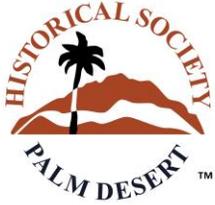


HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT



The Hourglass



Spring 2022

The Mystique of Shadow Mountain

by Linda Holden Clode, Chair, HSPD Architecture and Design Committee

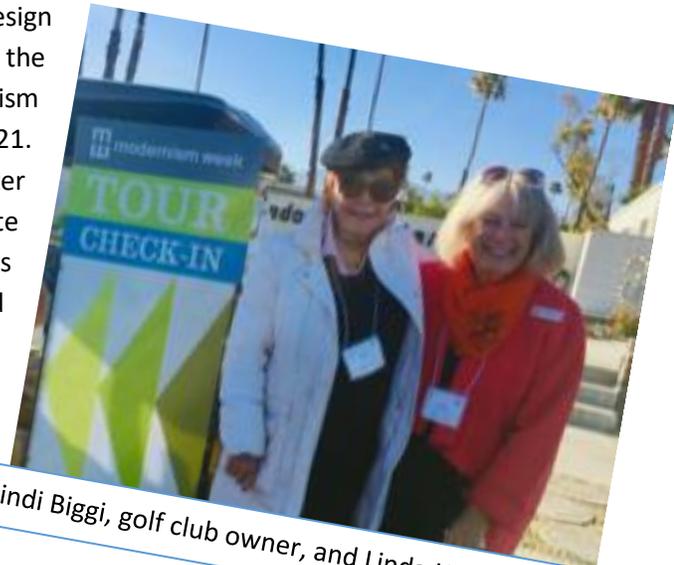
The Historical Society of Palm Desert partnered with Modernism Week for the first time in February, 2022, and the dream of having a South Palm Desert Walking Tour – which we titled the “Mystique of Shadow Mountain” – came true. With a dedicated committee doing the planning and 20 volunteers supporting the effort, three groups of 15 walkers each traveled through the eastern Shadow Mountain neighborhood on the mornings of February 24th and 25th, exploring the architectural treasures there.



The MW 2022 Steering Committee, a subcommittee of the HSPD’s Architecture and Design Committee, began the planning for Modernism Week 2022 in May, 2021.

Read about the plans in the Winter Newsletter. We established our route, determined how many separate tours we could do and selected many significant houses. Covid was raging as we worked through the summer and fall, but we plunged ahead with faith that it would come together. Deep research into each house was the focus, double-checking each fact about the architecture and often, the landscape and interiors. (If we remained

unsure about a fact, we used the word “attributed” and research will continue on these houses.)



Lindi Biggi, golf club owner, and Linda Holden Clode



Vintage three-wheeled golf cart

We also came across wonderful stories about the people who lived in these homes and wanted to share those, as well.

Just when we thought we had finished, we uncovered a Herbert Burns on Juniper from 1949 with his signature stacked rock on the chimney and the side of the house. It was, of course, hiding in plain sight, but new to us, and a very exciting find.

Lisa Vossler Smith, Executive Director of Modernism Week 2022, and her team were unconditionally enthusiastic about our project. We were all rewarded when tickets for our event went up on the Modernism Week website and sold out in four days! The Steering Committee redoubled our efforts, as there was still much to do.

This was advertised as a walking tour but we wanted to enhance it by visiting a few interiors, as well. After trying to contact homeowners by email with no response, I went door-to-door to a few of them and amazingly, four homeowners offered to open their homes for the two-day, 2+ hour tours.

The Tour



Steven Price, Karen Prinzmetal and I, along with our supportive ‘wingmen’ David Toltzmann, Jim Schnepf and Charlie Franks, each led two tours for a total of six groups with staggered start times, winding 2 1/2 miles through the eastern Shadow Mountain neighborhood.

