

# Kirk Douglas Estate

515 West Via Lola  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

## **Nomination Application for City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site**



Prepared by

Susan Secoy Jensen, Architect/Preservation Consultant

(160 South Cypress Street, Orange, CA 92866)

for the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

February 2019

## ***Acknowledgements***

*The author would like to thank the following individuals for either research or editing assistance:*

***Ron & Barbara Marshall  
Palm Springs Historical Society  
Ron Duby***



**Kirk Douglas as the Grand Marshall of the Palm Springs Desert Circus, 1956.  
Photo location is downtown, Palm Canyon Avenue.**

**Cover image: Kirk Douglas Estate, view looking north towards the main residence.**



# **The Kirk Douglas Estate**

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# **Introduction**

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.”

In 2017, the PSPF board of directors, in consultation with the owners of the Kirk Douglas Residence, assigned the task of writing the residence’s Class 1 Historic Site nomination to board advisory member Susan Secoy Jensen.

The Owner’s Letter of Support is at Appendix I.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The residence of actor Kirk Douglas and his wife, Anne, located at 515 West Via Lola, Old Las Palmas, in Palm Springs was originally owned by Robert Howard, and his wife, screen actress Andrea Leeds. Currently, tucked behind stone walls and gates, the Estate centers on a low-slung main house originally designed by modernist master architects, Wexler & Harrison, completed in 1954. The Kirk Douglas Residence is an important example of a custom modernist structure and it exhibits numerous character defining features that place it within the historic context of Palm Springs modern period. Kirk Douglas is not only an internationally acclaimed actor, he is a Palm Springs icon. He has actively participated with the Palm Springs community for over forty years.

**DESIGNATION CRITERIA:** The Kirk Douglas Estate has not previously been evaluated for Class 1 Historic Site eligibility.

A brief summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 2 - **Persons:** Kirk Douglas made a meaningful contribution to local history through his career as an internationally important celebrity whose presence in Palm Springs was an important influence in the city's history. His personal involvement in the history of Palm Springs rises to the level sufficient to qualify the building's eligibility for local listing. *The building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 2.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 3, 4 & 5 - **Design/Construction:** The Kirk Douglas Estate is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the modernist style, including lack of ornamentation, horizontality, expansive amounts of glass, use of natural materials, etc. As a custom residence skillfully designed by the firm of Wexler & Harrison, it rises to the level of work by master architects with high artistic values. Although several modifications occurred during the ownership of the Douglas family, it maintained the vocabulary and overall design intent of the original design created by Master Architects. *Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the Kirk Douglas Estate qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criteria 3, 4 & 5.*

**SUMMARY:** *This evaluation finds the Kirk Douglas Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Site under 8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 2, 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the Kirk Douglas Residence retains a high degree of architectural integrity. (see Section 7, "Integrity Analysis".)*





# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## Department of Planning Services

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Telephone: 760-323-8245

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## HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION

The City of Palm Springs allows for the local designation of historic buildings, sites or districts within the City (Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.). This application packet is to be completed in order to request a historic designation. For additional information, please contact the Department of Planning Services at 760-323-8245 or [planning@palmspringsca.gov](mailto:planning@palmspringsca.gov).

### **APPLICATION**

The completed application and required materials may be submitted to the Department of Planning Services. The submittal will be given a cursory check and will be accepted for filing only if the basic requirements have been met. A case planner will be assigned to the project and will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and all exhibits to ensure that all required information is adequate and accurate. Incomplete applications due to missing or inadequate information will not be accepted for filing. Applicants may be asked to attend scheduled meetings pertaining to their project. These will include the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and the City Council.

### **HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD (HSPB)**

Once the application has been determined to be complete, the HSPB will review the application to determine whether the site meets the minimum qualifications for designation pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. If such determination is made, a public hearing will be scheduled for a future meeting.

A public hearing will be held by the HSPB to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the HSPB will make a recommendation to the City Council. Notice will be provided as indicated below.

### **CITY COUNCIL**

After receiving the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board, a public hearing will be held by the City Council to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the requested Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the City Council will then conditionally approve, deny, or approve the application as submitted. The City Council's decision on the application is final.

### **NOTIFICATION**

Prior to consideration of the application by the HSPB and the City Council, a notice of public hearing for a Historic Site Designation request will be mailed to all property owners within 400 feet of the subject property a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the hearing dates.



## Office Use Only

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

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### CITY OF PALM SPRINGS Department of Planning Services

## HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION

### **TO THE APPLICANT:**

Your cooperation in completing this application and supplying the information requested will expedite City review of your application. Application submitted will not be considered until all submittal requirements are met. Staff may require additional information depending upon the specific project. Please submit this completed application and any subsequent material to the Department of Planning Services.

This form is to be used to nominate individual properties for Class 1 or 2 historic designations, or to nominate the formation of historic districts. Applicants are encouraged to review two bulletins from the US Department of Interior for additional information:

- "How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form" (National Register Bulletin 16A / <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>); and
- "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (National Register Bulletin 15; <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions in the Bulletins.

