

Q & A with the "Desert Flippers," HGTV's New Power Couple

Written by Kyley Warren

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Eric and Lindsey Bennett might be Midwesterners at heart, but they're certainly not strangers to the unique climate and culture of Palm Springs. Thanks to some of their family - who similarly reside in the area - the couple was offered a first-hand introduction and glimpse into the city's versatile real estate market. Inspired by artistic, Mid Century-style homes and vacation rentals galore, the couple decided to relocate their family to the West Coast gem and pursue their passions of buying, renovating and flipping homes in the heart of the desert.

Fast forward to today, and the couple are now the stars of one of HGTV's most beloved shows, "Desert Flippers." The television series showcases the Bennetts' unique design capabilities, as well as their family adventures as they attempt to navigate life as HGTV stars, parents and people of faith. Ahead of their appearance at WestWorld of Scottsdale this weekend for The Maricopa County Home & Garden Show, we had the chance to catch up with the famed couple, who was dubbed the "next Chip and Joanna Gaines" by People.



AFM: For our readership who might not be familiar with your show or your family's story, would you mind sharing a little bit about what exactly you guys do and what your business venture looks like over in Palm Springs?

EB: Well, we've been flipping houses for over a decade and in each episode of "Desert Flippers," you'll really get the chance to just see us shop for a house, buy a house, renovate a house, and then try to sell it for profit.

LB: All along, we're raising three small kids. So, it's really fun, and part of the adventure is obviously following our family. But another huge part of it is really seeing Palm Springs – it's such a unique destination with gorgeous weather, and palm trees and windmills, and of course a lot of sunshine. I think people really enjoy tuning into that, especially if they're not familiar with it. We're from the Midwest, we're from Wisconsin – so, we get that appeal and it's just such a privilege to live in this beautiful climate year-round, and flip houses for a living.

AFM: Wisconsin and Palm Springs are obviously two very different places. What inspired you guys to make that move and pursue this passion out on the West Coast?

LB: So, I have family that lives in Palm Springs. It was 2006, and they were actually crushing it in the real estate business doing the high-end, luxury market. Eric and I were renovating our own homes at the time and then we did our first flip and loved it. So, we thought let's go out and learn more about that business in Palm Springs. It was a climate that we were excited about, but it was a market that was a little bit more volatile in real estate. The depreciation of the market was good even in 2006, and so it was just a market that seemed like a lot more fun to play.

EB: And the greater Phoenix area is similar in that way, too. There's higher-highs and lower-lows. It provides a great opportunity to really make money flipping, but you can also really get burned. So, you've got to be careful on both sides of it.

LB: Additionally, you've got the vacation rental market, as well. So, there's really a lot of opportunity in real estate, and that's what we cared about. So, we got licensed in real estate before we moved out and then we just came out, and learned the business.

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AFM: So, you now have this uber-successful TV show, you're pursuing this sort of passion project, and yet amid it all – as you've said – you're also parents to three children. I have to ask: is there a secret to balancing all of it?

[LAUGHS]

EB: Balancing is probably one of the biggest challenges of all of it.

LB: We're sort of learning as we go, especially as we're also navigating the limits of this business. Eric and I have always had great communication as a couple, so we often get together and try to 'reset,' if you will. But also, we just kind of live in the moment. We are present when we're with our kids and when we're working, we really delve into our work. So, I think it's just about us having focus in the times that we need to and further, there's seasons for everything. There's busy seasons, and right now, we're in a bit of a down-season where we can resent and Eric is involved in coaching sports. So, we can plug into that when we have the opportunity. And then on the flip side of that, our kids are very adaptable. They build with us, they film with us sometimes – we've just got a great community that's very supportive and it all flows together, where it just kind of takes a village.

AFM: Everybody right now is seemingly obsessed with HGTV and in channeling their inner-design geek. And couples like Chip and Joanna Gaines have actually built a brand out of it. For you both, how do you try to set yourselves apart from all of the different designers, showrunners and couples who are also trying to develop a name of their own?

LB: We have kind of a limited, niche market where architecture and art are all the rage. And it's an international destination, so Palm Springs is already well-known for its unique location. So, we have the opportunity to do so many different design styles and every home, of course, has its own personality. But I would say that the design I personally like to do is more Mid-century, with lots of colors. One thing that's really trying to pack a punch and get as much bang for our buck as we can. I think a lot of our followers really appreciate that, and enjoy getting inspiration in seeing how you can invest in re-designing a little part of your home, without having to change the whole thing.

EB: It's kind of like a throwback to "Design on a Dime." Flippers really try to capture the design and desirability of a home, and to bring it to its utmost potential. But to do it on a budget – that can be really tough. That's where Lindsey really shines.

AFM: You've clearly found a specific market and angle that really works for you in regard to buying and renovating in Palm Springs. But do you have any plans to expand your venture or perhaps even take your talents around the country or world?

LB: We always talk about at least taking it across America. We love the idea of vacation homes, because that really is an up-and-coming market. We'd love to go that route – we have a lot of mountains in Palm Springs, so focusing more on mountain real estate or cabins would be really fun. We're trying to diversify all the time and to just really go where the opportunity is at.

EB: Yeah, and also – some of the advice that we try to give to people – is to flip in areas that you know. So, those bigger ones are the desert out here and Madison, Wis. We have family in Boise, Ida., and we've flipped a couple houses there. I come out every few years for the Waste Management Open, so even here, I'm starting to get my feel around for the area of Phoenix, Scottsdale, and some of the other areas of Arizona that are ripe for some flipping. I think we have big aspirations, but we're also grounded in who we are with our family and our faith, so we will of course consider opportunities as they come up. But, we're also just trying to stay the people that we are.