He won a prestigious W.K. Kellogg Foundation fellowship -- one of 40 chosen out of 900 applicants. That honor took Tim all over the world, working on issues of equity and diversity, eventually introducing him to Haiti.

"It's one of those places where you either hate it or you love it, and I loved it," he says. "It was visceral. I felt like I could do some good there. You know, in most places in the United States where you want to make a difference, I always felt as though I was two or three steps removed from where the action was and where the tangible changes happen. But in Haiti, I felt like I could be closer to actually seeing where some of those changes happen."

The Duttons brought their two daughters, Ella and Emily, to Haiti while their older sons (two Erics from his and Carol's former marriages) stayed behind. In addition to his hospital duties, Tim served as principal of the girls' primitive two-room schoolhouse, where there was no electricity, only sporadic running water, but an unforgettable education that made them "citizens of the world." In spite of the extreme poverty, gunshots in the night, and the harsh reality of being unable to save all the malnourished children who came for treatment in the hospital, the Duttons were all profoundly moved by the warmth and spirit of the Haitian people. "It changed my life," Tim says. "I'm absolutely convinced that I learned more than I taught. I got more than I gave. And I was the beneficiary in the whole experience as opposed to being any sort of agent of change."

Life during the U.N. embargo from 1991 to 1994 was particularly harsh for the Haitians, and Tim remembers buying black-market diesel fuel for his hospital's generators out of the hold of a wrecked cargo ship, in a scene reminiscent of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." If the spotty electricity should pop on in the middle of the night, everyone jumped out of bed to take advantage of a hot shower.

But it was Haiti where Tim first experienced the profound importance of being connected in a community. "I came to appreciate that the joy that people feel is not necessarily related to their economic situation," he explains. "The emotions among the Haitians were rich with laughter, and having a good time and being connected with each other, even on dirt floors and under thatched roofs." It was a "Tom Sawyer type of experience for my kids," he adds. "If they misbehaved, I'd know about it before they got home. We called it 'telebush.' We would hear everything passed around instantly by word of mouth. That was pretty cool."

Tim was especially moved by the lengths the Haitians went to in order to cast their votes during an election, a responsibility, he says, that they take much more seriously than we do. He was asked to be an observer with the Organization of American States for the presidential election in 1995, and again with an independent delegation during the congressional balloting in 2000. "I saw people walking two hours in the sun in their Sunday clothes to vote," he recalls, stressing that 80 percent of the people in Haiti can't read or write. "But there, the hope was so strong that they could be involved in something that would actually make a difference and that their voices would be heard."

Tim spends a great deal of time reading about democracy and how it can be nurtured and fulfilled in today's world. He hopes he doesn't come off as a Pollyanna when he talks about his great optimism for the future.

"I think we have an opportunity now to rediscover democracy and citizenship," he says. "We're at a time when people's disaffection from the public realm is troubling, but I see so much hope right now." He is inspired by Barack Obama and feels that "all the candidates are speaking to people differently now ... We are rediscovering how citizenship works in this country. I have so much faith in this next generation and the young people who are so committed to seeing things happen. There's a big movement of people who care about things, and it's profound."

At the age of 57, with four adult children and two granddaughters, Tim is very happy in his own skin. "Six or seven years ago, I decided that the 50s are the best age," he enthuses. "I have only recently realized that I know stuff. I only know it because I've been around long enough to experience it. And I've come to really appreciate, for the first time in my life, that because of my experience, I actually have some depth and richness of knowledge that isn't just about what I've read or my innate knowledge, but about my experience. Every decade up until now was preparing me for what I think is next: being in my 50s and 60s and 70s, when there's a greater capacity for people our age to have influence and impact."

Tim seeks to find the strengths already out there in our neighborhoods. "How can we acknowledge, affirm and activate the people who are already doing good work, instead of

pulling away from them?" he asks. "Every family has somebody -- I don't care who it is -- there is somebody in people's lives who has the capacity to be helpful to them, and they have the power to help somebody else. So how do we help to activate more of that that can go on in a neighborhood, a community?"

He has the perfect job as executive director of SCOPE, which functions as Sarasota's neutral think tank; he's an idea starter and catalyst for community change. While pushing no agenda of its own, the organization provides a platform for people of all ages to study issues and develop solutions on topics such as creative aging, the environment, transportation, affordable housing, crime and other key community indicators. It's kind of like your ninth-grade civics class at work, doing the real work of a democracy, with someone completely in tune with America's founding fathers at the helm.

Where we ate: At Tim and Carol Butera-Dutton's Laurel Park home.

What we ate: Tim's grilled chicken breasts, bell peppers, asparagus and fresh pineapple.