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### 1. Property Information

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Historic name: The Kirk Douglas Estate  
Other names: Howard Leeds House I  
Address: 515 West Via Lola, Palm Springs, CA 92262  
Assessor Parcel Number: 505-252-032, Lot 10, Merito Vista #2  
Owner's Name(s): Diane Budman Bald Family Trust  
Owner's Address: 153 Richview Avenue  
Toronto, Canada M5P1V9  
Telephone: 760 565 5000 (Owner's Rep) Kip Serafin  
Fax number: N/A  
E-mail address: [dianeald@rogers.com](mailto:dianeald@rogers.com)

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## 2. Classifications

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Ownership of Property. Fill as many boxes as apply.

- ☒ Private
- ☐ Public - Local
- ☐ Public - State
- ☐ Public - Federal

Category of Property. Fill only one box.

- ☒ Building (Note can include site)
- ☐ District
- ☐ Site (Exclusive of Structures)
- ☐ Structure
- ☐ Object

Number of Resources within Property. TOTAL must include at least One (1) in Contributing Column.

Contributing	Non-contributing	
2		Buildings
1		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
<hr/>		<b>Total</b>
3		

If the building or site is part of a larger group of properties, enter the name of the multiple-property group; otherwise enter "N/A". "N/A"

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## 3. Use or Function

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Cat: Domestic	Private Residence
Current Functions	Private Residence

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## 4. Description

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Architect: Wexler & Harrison, Architects

Construction Date and Source: 1954 (Permit)

Architectural Classification: Mid-Century desert modernism

Construction Materials:

Foundation: Concrete slab

Roof: Built-up composition

Walls: Wood stud, stucco, glass & stone

Other:

Building Description: *Attach a description of the Building/Site/District, including all character defining features, on one or more additional sheets.*



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**5. Criteria (Fill all boxes that apply for the criteria qualifying the property for listing.)**

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**Events**

- ☐ (1) Fill this box if the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**Persons**

- ☒ (2) Fill this box if the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**Architecture**

- ☒ (3) Fill this box if the property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, State or local history, or
- ☒ (4) Fill this box if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or
- ☒ (5) Fill this box if the property represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or
- ☐ (6) Fill this box if the property represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**Archeology**

- ☐ (7) Fill this box if the property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Other Criteria Considerations (Check all the boxes that apply.)**

- ☐ the property is owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ the property has been removed from its original location.
- ☐ the property is a birthplace
- ☐ the property is a grave or cemetery.
- ☐ the property is a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ the property is commemorative
- ☐ the property is less than 50 years of age or has achieved significance within the past 50 years

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## 6. Statement of Significance

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### **Narrative Description**

The Kirk Douglas Residence, located at 515 West Via Lola, was constructed on Lot 10, Merito Vista #2, of Las Palmas Estates, in 1954. (see the grant deed in Appendix III).

### **First Owners, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Howard**

Robert Howard's father, Charles Howard, made his fortune in the automobile industry, and invested in several things, including race horses, (most notably, Seabiscuit.) His son, Robert, also had an interest in horse racing and breeding, and was involved with many business ventures, including the ownership of the hotel, The Howard Manor (now the Colony Palms), Palm Springs. Robert married actress Andrea Leeds in 1939. She was already a well-established actress, having started her career in 1933. In 1937, she received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress in the film "Stage Door", starring Katherine Hepburn. She starred in her final film in 1940, then dedicated her time to her husband and social responsibilities. In 1940, she gave birth to Robert Howard Jr., and in 1942, daughter Leeann May. They were a prominent Beverly Hills couple, and prominent in the horse racing and breeding arena as well. They also enjoyed their time in Palm Springs, and purchased their house, designed by Wexler & Harrison Architects, in 1953.

Prior to acquiring their home located at 515 West Via Lola, Robert Howard purchased the Colonial House Hotel in 1951. He then named it Howard Manor. The Colonial House was established in 1936 by Las Vegas casino owner Al Wertheimer. He was considered a mobster, being a member of the Purple Gang. The Howards maintained ownership of the Howard Manor until 1956. During their ownership, it was an upscale resort, catering to numerous celebrities. The resort hotel boasted its supper club, "The Academy Room" and a "Winners Circle Suite" in honor of Seabiscuit and the Howard family.

The Howards sold 515 West Via Lola in the mid 1950's. The house was sold to its builder, prominent in Palm Springs, Robert (Bob) Higgins. After a couple of years, Higgins sold the house to Kirk and Anne Douglas. The Howards relocated to another Wexler Harrison designed home, down the street at 375 West Via Lola. The Howards worked closely with Bob Higgins on several projects, including their homes and the Howard Manor. The current Purple Palms restaurant at Colony Palms, pays homage to the original owner, a member of the Purple Gang.

Robert Howard died unexpectedly in Las Vegas, in 1962, at the age of 45. Andrea Leeds continued to reside in Palm Springs, and ran an upscale jewelry business at the hotel called "Andreas." She died in 1984, at the age of 70, in Palm Springs.



