

El Mirador Is A Very Eclectic And Interesting Neighborhood **By Roxann Ploss**

Palm Springs is home to 25 organized neighborhoods through the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement -- and one of the most well known is the El Mirador Neighborhood.



The neighborhood was originally referred to by P.T. Stevens, the builder of the famed El Mirador Hotel and developer of this tract of land as the Bel Desierto Neighborhood. The curious combination of Italian and Spanish did not sit too well with some members of the association so we went through a name change, identifying ourselves by the outstanding topographical landmark of the area: The El Mirador (meaning "watch tower") bell tower.

The Stevens tract was designed to attract middle and upper-middle class working folks from the medical, educational and government sectors of the business community. Abutting estate-sized homes (in our Southern section) made for a very eclectic and interesting neighborhood. It remains that to this day.

El Mirador, one of the two major hotels of the early Palm Springs days, catered to the nouveau riche-Hollywood crowd. With its Olympic-sized pool drawing the likes of Esther Williams and Johnny Weismuller, it also had the town's first 18-hole golf course which swirled out behind the hotel. Where you see newer homes sitting next to considerably older homes on Mel Avenue and El Mirador, it's a good bet that the older one sat right off a hole of the course. The second house northeast of Miraleste on El Mirador, for instance, belonged to vaudevillian and early movie star Eddie Cantor, who was frequently seen walking across the course to the hotel for his evening cocktail.

About the middle of the same side of the street, Truman Capote rented a home where he worked on his last book, the roman a clef which got him into such scandalous trouble with his jet-setting crowd, many of whom refused to speak to him again before he died.

Speaking of El Mirador Hotel, the pink house on the corner of Miraleste and Tachevah was once owned by the silent-movie star (later the star of TV's "My Little Margie") Charlie Farrell, largely responsible for the popularity of Palm Springs with the movie crowd. He and actor Ralph Bellamy, having overstayed their welcome on El Mirador tennis courts, decided to create a place for themselves and their buddies: The Racquet Club. The rest is, as they say "show biz" history.

And on the corner of Miraleste and Mel is a large home on a double lot, once owned by European heartthrob Francis Lederer and his beautiful wife Marion. It is rumored that, in another effort to sober up before his next movie, Errol Flynn would hide out there behind the privacy walls.

On the other side of Miraleste, in a once-gated cul-de-sac The Palms, were the homes of two Warner SISTERS. Who knew that there were anything but brothers in that family?

And now we have celebrity/society bandleader, former saxophonist with Sly and the Family Stone, Pat Rizzo who has lived quietly on Vaquero for a couple of decades.