



Neighborhood Home Tour 2022

Brought to you by the
Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization



modernism week®

Official Modernism Week Event

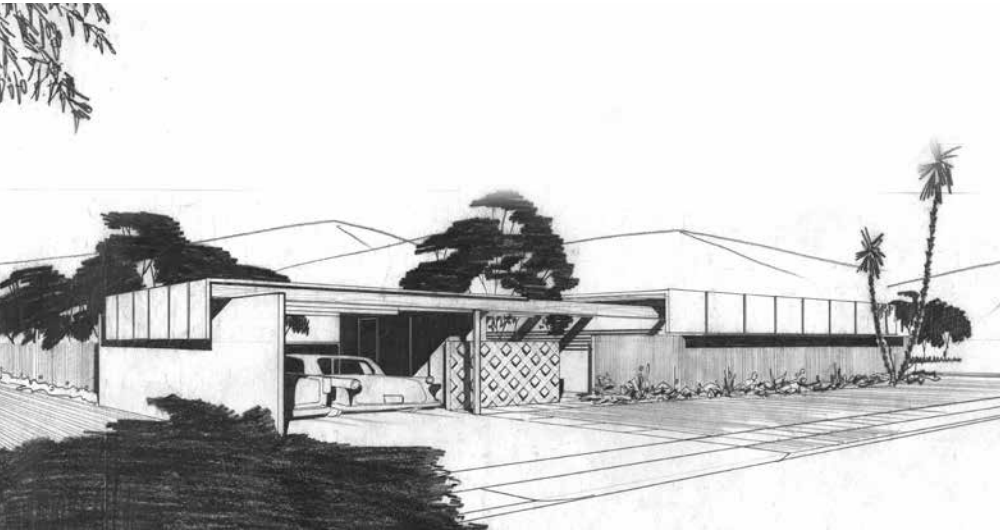


In the Beginning...

In 1956, developers George and Robert Alexander, working with architect William Krisel completed the **Ocotillo Lodge** at what was then the southern edge of Palm Springs. The Lodge welcomed home-seekers considering one of their 90 new and distinctive residences. ‘Distinctive’ because this fledgling district (referred to then as “Smoke Tree Valley Estates”) introduced to the desert such modernist elements as open carports, clerestory windows, exposed concrete block, breezeways, and butterfly roofs. With little fanfare at the time, the area became both the first mid-century modern neighborhood completed by the Alexander Construction Company and the first truly modern housing tract in Palm Springs.



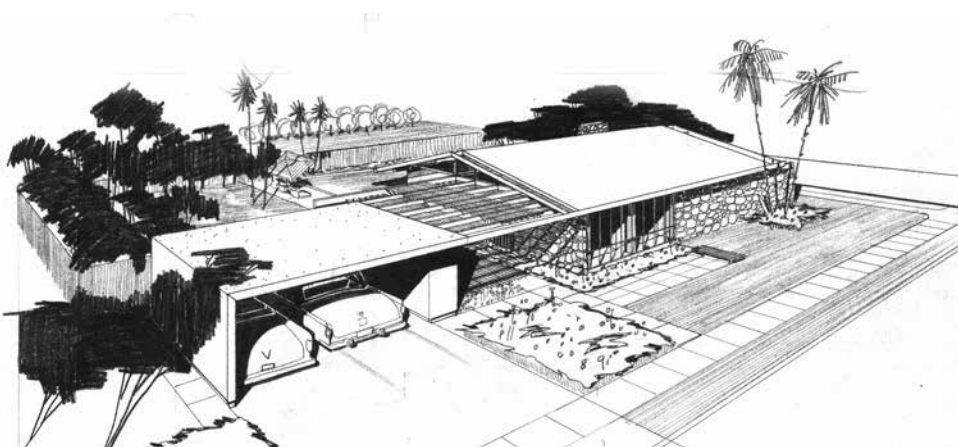
William Krisel's rendering of some of the 90 Twin Palms lots



Rendering of the Sunflap roofline design A3

Only two floor plans were available—one a mirror image of the other—from which prospective Twin Palms homeowners could choose. But a wide variety of available facades, roof-lines, landscaping, color palettes, and home orientations on the property effectively concealed this limitation. The result is that the Alexanders could pass along to buyers the economies of constructing tract housing, and buyers could enjoy a sense of owning a home that was aesthetically unique—at least on the outside.