THE OLD COLONIAL HOUSE IS A SMALL PART OF THIS FINE DEVELOPMENT



BOB, ANDREA & G.I. JOE

## A NEW HOWARD MANOR

CONSTRUCTION progress was proceeding on schedule for 18 new units at Howard Manor, a \$180,000 project to be ready for occupancy in December. This addition will almost double the capacity of the popular and exclusive luxury spot to 100 guests. Architects are Williams, Williams & Williams and the building contract is in the hands of Robert Higgins, one of the leading construction concerns of the desert.

Robert S. Howard, who made rapid recovery from a major operation this summer, has been a frequent visitor to the village preparing for the opening of the Manor in mid-October. He announced the appointment of an outstanding hotel man for manager, to assume duties at once. He is Lewis S. Thomas, former assistant executive manager of the Los Angeles Ambassador and once general manager of the Schroeder Hotel chain.



MANAGER THOMAS

Andrea (Leeds) Howard and Robert Howard, promoting the Howard Manor, Palm Springs.



Andrea (Leeds) Howard at her retail store located within the Howard Manor, Palm Springs.



Robert Howard and Andrea (Leeds) Howard at the Howard Manor, Palm Springs.



## Second Owner, Mr. Robert Higgins

Robert Higgins, also known as Bob Higgins, was a prominent builder in Palm Springs. He was responsible for several noteworthy residential and commercial projects. He purchased the home from Robert and Andrea (Leeds) Howard, and resided there for approximately two years until he sold it to Kirk and Anne Douglas. During his ownership of the property, he constructed the swimming pool, which remains in its current shape, an abstraction of the letter "K".

Robert Higgins worked on the construction of the Howard Manor Hotel, by William, Williams, and Williams Architects, for Robert and Andrea Howard. (1952) He also constructed Jack Wrather's L'Horizon Hotel by William Cody, Architect. (1952) He was the builder of the Wexler & Harrison designed home (where he resided) at 515 West Via Lola, (1954) and also built the Wexler & Harrison home for Robert and Andrea Howard at 375 West Via Lola. (1957) He partnered with actor Alan Ladd for the hardware store located on Palm Canyon Drive. He built several homes in the Sunmor residential neighborhood, including the home of Mayor Frank Bogert. Robert and Patricia Higgins were prominent residents of Deep Well Ranch Estates for several years.

(Editor's note: Aline Mosby is on vacation. Today's guest columnist, Alan Ladd, tells how he runs his hardware store at Palm Springs.)

By ALAN LADD  
Written for The United Press  
HOLLYWOOD AP—For the past year and a half I've been carrying on a great American tradition—that of the general store proprietor in an American community. I must admit the Higgins and Ladd hardware store in Palm Springs isn't quite an average general store, but then Palm Springs isn't exactly the typical American community, either. It's been quite a switch for me, changing from movieolas to monkey wrenches, from screenings to screwdrivers, but I assure you it has had its merits. I'm beginning to understand why the general store has become such an American institution.

FOR ONE THING, it's a better place to get to know people than a lonely hearts club social. More people come in for gab than for gadgets.

Also, as an actor, during an average working day you meet very interesting people, but over the year, they are the same people. You can get a yearning for a greater variety of acquaintances.

My wife, Susie, and I consulted Bob Higgins, a well-known, long-established Palm Springs proprietor. Bob was for a hardware store. The nuts and bolts market hardly had been scratched in Palm Springs, he assured me.


BUT TO OPEN an ordinary hardware store in Palm Springs seemed a little banal. Glamour, we maintained, was the key to the situation. But, glamour is a very difficult thing to incorporate into a hardware store. As far as I could remember, neither Browning nor Byron had written a single ode to a double-headed nail. However, the Higgins and Ladd hardware store is living proof that glamour and hardware are not necessarily totally opposed concepts.

THE FIRST THING we did was to install fountains which serve iced drinks. Screwdrivers, we decided, are not very glamorous. Why not have sequined screwdrivers? If anybody in Palm Springs is seized with craving for sequined screwdrivers, Higgins and Ladd is the place to come! Dedicated to this revolutionary new concept of hardware, we proceeded to stock all sorts of hardware to suit the exotic tastes. It may seem a little strange to timid souls, but we think it's fun.

And, if the idea of glamorous hardware is ever to catch on at all, it will be in Palm Springs.

1952 MERCURY

## DESIGNED FOR DESERT LIVING



*Mr. and Mrs. Robert Higgins, Deep Well Ranch  
Estates, and their Monterey Convertible*

**PALM SPRINGS  
LINCOLN MERCURY CO.**

Sunny Dunes at Palm Canyon Dr. — Phone 2301

### **Third Owners, Mr. & Mrs. Kirk Douglas**

Kirk Douglas and Anne Buydens were married in 1954, and then had two sons, Peter and Erik. Kirk had two sons from a previous marriage, Michael and Joel. The Douglasses had a home in the Palm Springs Movie Colony in the mid 1950's, and enjoyed their retreat from Beverly Hills so much that they invested in another property in the Old Las Palmas neighborhood. In fact, their first baby, Peter, had his photos on the cover of the *Palm Springs Villager* in 1956 with proud parents, Kirk and Anne. Douglas acquired the larger property from Robert Higgins in the late 1950's and used it as the family retreat for decades. Upon purchase, he had intentions of increasing the square footage of the modest Wexler design to accommodate his family. He also purchased additional property to expand the estate to eventually include a tennis court and pavilion. After personalizing the house to his needs and that of the family, they enjoyed it for four decades. He sold it in 1999. Kirk and Anne enjoyed the house not only with their children, but with their grandchildren, as well.