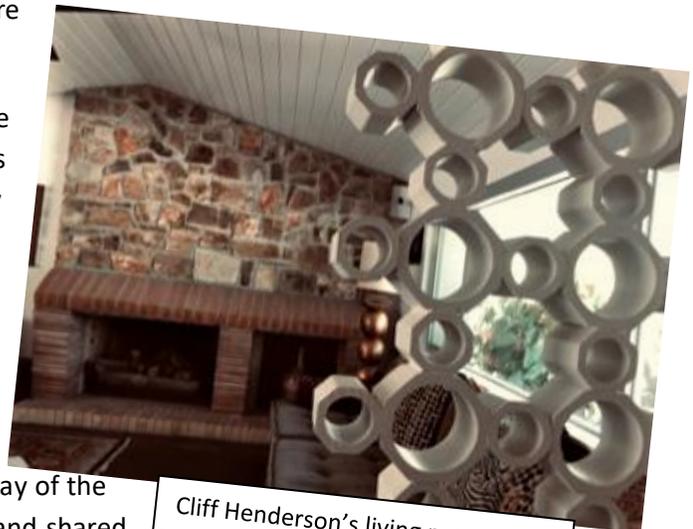
During the tour we discussed 17 architects and designers and several points of interest. Some architects (Walter S. White) did several homes and some did only one (Pereira). **Note:** There are 30 brochures suitable for printing and with pictures of the houses and details about them, on the HSPD website at www.hspd.org.

Click on the walking tour button on the first page and then select the house you would like to read about from the list. Committee member Sue Harvey designed the beautiful brochures and HSPD Archivist Rochelle McCune uploaded the brochures to the website.

The Houses

We were in front of the Joan Crawford House and I was just launching into the story of her renting that 1949 gem during the making of the now classic Film Noir, “The Damned Don’t Cry” when one of our Florida guests exclaimed, “We saw that last night! And it was fabulous.” I turned it over to him, of course, and he told the storyline about Virginia Hill, Bugsy Siegel, money laundering and the mafia in Vegas. We have a link to the entire movie in our brochure.

Speaking of the Mafia.... homeowner Robert of the Bollinger House tells the story that neighbors told him, of two black limousines arriving from Carson City one week a year and staying completely sequestered the entire time. When Robert bought the house, it had a panic button in the master bedroom and locks on both bedroom doors - on the outside! The Jascha Veissi house (Frederich Monhoff, AIA) around the corner has been gutted inside, but the exterior is being restored. Neighbors had told me rumors involving General George Patton during WWII and this house. I was puzzled because this house was built in 1950 and Patton was long gone. On the Friday of the tour, the homeowner unexpectedly came out with his blueprints and shared them and the story of Patton with us. He told us that Patton had lived in a small house on the site and this current house had been built around it. A cellar, or bomb shelter, had been at the core. More research is needed, but new finds are one of the joys of exploration.



Cliff Henderson's living room entry

We stopped in front of the Paul Diggie House designed by architect Ross Patten and built by Duke Wild. Ross Patten has a connection with Frank Sinatra. Sinatra is synonymous with Palm Springs; his Twin Palms house on Alejo is a favorite of Modernists. In fact, one of the final scenes in Joan Crawford’s movie was filmed there. Frank owned several houses but

wanted the perfect getaway, so he called on Ross Patten, who designed a rustic hideaway in Pinyon Crest off Highway 74. Frank called the eight-bedroom, thirteen-bath and nine-fireplace compound Villa Maggio after the character he played in “From Here to Eternity” in his 1953 Best Supporting Oscar winning performance. Frank is quintessentially Palm Springs, but with the assistance of architect Ross Patten, he also loved another desert home - right here in Palm Desert.



We concluded our tour at the Shadow Mountain Resort and enjoyed refreshments by Delish, the resort’s bistro, and viewed an exhibit curated by committee member Cim Castellon, of vintage Shadow Mountain photographs and paraphernalia. Most of these were kindly loaned to us by the Resort. Local and former HSPD President Barbara Keedy Eastes, whose father started Keedy’s, shared her recollections of the early days. Cim also had gift packages for the tour participants,

with items donated by the City of Palm Desert, the Shadow Mountain Resort, the Shadow Mountain Golf Club and the Historical Society of Palm Desert.