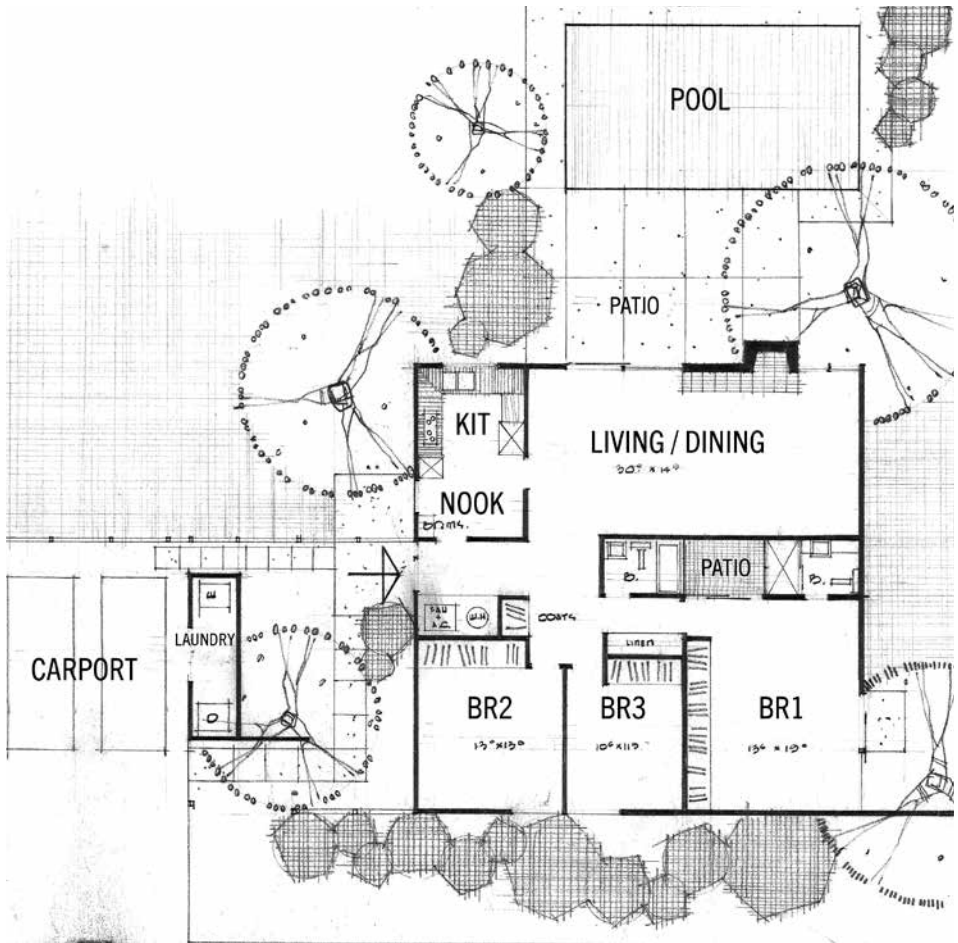
As a design and marketing strategy, this proved quite sound. Considered for decades to be a second hometown for the wealthy, Palm Springs suddenly came within grasp of a much larger population of home buyers. The 90 original residences sold briskly and led to the development of equally popular tracts elsewhere in the area. In this way, the success of Twin Palms initiated the City's first major housing boom and forever changed its architectural landscape.



Rendering of the Gable roofline design B2

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Today, more than six decades later, Twin Palms enjoys a population mix that reflects the diversity and spirit of Palm Springs. The legacy of William Krisel and the Alexanders is a neighborhood alive with history, rich with character, and fully engaged in its affairs both social and civic.



This 3BR, 2BA 1600-sf floor plan, or its mirror image, were the basis for all Krisel-designed homes in Twin Palms.



The Architect of Twin Palms

William (Bill) Krisel, AIA, was born in Shanghai in 1924 where his father was an attorney and a distributor for United Artists motion pictures. Krisel's affinity for architecture came early. At age 13, he critiqued the plans published in *Time* magazine for Franklin D. Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park by sending a letter along with his plans, which were subsequently published by the magazine.

The family moved back to Southern California as the gathering storm of World War II was forming. After the war, Krisel continued his studies at USC, which had one of the foremost architectural departments dedicated to modernism in the country. He graduated there with honors in 1949 and formed a partnership with Dan Palmer whom he had met while working part time during school with architect Victor Gruen.