Kirk Douglas first began visiting Palm Springs in 1946. He would drive from Los Angeles and rent a hotel room. He played tennis at the famous Palm Springs Racquet Club with friends who included William Holden, Lucille Ball, George Montgomery and his wife Dinah Shore. Under the stewardship of its owner and co-founder Charlie Farrell, the Racquet Club was a magnet for Hollywood's elite during its heyday – 1934 through 1959. With its four tennis courts, Olympic sized swimming pool, first class restaurant and the world-famous Bamboo Lounge, it was the place for stars to congregate. It was an oasis for people in the movie industry, including Cary Grant, Bing Crosby, Ginger Rogers, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Errol Flynn, and Marilyn Monroe, who was discovered there. Kirk Douglas became friends with the owner, Charlie Farrell, and spent much time there, fine tuning his tennis game.

Kirk Douglas is one of the last living people of the film industry's Golden Age. He was born Issur Danielovitch in 1916 and after an impoverished childhood with immigrant parents and six sisters, he had his film debut in the "Strange Love of Martha Ivers" (1946) with Barbara Stanwyck. Douglas soon developed into a leading box office star throughout the 1950's and 1960's, known for serious dramas, including westerns and war movies. During his career, he appeared in more than 90 movies.

Douglas became an international star through positive reception for his leading role as an unscrupulous boxing hero in "Champion" (1949) which brought him his first nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actor. Other early films include "Young Man with a Horn" (1950), playing opposite Lauren Bacall and Doris Day; "Ace in the Hole" opposite Jan Sterling (1951), and "Detective Story" (1951). He received a second Oscar nomination for his dramatic role in "The Bad and the Beautiful" (1952) opposite Lana Turner, and his third nomination for portraying Vincent van Gogh in "Lust for Life" (1956).

In 1955, he established Bryna Productions, which began producing films as varied as "Paths of Glory" (1957) and "Spartacus" (1960). In those two films, he starred and collaborated with the then relatively unknown director, Stanley Kubrick. Douglas helped break the Hollywood blacklist by having Dalton Trumbo write "Spartacus" with an official

on-screen credit. The Hollywood blacklist banned anyone considered to be affiliated with the Communist Party. Kirk Douglas produced and starred in “Lonely are the Brave” (1962), considered a cult classic, and “Seven Days in May” (1964) opposite Burt Lancaster, with whom he made seven films. In 1963, he starred in the Broadway play “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”, a story he purchased, which he later gave to his son, Michael Douglas, who turned it into an Oscar-winning film.

As an actor and philanthropist, Douglas has received three Academy Award nominations, an Oscar for Lifetime Achievement, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. As an author, he has written ten novels and memoirs. Currently, he is No. 17 on the American Film Institute’s list of the greatest male screen legends of classic Hollywood cinema, and the highest ranked living person on the list. After barely surviving a helicopter crash in 1991 and then suffering a stroke in 1996, he has focused on renewing his spiritual and religious life.

Kirk Douglas’s involvement with Palm Springs has earned him the distinction of a Palm Springs icon. Whether supporting his favorite charity, or donating time and money to the city library or museum, he was always willing to get involved with the local causes. The couple founded the Douglas Charitable foundation in the early 1960’s, which focuses on education. Since 1963 Kirk and Anne have visited more than 45 countries as goodwill ambassadors for the U.S. State Department advocating for democracy and freedom. In 1981 President Jimmy Carter presented Kirk with the Medal of Freedom for his outstanding work. The Douglasses continued their philanthropic dedication at home in Palm Springs. He would throw out the first ball when the city hosted the Angels minor league baseball franchise. In 1992, Kirk and Anne Douglas were named Palm Springs Citizens of the Year in recognition of their support of Desert Hospital, Palm Springs Desert Museum, Temple Isaiah, The Desert AIDS Project, Parks for People, and the Palm Springs Youth Center. Kirk Douglas presented a check for \$2,000,000 to the Desert Regional Medical Center for MRI equipment, and he also narrated the film to promote the cause. The Douglas’s donated significant time and money to the Palm Springs Desert Museum and were actively involved with the renovation of the Annenberg Theatre. The Douglas’s also marched in the first Desert AIDS Walk in an effort to increase awareness and help educate the public about the disease. He also participated in the United Jewish Appeal fund raisers, a major contributor to distinguished neighbor’s Palm Springs events.

### **Subsequent Owners**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Owners</u>
1999	Tod Jenkins and Timothy Dietrich
2016	Diane Bald and Michael Budman



# Village Life



CHARLES FARRELL AND KIRK DOUGLAS

— Bernard-Keith

Kirk Douglas, the motion picture actor, quietly moved into the Racquet Club to recuperate from an attack of pneumonia....Desert atmosphere and sunshine brought speedy recovery and it was not long before he was playing a few easy games of tennis, and then back home to work.