Here is the Steering Committee, (L-R seated) Sue Harvey and Karen Prinzmetal and (L-R standing) Cim Castellon and Linda Holden Clode, debriefing at Delish Bistro in front of the Shadow Mountain Resort pool. The bistro and clubhouse overlook the spectacular 130-foot Figure-8 swimming pool designed by Tommy Tomson and famously photographed by Julius Shulman. The photo caption usually reads “Palm Springs.” But now you know where his iconic photo was taken. Well, there is more, of course. But hopefully, this gives you a flavor of the treasures here, and the veil has been pulled back just a little bit on “The Mystique of Shadow Mountain.”



Many Thanks

To all the volunteers, and especially to Lindi Biggi and her son Rocco at the Shadow Mountain Golf Club, and Cindy Calquhoun and Michael MacFarlane at the Shadow Mountain Resort, who were incredibly generous with their time, space, and historical artifacts. The event would have been impossible without their support, many thanks. The HOA of the Fairway Cottages kindly allowed us to set up on their site. The four homeowners who graciously allowed us access to the interiors of their beautiful homes were so incredibly generous. We truly appreciate the efforts of so many in assisting the Historical Society of Palm Desert to present our Walking Tour of Shadow Mountain in partnership with Modernism Week 2022.

In spite of all the hard work, everyone had a great time, volunteers and participants alike. We are so fortunate to live in an area full of such architectural treasures!

HSPD MISSION STATEMENT
TO COLLECT, PRESERVE AND RECORD THE
HISTORY OF OUR CITY AND COMMUNITIES, AND
TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE SOCIETY’S ARCHIVES
AND ARTIFACTS THROUGH EXHIBITS,
PUBLICATIONS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

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 Contact the Society at 760-346-6588 to
 make an appointment - this service is
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*Shadow Mountain Club with a few South Palm Desert streets laid out but not yet paved, and two houses visible in the distance @1946
The Lake is in the foreground, and was used for boating and as a reservoir. The golf course would not be built for several years.*

President's Letter

Spring showed up right on time the other day. Springing ahead on the clock brings welcome sunlight after the workday stops at 5 PM. Time is flying just like it always does. Our Spring Picnic will be here on Sunday, April 10th, before we know it. And our season at the Firehouse ends at the end of May when we close for the summer.

Before that happens, we will have our last Friday Night Lecture on May 20th at the Portola Community Center at our usual time at 6 PM. As April's lecture night falls on Good Friday and Passover, we will be skipping our April lecture. If you missed our last one on March 18th – Steven Keylon spoke about Tommy Tomson – a very interesting topic and very well attended. Anyway – back to May 20th. We are going to try something new. If it works, and I think it will, we will continue it when we start back up in the Fall. We are calling it "Early Families of Palm Desert." May 20th will showcase the Keedy family and the Rover family. Barbara Keedy Eastes will lead us off, speaking about her family, and Hal Rover will follow soon after to talk about the Rover clan.

This will be a night you won't want to miss. Hope to see you there, and also on Sunday, April 10, at the Spring Picnic.

Rob Pitchford

“Know Your Board”

Ed. Note: This is the first in a series of articles to introduce the currently-serving HSPD Board of Directors.

Nerl Porras

I was born on August 23, 1960 at Desert Hospital in Palm Springs and have lived my entire 61 years in Palm Desert. My parents were Patricia and Bill Wilson. My dad was killed in an automobile accident in 1967. My mom met Edmund Porras at Market Basket, they married and he was a great dad, raising me and my two brothers. I attended Washington and Lincoln Elementary Schools, Palm Desert Middle School and graduated from Indio High School in 1978.

I have fond memories of growing up here. We rode our bikes all over town, spent a lot of time at the teen center on Portola, built dirt tracks and underground forts in the desert, played football in the streets and hide and seek in the date groves. It was a great time to be a kid in Palm Desert! In the eighth grade I had a paper route. Palm Desert wasn't nearly as big as it is today, but I think every house on every block subscribed to the paper. I was in Cub Scouts, Webelos, and Boy Scouts. My dad Bill started troop 76 in Palm Desert and my-next door neighbor, Mr. Keeran, was the scout master. During early teens and high school years I worked at several local businesses – as a dishwasher and then cook at Tony's Deli, attendant at Blackies Gas Station in Indio and the Palm Desert Shell.