While at USC, Krisel met Robert (Bob) Alexander who was a classmate. At the time, Bob's father, George, was building traditional style tract homes in the San Fernando Valley. George Alexander gave Krisel and Palmer 10 lots to try and presumed they would not be very successful. But Krisel's homes sold so well that the Alexander's company went on to do hundreds more using Krisel for many of the projects, including the Ocotillo Lodge and the Twin Palms tract of homes adjacent to it. Krisel went on to design one of the first condominium developments in Palm Desert, Sandpiper, which went on to win awards for architecture, landscape design and site planning. Other jobs soon followed and at one time the firm was the largest designer of homes in the country with over 40,000 living units built. In the 1950s, seven of the ten largest national tract builders were built by his clients.

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During his career, Krisel designed a stunning variety of buildings including tract houses, over 50 custom homes, condominium developments, stores, office buildings, restaurants, 35 high-rise towers, and warehouses. Working in what he called the language of modernism, he specified everything down to the last detail, including the landscaping, which, as a landscape architect, he often designed as well.

The rediscovery of his work in Palm Springs brought his name to the fore again as people sought his advice in restoring their homes. Krisel was honored with a sidewalk star in front of the Palm Springs Architecture and Design Center in 2009 and there was a museum exhibition of his work in both Los Angeles and Denver in 2010. The Getty accepted his archive in 2012 and a book about the architect and his work in Palm Springs was published in 2016. Also in 2016, the street adjacent to the Ocotillo Lodge was renamed William Krisel Way.

—Chris Menrad, Founding Board Member and President of Palm Springs Modern Committee (2012-2019) and co-author of the book **William Krisel's Palm Springs – The Language of Modernism**.



william krisel's palm springs

THE LANGUAGE OF MODERNISM

edited by CHRIS MENRAD and HEIDI CREIGHTON



William Krisel's Twin Palms Exhibit

In 2018, the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization created a museum-quality exhibit unique to Palm Springs neighborhoods. The exhibit, William Krisel's Twin Palms, documents the impact of our founding architect on our neighborhood and our neighborhood's impact on the City and beyond.

A true multimedia project, William Krisel's Twin Palms has grown every year since its introduction. It is currently comprised of eight narrative-and-graphics panels, a display of artifacts and ephemera, and a video kiosk running a loop of the William Krisel Way Dedication Ceremony. The exhibit also includes a "street" of detailed, scale-model homes, each depicting one of the four original designs for Twin Palms residences.

In addition to its Modernism Week installations, William Krisel's Twin Palms was exhibited for six weeks at the Palm Springs Public Library, at the Preservation Matters annual conference in the Palm Springs Convention Center, at the 2019 national meeting of Neighborhoods USA (NUSA), and other events.

Production of the exhibit was funded entirely by the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization and through supplemental donations from some of its individual members. Twin Palms resident Eric Chiel conceived and developed the exhibit and authored the panel texts.

Twin Palms Home Tour 2022



Tour Map

- 1 Landmark:** Twin Palms Blade Sign
- 2 Landmark:** Twin Palms Neighborhood Entry Monument Sign
- 3 Landmark:** William Krisel Way
- 4 Open Home:** Ocotillo Lodge, Alexander Suite #111
- 5 Open Home:** Ocotillo Lodge, Bungalow #353
- 6 Open Home:** 973 E. La Jolla Road
- 7 Open Home:** 991 E. La Jolla Road
- 8 Landmark:** 992 E. La Jolla Road
Class 1 Historic Site Home
- 9 Landmark:** 1070 E. Apache Road
Class 1 Historic Site Home
- 10 Landmark:** 1840 S. Caliente Dr
National Registry of Historic Places
- 11 Open Home:** 1081 E. La Jolla Road
- 12 Landmark:** 1300 S. La Verne Way
City of Palm Springs Fire Station #4



1 Landmark: Twin Palms Blade Sign

In 2013, Michele Johnson chaired the Blade Sign Committee that produced our Neighborhood Blade sign. Based on her original concept, graphic artist and Twin Palms resident Henry Connell created the Twin Palms Blade sign design. Connell took inspiration from the Ocotillo Lodge signage and consulted Krisel—then in his late 80s—who provided guidance in modifying and filling in the letters necessary to spell out “Twin Palms.” The color selection harkened to the past. The combination of Apricot Glow, Sea Isle Blue and Weathered Brown were selected from the color palette available to the original Twin Palms homebuyers.