By far the largest party of the season, cocktails and a buffet at Howard Manor....Bob and Andrea (Leeds) Howard were obviously proud of the transformation they had made of the old but smart Colonial House....The dining room and cocktail lounge had been given a new styling by Architect Stewart Williams and the newly furnished rooms had been given an exclusive touch by O. E. L. Graves, a feature being sculptured figures on the walls....Guests found interest in the modern furnishings by Barrett O'Shea's House of Modern Interiors....It was estimated that 1000 attended, some remaining until an early morning hour.

*Palm Springs Villager*, January 1952. News about Kirk Douglas, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Howard. Both families very prominent in Palm Springs during the 1950's.

# THE KIRK DOUGLASES

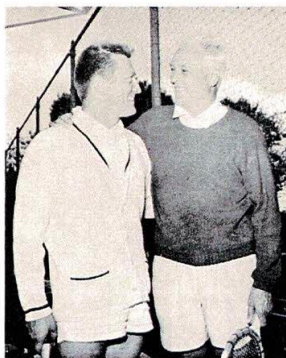
## *Real Palm Springs Enthusiasts*

By Bernice Beekman

It won't be long before Palm Springs can count on Kirk Douglas and his family as regular residents. They have lived and traveled in many parts of the world, but, completely enchanted with their recent five weeks' vacation here, are ready to call the Village "home," and hope to return soon to find a house. As guests of Joe Drown, this was their first lengthy stay, although Kirk and Anne have been week-end visitors on many occasions.

It was the first trip anywhere for little Peter Vincent, born last November 23rd, and another "first" for him . . . his first pictures were taken here in their vacation home. The mutual admiration of parents and son is evident in the appealing scene on this month's cover. No wonder Peter keeps asking his mother (so she claims, with a straight face) when they will return to Palm Springs! As a VILLAGER cover boy, he is famous in his own right and certainly an important figure in the local diaper set.

Kirk Douglas with wife, Anne, and Racquet Club tennis pro Vini Rurac (at right); with club owner Charlie Farrell (below).



Kirk and Anne's enthusiasm for the Palm Springs way of life is a natural consequence of their diverse interests. Primarily, they love outdoor sports . . . both played tennis several times a week at the Racquet Club, where Kirk was runner-up in the men's doubles in the 6th Annual Blue Ribbon Tournament. A natural athlete, he played golf for the first time in his life here at Tamarisk Country Club, where, incredibly, he parred the first two holes. "That was a terrible thing to happen to me,"

he said (while not divulging his score). "Now I guess I'll spend the rest of my life trying to get that good—or that lucky—again." The Douglasses swam daily and liked to use their bicycles on short errands around the Village, in traditional style.

Anne, born in Belgium and raised in France, is a connoisseur of fine food, and she and her husband found one delightful spot after another serving food that rates with any of the famous restaurants in this country or in Europe. They took in all the first-rate floor shows, marveling at the variety of stellar entertainment presented here during the season; they're movie fans, too, frequently dropping into the local movie theatres to catch the latest Hollywood releases.

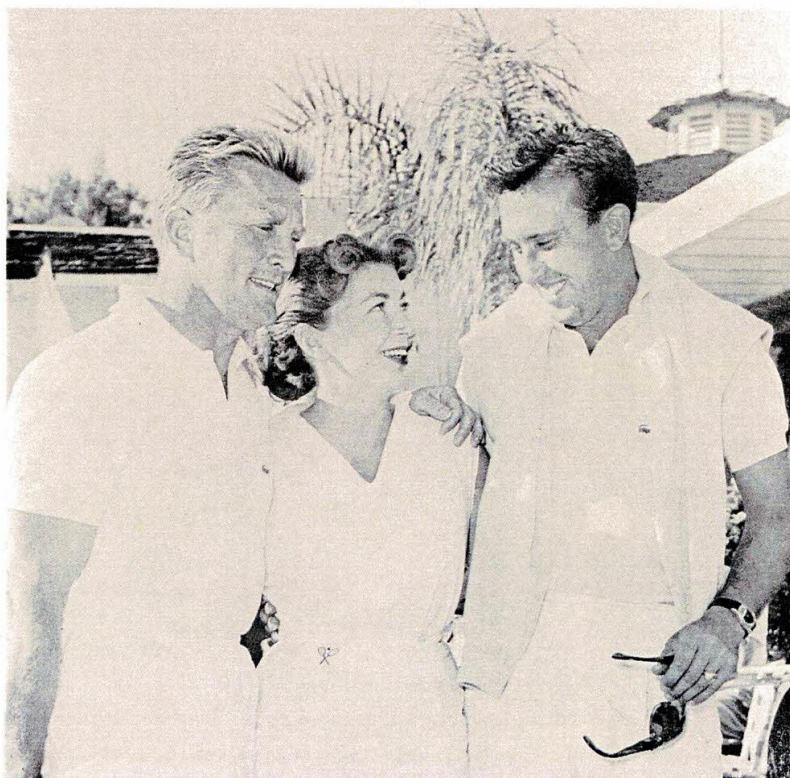
Kirk's two older boys, Michael, 11, and Joel, 9, came down several week-ends. One reason that Kirk and Anne want to have a home here is to enable the entire family to be together for longer vacations when the boys are not in school.