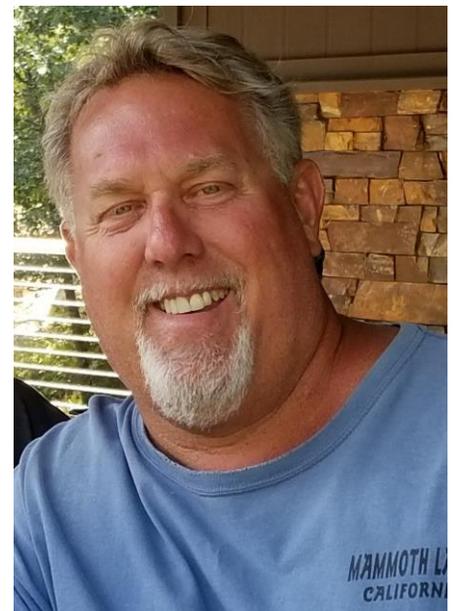
But it wasn't all work and no play! I got my first truck – an El Camino – and my buddies and I created a hot rod group called the “Palm Desert Street Machines,” hanging out at Swenson's Ice Cream and McDonalds and having drag races all over this valley. In 1977 Vista Chino was one long street with no houses, so we painted the street and did a lot of racing there. And then there were the desert parties – anyone here in the 70's and 80's probably went to a few of them.

As a Teamster's member during the 1980s I worked for Allred & Kiser pouring concrete. We poured a lot of concrete and made good money. But my real passion was working with my hands to build things, so I joined the Carpenters Union and worked in construction, building a lot of structures in this valley. To stay in the Carpenters Union and remain employed here in the desert was getting harder and harder. Many union workers were moving out of the area, to larger cities. I chose to stay and did piece-work, building lots of homes at Sunrise, Palm Valley and The Lakes. While working for Scrivens Constructions we built Hope Lutheran Church, the African Village at Living Desert and numerous custom homes.

I struck out on my own and got my contractor's license in 1993 and started my own company. I specialized in doors and was known as “The Door Man,” and hung hundreds of doors here in the valley, maybe even yours!

I bought my first house in Palm Desert Country Club (PDCC) and lived there for three years until I met and married my wife, Lorrie, in 1990. She also lived in PDCC and even though I had a pool in my back yard, she had a golf course in hers, so we decided to sell my house and live in hers. You can always add a pool to your house but not a golf course! After 30 years I still live in the same house and am married to my best friend. I spent 12 years as a PDCC HOA board member and three years as president.

Both my parents passed in 2011, 6 months apart from each other. I credit them with arousing my interest in the history of Palm Desert. First, I started a Facebook group page called “You Know You're from Palm Desert when you....” It's been great



to share and read about all past and present tales of the people and places of Palm Desert. There are about 3,000 members today. In 2016 Robert Pitchford asked if I'd like to join the city's Historical Society and I accepted. Rob and I were friends and former classmates at Indio High School and although I didn't care for studying history in school, I realized I did have a strong interest in the history of where I grew up.

Being a part of the Historical Society has been very rewarding. We've remodeled and upgraded our "home" – the old firehouse on El Paseo – including new floors, paint, landscaping and the restoration and display of old photos. This has been thanks to the City of Palm Desert and our own great crew of volunteers and Board members. We got the firetruck running, and we take it to many of the city's events, including Cruise Night on El Paseo during the season, events at Civic Center Park, classic car shows and the like. It's an attraction feature that everyone seems to enjoy, the community, tourists and especially the little ones getting their pictures taken wearing a fire hat. My hobbies include traveling and lots and lots of fishing!

David Toltzmann

Hi there, my name is David Toltzmann and I am a resident of Palm Desert, having moved here six years ago from San Diego. While living in San Diego I often spent weekends in Palm Springs and Palm Desert. I have always enjoyed the desert, so we purchased a small boutique hotel in Palm Springs, and this became our part-time job. After several years we sold it and purchased a home in Borrego Springs, and for 17 years this was our part-time/weekend home.



