

Meet Our Columnists

Vet finds animals' magnetism irresistible

By STEVE DORFMAN
Residences Staff Writer

Growing up in North Carolina in a family of doctors — Dad was an internist, and a brother became an orthopedic surgeon — Mary Fondren was always attracted to the medical field.

But where she differed from her relatives was in her choice of patients: “I’ve always loved animals and wanted to be a veterinarian,” said *Residences’* new “Living With Pets” columnist.

After graduating from the University of North Carolina (“Michael Jordan was staring on our basketball team then”), Fondren enrolled in the North Carolina State veterinary school, where she learned not only about medicine but diplomacy:

“Being a Tar Heel grad in Wolfpack territory required a lot of tact,” she said with a laugh.

Fondren moved to South Florida

in 1987 and eventually opened the ABCDE Animal Clinic, which she sold in 1995. Three years later the Palm Beach Gardens resident opened Fondren Pet Care Center with husband Terry O’Neill (he serves as the clinic’s financial manager).

Limiting her practice to cats and dogs, Fondren said her clinic has been a success.

“We’re very service-oriented, feature state-of-the-art equipment, and have great working relationships with local specialists and surgeons,” said Fondren, whose center has won awards from various veterinary trade publications.

And lest you think that Fondren and O’Neill get their fill of the furry, four-legged ones at work, think again: “We have three pets of our own — two formerly feral cats we rescued at 4 weeks old and a Springer spaniel who treats them as if she were their mother.”

You might say this veterinarian loves her work so much, she takes it home with her.

“Meet Our Columnists,” in which we present a personal look at the writers you read every week, will run periodically throughout the year.



Fondren with two of her pets