Kirk has recently formed his own independent motion picture

company, Bryna Productions, and writers Robert Alan Aurthur and Samuel Grafton came here from the East to confer with him on their respective projects, "Shadow of the Champ" and "A Most Contagious Game." Bryna's producer and general manager, Jerry Bresler, was a frequent visitor.

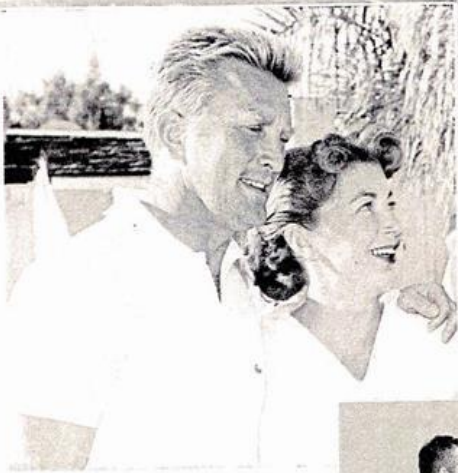
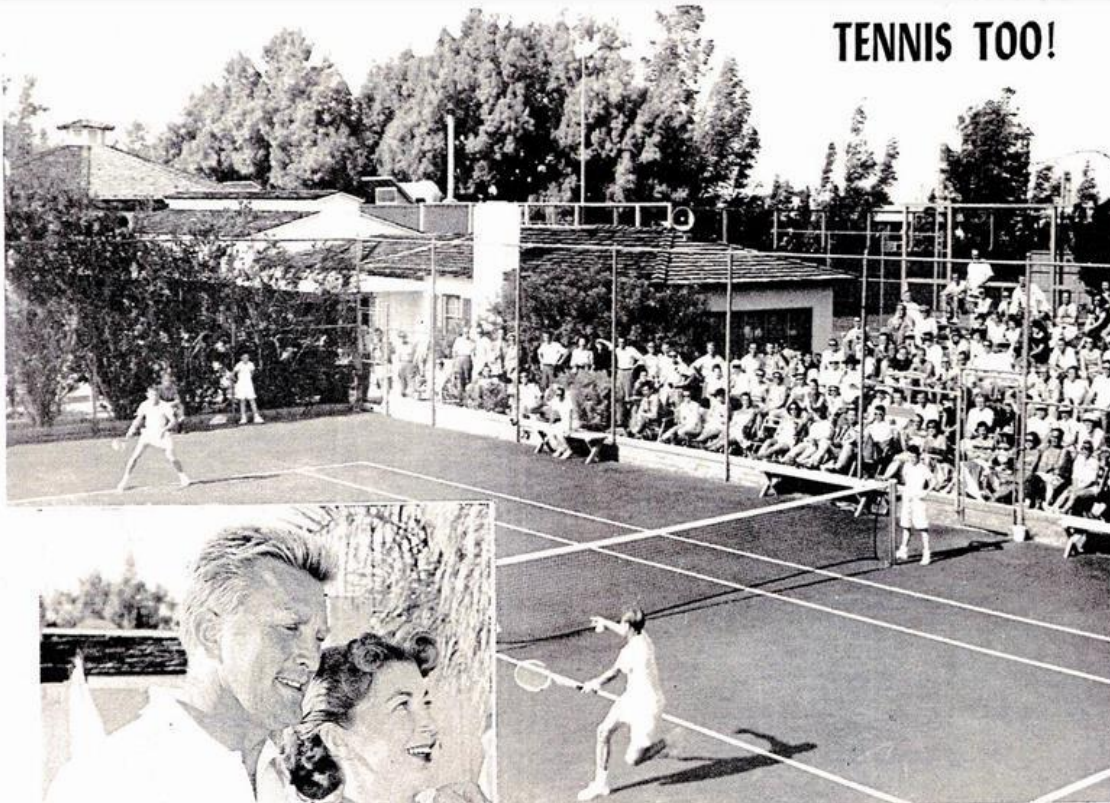
His first professional break came in the stage success, "Kiss and Tell," opening up important opportunities which brought him to the attention of producer Hal Wallis and led to a role opposite Barbara Stanwyck in "The Strange Love of Martha Ivers." Success followed success and he has been twice nominated for Academy Awards.

Kirk met Anne Buydens in Paris while making movies, and they were married on May 29, 1954. When not in Palm Springs, the Douglasses live in a modest two-bedroom home in Beverly Hills, decorated in contrasting black and white, a striking setting for their valuable collection of primitive statuary from the Belgian Congo and paintings by contemporary French artists.





