



**NOMINATION OF THE OCOTILLO LODGE
FOR RECOGNITION AS ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT TO TWIN PALMS
AT THE ORGANIZATION'S NOVEMBER 14, 2015 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

Submitted by Larry Johnson

On November 3, 2015, the Ocotillo Lodge was selected by the Advisory Board of the Twin Palms Neighborhood Organization (TPNO) as the Fall 2015 recipient of our Neighborhood Recognition Award in the Architectural category. The award was formally announced at the November 14, 2015 TPNO General Membership Meeting and presented to residents of the Ocotillo Lodge in attendance at that meeting.

Selection Criteria

The following are among the key reasons the Ocotillo Lodge was selected:

- 1) The Lodge was the initial complex of buildings designed by William Krisel in what was to become the Twin Palms neighborhood.
- 2) Given the focus on Mr. Krisel in our 2016 Modernism Home Tour, and the William Krisel Way street dedication event on February 16, 2016 honoring him, it seems that now is an especially appropriate time to highlight this architecturally significant complex in which he had a major role designing.
- 3) The typeface in our Organization's logo is based on the font designed by Mr. Krisel for marketing materials used to promote the Lodge in its first incarnation as a hotel.
- 4) In the past few years, the Ocotillo Lodge Homeowners Association's leadership and members have undertaken a number of steps to rejuvenate, restore, and preserve the Lodge in keeping with Mr. Krisel's original designs. Future plans are envisioned to continue these efforts. We believe these actions should be recognized and applauded.

The Story of the Ocotillo Lodge

In 1954, George and Bob Alexander purchased a large section of land in what is now the Twin Palms neighborhood. The Ocotillo Lodge was conceived by the Alexanders as a device by which to market the 90 new homes they planned to build in what was then called Smoke Tree Valley Estates (now part of Twin Palms). The Alexanders wanted to attract people to their development, and a hotel with a restaurant and bar was seen as a way to lure potential home buyers to the area. They engaged William Krisel—already

working as architect on the new housing tract—to be the hotel’s designer. He was given complete freedom to create cutting-edge designs.

The nearly seven-acre project designed by William Krisel and partner Dan Palmer opened as a hotel in 1956 at a cost of \$1.5 million. Garrett Eckbo was the landscape architect. The project featured a central structure that was curved like a lower eyelid along its interior side, while the linear edge on its public side met the street with a generous porte-cochere extending outward from the lobby.

This central building originally housed the celebrated Candlewood Room. Its indoor-outdoor design offered a panoramic view to the iconic key-hole shaped swimming pool and the mountains beyond. The complex includes units in the two-story buildings along Palm Canyon Drive and four rows of single-story bungalows.

Some of the architectural features of this all-electric complex include open post-and-beam ceilings extending into long exterior overhangs, open spaces above the closets, high windows, and efficiency kitchens. The units were given an open plan with only a folding door/wall to the bedroom. Furniture was low to the floor. Unit patios were all open to the common area. This indoor-outdoor aesthetic was a prominent feature of the hotel, as it was in the adjacent home development. Concrete block walls provided counterbalance to the use of glass, so units felt substantial yet full of light. Color played an important role in the design. Burnt orange, charcoal, and pale tan were the dominate colors.

Evolution of the Ocotillo Lodge

Over the decades, the hotel was operated by a number of owners including actor Gene Autry who acquired it in 1966. He later sold to Los Angeles Lakers owner Jerry Buss. In the 1980s, an investment group purchased the hotel. After several additional ownership changes, all the units were sold as condos in the mid 90s, and all hotel operations ceased around 2000.

While much has changed over the past 60 years, the brilliance and innovation of the original Krisel architecture has endured as a prime example of the best in midcentury modern design. Palm Springs, and the Twin Palms neighborhood in particular, is blessed to have the Ocotillo Lodge in its midst.