For more than 30 years, I owned a floral design studio in downtown San Diego. Upon retirement, we sold our homes in San Diego and Borrego Springs and began looking for a home in the Coachella Valley. After many months, we decided upon and purchased a home in South Palm Desert. I now live in a lovely Charles Du Bois home in the Purple Hills Estates area with my partner of 38 years. Loving our home from the very beginning and then discovering it to be a Du Bois-designed home, I immediately became interested in the history of our house and neighborhood. During Modernism Week 2020 we were fortunate to host the architect's granddaughter and the builder's grandson in a tour of our 1960's Du Bois home.

About three years ago I was appointed to the City of Palm Desert's Cultural Resources Preservation Committee. Feeling the need to know more about the history of Palm Desert, I joined the HSPD. I have been a member for three years and am now a Board member. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture, and am an avid desert gardener, including being a member of the Coachella Valley Plumeria Society. Additionally, I lease a garden plot in the city-sponsored community gardens on San Pablo.

Ed. Note: David single-handedly designed and created many of the exhibits in the West/Prinzmetal Room, the largest display room at the Firehouse Museum, in 2021. His talents are boundless!

The Ballots Are In!

Congratulations to the new Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Palm Desert for the 2022-2026 term. Members of the Board taking office for the new term on July 1 are: Rob Pitchford, Susan Marie Weber, Nerl Porras, Don Graybill, Erika Sharp, David Toltzmann (incumbents), and Joellen Hughes, Rick Holden and Matt Gonda. Note that ½ the Board is up for election every two years. Officers for the 2022-2024 officer term will be elected/re-elected by the Board at the June meeting, per the recent Bylaws change, and will take office July 1. **Board Nominations Committee**

The Historical Society is on YouTube

Many of our Friday Night Lectures and other events are on You Tube for your viewing pleasure. Paste the link <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCECrQkFgpb9eOIVFP0X1SfA> into your browser and sample the offerings. Enjoy!

Save the Date! Spring Picnic is April 10

The Spring Picnic will be held this year on Sunday, April 10, from 11-2 at our usual location, the large pavilion near the stage at Civic Center Park in Palm Desert. Please RSVP by April 6. You can leave a message at the Firehouse, 760-346-6588, or email to hspd.firehouse@gmail.com. We need a head count for the delicious hamburgers and hot dogs! \$10 per person. And mark your calendars now for our famous Midsummer Madness get-together at the Portola Community Center on Friday, July 15, from 5-8 PM. More information about July will follow.

Archivist's Report – Spring 2022 Update

As 2022 begins, the Archives volunteers are working hard to prepare for the upcoming **2023 50th Anniversary** of Palm Desert's incorporation. Volunteers are working on all sorts of projects:

- Sarah is reviewing our Pioneer files and records, and organizing them so we'll soon be able to start writing profiles on the people who helped build Palm Desert.
- Tyler is reviewing the materials in our Archival storage, separating our unique archival materials from our research files, which contain copies from other sources, so we'll soon be able to start telling the stories of our early buildings and institutions.
- Leslie is working to launch our new Oral History Program, recording the stories of long-time residents and visitors. If you or someone you know has tales of life in Palm Desert, send us an email or give us a call.
- Several volunteers are watching the newly digitized 200+ home movies taken by Cliff Henderson, cataloging the people and locations in the films so that we can organize them by subject. We aim to turn them into longer movies that we can show at the Firehouse Museum.

While our volunteers are working hard, we have room for more volunteers - Researchers and Writers are needed to tell Palm Desert stories, Movie buffs are needed to edit our home movies, Oral History Interviewers are needed to interview people with tales to tell about early Palm Desert, Scanners are needed to digitize archive photos and documents, and Organizers are needed to review and organize materials. Send us an email at hspd.firehouse@gmail.com or call 760-346-6588 and leave a message if you or someone you know can help.

Rochelle McCune, HSPD Archivist



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Join or renew quickly using PayPal on our website: visit www.hspd.org and click on "Join!"

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