## TENNIS TOO!



(At left) Kirk Douglas and wife Anne. Kirk won a trophy in Blue Ribbon tournament at the Racquet Club. Tennis is a popular desert sport and tournaments during season are also held at The Tennis Club and Shadow Mt. Club. A number of hotels, as well as home owners, have their own courts



(Center left) Dr. Ben Finch and Dr. John Moriarty, Beverly Hills, winners of Doubles matches in Ranch Club's First Invitational John Krysiak, on right, won singles

(L to R below) Vincent Fotre, Jr., and Sr., winners of Men's Doubles title at 7th Annual Racquet Club tennis tournament, with runners-up Keith Larson and Glen Kramer. The Fotres took same title in '52 and '53

(Below) Dana Wynter (Mrs. Greg Bautzer) and Glen Kramer admire Blue Ribbon trophies

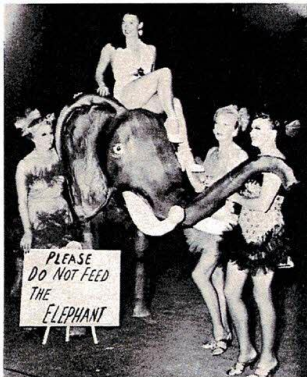


Kirk Douglas wins a trophy at the tennis tournament at the Palm Springs Racquet Club.



# Life In Palm Springs

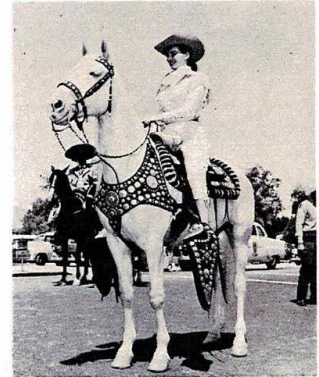
## Features of 1956 Desert Circus Week



BIG TOP BALL at Thunderbird, drew 600 revelers. Here, "The Cherry Sisters," Helen Kenaston, Ruth Mansau and Barbara Hinkle, with Maggie Hicks.



GRAND MARSHAL Kirk Douglas, village resident, led 20th Annual Desert Circus Parade, biggest, liveliest, most elaborate in Circus history.



FILM STAR Anita Ekberg was stunning Queen in pink and turquoise western outfit. Frank Bogert seen in background wearing giant sombrero.



SWEEPSTAKES winner was "The Word of God—The Foundation of Life," majestically interpreted by Palm Springs Community Church.



FIRST PRIZE for civic organizations went to Chamber of Commerce entry depicting outdoor activities, featured high school eye-fuls, the "Palm Springs Debs."



"THIS IS YOUR LIFE"—Andrea of Palm Springs float echoed Circus theme in religious motif, took top honors in that class.



THEME AWARD was won by outstanding Ranch Club entry, the float starring Connie Moore followed by equestrian group including Paul Coates, Jack Buettel.



CITIZEN'S BANK entered a trim showboat decoratively manned by shipshape girl employees in flashy garb of river queens.