Although mounted by the City at no cost, the signs themselves are purchased by neighborhood organizations. In an 8-week fundraising campaign, more than \$8000 was raised—enough to place a sign at all 42 available locations.



2 **Landmark:** Twin Palms Neighborhood Entry Monument Sign

Dedicated September 2021

Designed by H3K

Constructed by Hoyt Construction

Special thanks from the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization to the Twin Palms Condominiums Homeowners Association for their partnership and pivotal agreement to place this sign on their condominium grounds.

The lettering on the sign is based on the font William Krisel developed for the original Ocotillo Lodge signage. The butterfly roof line feature is a nod to this classic Krisel architectural element. The construction with concrete blocks and two breeze blocks reflects the building materials used in many mid-century homes. A formal ceremony was held for the sign in September 2021, including the unveiling of the dedication plaque.



3

Landmark: William Krisel Way

It's one of the shortest streets in our neighborhood, but perhaps, its most important. It defines the eastern edge of the Ocotillo Lodge—our first structure. It intersects Twin Palms Drive—the namesake street on which our first residences were built. It's the western boundary of our commercial district. It abuts what was once our country club. And it's still our neighborhood's only gateway from Palm Canyon Drive—the city's principal thoroughfare. It's only fitting that this be the street to bear the name William Krisel. The dedication was held on February 16, 2016.



Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization Chairperson Eric Chiel speaks at the dedication of William Krisel Way before more than 200 people.



Ocotillo Lodge 1111 E. Palm Canyon Dr

The construction of Ocotillo Lodge began in 1956 and was completed in 1957. It was built on 10 acres by the Alexanders from designs by William Krisel. The landscape architecture was conceived by Garrett Eckbo and the original interior design was done by Tony Dalu of Dalu Designs. Privacy was key to these indoor-outdoor living spaces and the kitchens and furniture were all designed low to take advantage of the view through the windows. The property was purchased by Gene Autry in 1963 and Jerry Buss in 1968. Today the 124 units are individually owned and many are available for vacation rental.

The lodge was named after the ocotillo plant which can be found throughout the property. The stunning panoramic views of the San Jacinto mountains, landscape and iconic key-hole shaped swimming pool are still the focal points of this historic property.

Dining at the Candlewood Room was advertised as “one of the most beautiful rooms in America” and stories of the Hollywood elite booking rooms and tables abound.

Much of the original design and intent of the property is still intact but the interior of the portico, lobby and clubhouse have been altered over the years. The beginnings of restoration plans are now underway (as a result of a donation from William Krisel through the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization) to return these areas back to their original glory.



Ocotillo Lodge circa 1957

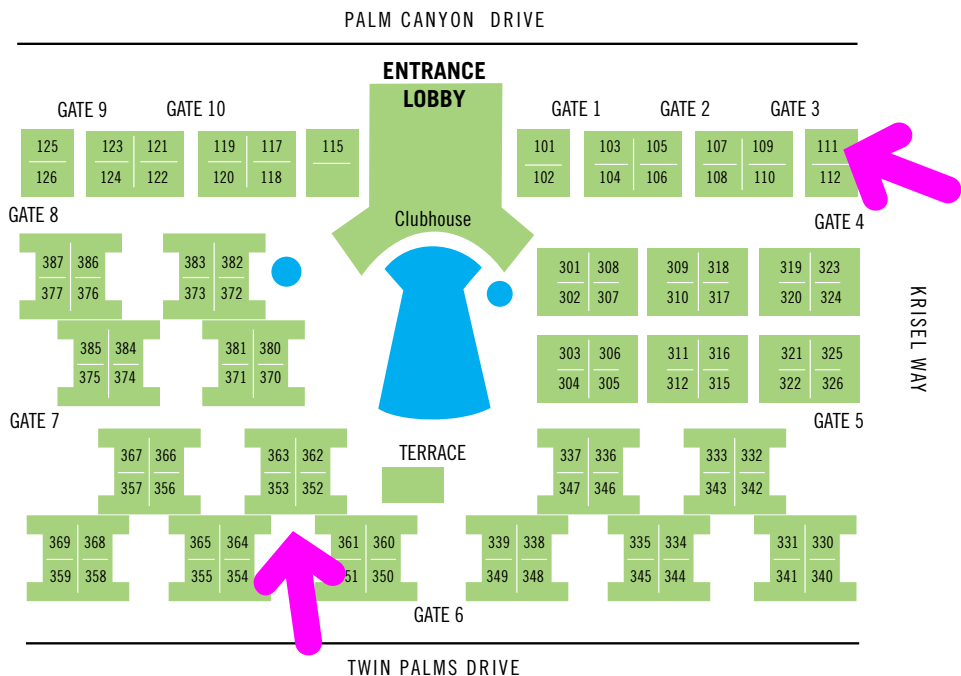
The keyhole-shaped pool (above) and the Candlewood Room (below)



