

# Casa Shirley



The old woman who lived in a shoe with her umpteen children (and obnoxiously fecund schmo of a husband, but that's another story) had *nothing* on Shirley Saperstein, who lived in a basket. True, the basket was the size of an entire block of luxury flats and even had its own aqueduct, but there was always that built-in stigma of living in a container made of interwoven rushes and twigs. Plus, Shirley could never completely suppress that nagging fear that whoever or *whatever* had put it there would one day come back for it. The resulting angst once drove her to see the distinguished psychotherapist Dr. Wasabi. But he brusquely diagnosed her as a classic "basket case" and sent her away. (Apparently, the Cosmos wasn't satisfied with Dr. Wasabi's response because, scarcely a month later, he had to answer to a Higher Authority in the form of an aggrieved sea monster. [See the *Lois* parable.]) At 39,550 square feet, the building was a bit too big for just one person, so Shirley occasionally opened up the place for formal dances. The Benö Guttman Band got its start there playing for hundreds of synchronized jitterbuggers one evening in June. One of the attendees was Dr. James Naismith, who later took some of the dancers' hand and arm motions and turned them into a sporting competition that he called "TBICSP," an unwieldy acronym that stood for Throw Ball Into Can, Score Point. Later, in deference to Shirley's event where the idea germinated, he renamed it "Basket Ball," a term that eventually stuck ... much like the veneer of protactinium that stubbornly stuck to the underside of the basket's handle, but that's yet *another* story.