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There are two units at the Ocotillo Lodge on the tour this year:
#111 and #353

Look for entrance signs on Krisel Way and Twin Palms Drive





4 **Open Home: Ocotillo Lodge, Alexander Suite, #111**

“I grew up here in the desert and have long wanted to return. Finally, after 16 years of Midwest winters, I convinced my husband to do it, and we purchased #111 at Ocotillo Lodge in the fall of 2019.

We have enjoyed learning about the Modernism story of Ocotillo Lodge and making connections with the iconic designs I was surrounded by in my childhood. I am now honored to be the conservator of this property and will continue to invest in its preservation, for example by working to help our community to become a historically designated district.

The Ocotillo Lodge was built by the Alexanders to “entertain” potential buyers of homes in the Twin Palms estate. But George Alexander and his wife also lived there, as we discovered in a *Palm Springs Life* article. When they built the Ocotillo Lodge in 1956, they had a two-story unit with a private pool. This is one of the unique features of our unit—it’s the only private pool on the property.

After Alexander sold the Lodge, there were subsequent famous owners like Gene Autry and then Jerry Buss, who added a third unit to bring #111 up to 1500 sq. ft. apparently in order to host his Lakers when they weren’t playing basketball.”

—Amber and Martin



5 Open Home: Ocotillo Lodge, Bungalow # 353

“Dig our amazing patio view and our Hawaiiana collection! Our decor incorporates our love of Hawaii with William Krisel’s mid-century modern design, a combination that was common during the Hawaii/tiki craze of the late ‘50s. When renovated in 2019, we were thrilled to find the original square cinder blocks intact; they had been covered by sheet rock and stucco! We absolutely love the Ocotillo, its history, its style, and its beauty.”

—Tony and Cheryl



6 Open Home: 973 E. La Jolla Road

“After renting another iconic sunflap house in Twin Palms, we were thrilled when one with the same design came on the market. Its modern, linear design attracted us, and its open sun-filled interior, spacious backyard and ideal location clinched the deal.

Although the house had been upgraded over the years, our renovation involved various structural repairs and improvements as well as aesthetic enhancements, while retaining as much original character as possible.

We are fascinated by the unique history of the Twin Palms neighborhood and the forward-thinking design that the Alexander Construction Company and architect William Krisel chose to use for this special collection of homes. Today, almost 65 years after it was built, we marvel at its clean and thoughtful design, its efficiency and its elegance. We’re honored to be a part of the Twin Palms neighborhood and its significant contribution to So Cal history.”

—Carol and Kevin



7 Open Home: 991 E. La Jolla Road

“This 1957 iconic extended butterfly home is making its re-debut on the Modernism Week tour after a period of restoration work. The front breezeway was returned to its natural state, bringing the sweeping roofline back to architects Palmer & Krisel’s original intent. The recent renovation also involved the addition of a casita and new Californian landscaping that seamlessly blends 21st-century conveniences and ultimate desert living. The updated interiors feature the original post-and-beam style, tongue and groove ceiling, a modern kitchen, vintage and modern furniture, and colorful art throughout. This light-filled property with its original clerestory windows embodies modern living in Palm Springs.”

–Phuong and Matt



8 **Landmark:** 992 E. La Jolla Road
Class 1 Historic Site No. 85

Twin Palms Estate Home – Model A2

Gable Roof

Constructed 1957

Designated Class 1 Historic Site HSPB No. 85

City of Palm Springs, January 2, 2013



9 **Landmark:** 1070 E. Apache Road
Class 1 Historic Site No. 74

Completed 1957

Historic Site No. 74 – Class 1

City of Palm Springs – February 2010

This is the first Twin Palms home to be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site and the first William Krisel structure recognized in Palm Springs. This classic Butterfly is one of the most photographed homes in Palm Springs.



10 **Landmark:** 1881 S. Caliente Road
National Register of Historic Places

This designation is significant in that this is the first William Krisel structure to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This home has the Sun Flap Roofline.



11 **Open Home:** 1081 E. La Jolla Road

“It’s long been my dream to own a mid-century modern home. Palm Springs had always attracted me—although I never spent any time here until I retired, and then I really fell in love with Palm Springs and the Twin Palms neighborhood. My dream came true when I bought my home in 2019 and started a major renovation. The house had been updated over the years as well as used as a rental, so it wasn’t a question of keeping original surfaces—but bringing out the incredible bones of the house—opening the living space and incorporating modern design materials that reflect the mid-century aesthetic. The indoor/outdoor lifestyle along with the privacy of the property, beautiful mountain views and great Twin Palms neighborhood really is living in paradise!”

—Carol



12 **Landmark:** **1300 S. La Verne Way**
City of Palm Springs Fire Station #4

Palm Springs Fire Station #4 was designed by noted midcentury architect Hugh Kaptur and entered service in 1971.

Early in the station's planning, the City requested that Kaptur design a facility that would be visually appealing in its high-profile location and compatible with the aesthetics of the growing Twin Palms neighborhood behind it. Kaptur achieved this in several ways.

Rather than design a hard-edged steel and concrete cube typical of fire stations, he used primarily stucco with rounded corners for most of the building. In place of a nondescript façade, he endowed it with features characteristic of southwestern architecture: exposed and protruding wooden beams, sloping sides, segmented sectioning, earth-tone colors, and irregularly sized and shaped deeply inset windows. To reduce its scale to something more like a neighborhood, Kaptur gave greater height only where it was needed—the truck bay—and reduced height for the rest of the structure. The truck bay is also set back from the road further than any other portion of the building, reducing even more the visual impact of its most imposing feature. The size and placement of the entire station allows for the mountainscape behind it to create an attractive backdrop of related colors and similar shape.

But by the 2010s, the aging station was facing structural deterioration, technical obsolescence, and the increased need for emergency services in south Palm Springs. The most economical

way to remedy this would have been demolishing and rebuilding larger in a more generic style. But the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization made the case to the City that a renovation-and-expansion effort, though more costly, would preserve and enhance the architectural relevance of the facility and increase its value as a City asset—particularly if its original architect was re-engaged. This became part of an even-greater preservation effort that ultimately avoided demolition and recruited Hugh Kaptur as a consulting architect.

The station was shuttered for three years during which its interior was almost entirely rebuilt and its footprint expanded by about 50%. It returned to service in 2019.

Since its inception in 2013, the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization has had a close relationship with the Palm Springs Fire Department and the men and women of Station #4. Proceeds from our Modernism Week Home Tours have allowed us to purchase a sound system for its lounge, free weights for its fitness room, and a professional outdoor chef's grill installed in the cinder-block enclosure adjacent to its kitchen. We also "adopted" the two olive trees on its grounds, thereby funding conversion to water-conserving underground irrigation.

Thank you to all who helped make the 2022 Twin Palms Home Tour possible.

Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization Modernism Committee

Carol Buckman – Social Media

Eric Chiel – William Krisel's Twin Palms Exhibit

Henry Connell – Graphic Design

Joyce Debreczeni – Smoke Tree Racquet Club

Larry Johnson – Finance

Michele Johnson – Volunteer Coordinator

Carol Munro – Brochure

Diane Sexton – Smoke Tree Racquet Club

Tony Vardaro – Ocotillo Lodge

Tour Homeowners

Carol Buckman & Kevin Goddess

Carol Munro

Phuong Nguyen & Matt Work

Amber & Martin Telfer

Tony & Cheryl Vardaro

All Our Twin Palms Volunteers!

Thank you to the Smoke Tree Racquet Club for the use of their facilities for Registration, William Krisel's Twin Palms Exhibit and the Volunteer Recognition Reception.

Thank you to the Ocotillo Lodge for allowing tour guests access to a portion of their common area.

The cars featured along the tour route are provided by members of the Great Autos Car Club. Thank you to Scott Butterfield, Tony Loverso, Chris Menrad, Carol Munro, Christopher Stone, Will Wiegler and Ron Williams.



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