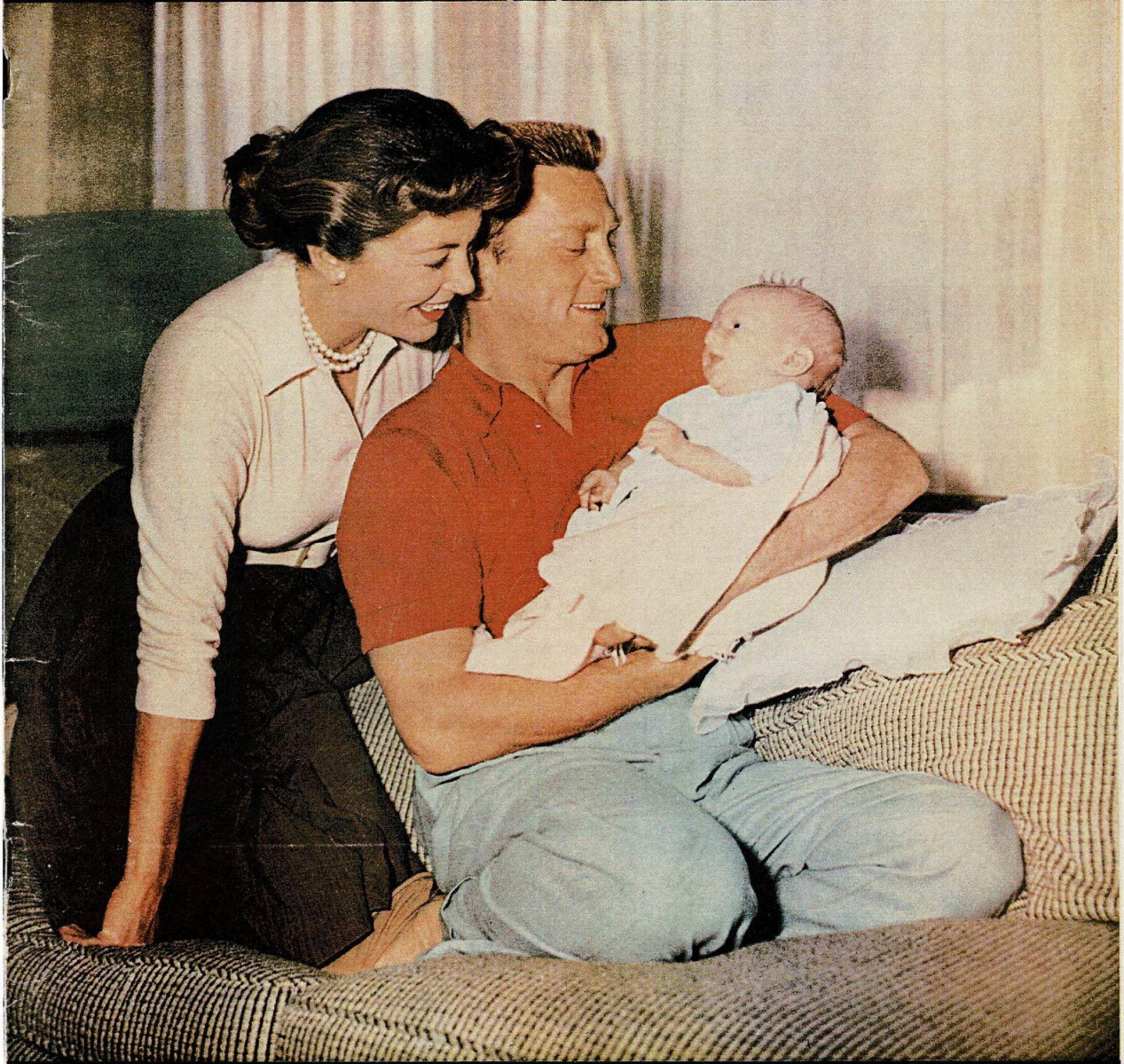


HIGH SHERIFF Trav Rogers (right) boarded medicine wagon at Big Top Ball with Mrs. Edwin Fallgren, Mrs. Frank Bering, Philip Reed, Clown Joe Burgess.



*The Coffee Table Magazine*

# Palm Springs Villager



PALM CANYON  
IN 1900  
By  
Lloyd Mason Smith  
MARCH 1956

*First Family "Baby Picture" of Kirk Douglases*  
**Palm Springs' Most Fantabulous Party of the Year**  
IN FULL COLOR PICTURES

COLOR PHOTO  
OF CACTUS  
IN  
FULL BLOOM  
50c

Kirk and Anne Douglas first public baby photos of Peter, 1956. Photo is taken in Palm Springs, prior to residing at 515 W. Via Lola. A strong Palm Springs presence is being established.





*Mrs. Kirk Douglas, Mrs. Rae Stark, Alan Livingston, Kirk Douglas, Betty Hutton, and Rae Stark.*

26 — PALM SPRINGS VILLAGER (February, 1956)

Dining at the Doll House, Palm Springs. Friends include actress Betty Hutton and Mrs. Rae Stark, Fanny Brice's daughter.



## The Architects

The Kirk Douglas Residence, built in 1954, was one of Donald Wexler's first residential commissions since forming Wexler & Harrison Architects in 1952. Built by Bob Higgins, a locally recognized home builder, the house had 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, several closets, exceptional kitchen, built in oven and range, a combination bar and butler's pantry, forced air heating, and a large estate lot.

Wexler & Harrison Architects (1952-1961) was formed after completing apprentice requirements working for architect William Cody. They leased office space on the second level of the Town & Country Center, at 174 North Palm Canyon Drive. Consequently, they would design a building for E.F Hutton at the Town & Country Center in 1955. Among the firm's earliest important commissions was the Palm Springs Spa and Bathhouse project at the prominent intersection of Tahquitz-McCallum Way and Indian Canyon Drive. Over the years the Wexler & Harrison Architects would design homes, residential subdivisions, schools, banks and offices. The partnership dissolved amicably in 1961.

Wexler and Harrison were essentially running two practices out of one office. By mutual agreement, the partners decided to part.

Richard A. Harrison (1921-1993) was educated at USC. He and his wife raised three children in Palm Springs, at their Deepwell Estates home. Harrison was quite involved in housing and developer work. Harrison opened his own office in 1961 at 577 Sunny Dunes, a building designed by Howard Lapham. Among Harrison's known projects as a sole proprietor are the Patencio Building, Seven Lakes Country Club development, alterations to the Frances Stevens Park and Art Center, Bermuda Dunes Cooperative Apartments and the Julius Corsini School in Desert Hot Springs.

Donald Wexler (1926-2015) was educated at the University of Minnesota. Upon graduation he moved to Los Angeles where he worked for Richard Neutra, whose influence can be seen in Wexler's work. He and his wife raised three children in their Palm Springs home, which he designed, on East Verbena Drive. He is known for pioneering the use of steel in residential design. Wexler's designs for public buildings, including the dramatic Palm Springs Airport, served as both soaring and practical models for other municipalities to emulate. His Steel Development House Number 2 is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Both Richard Harrison and Donald Wexler are the recipients of distinguished stars along Palm Canyon Drive, a Palm Springs honor of their achievements in architecture. That is only one of many honors and awards received for their extraordinary work within the architectural profession.

The drawings of the Kirk Douglas additions and remodel in 1964 were produced by Michael H. Morrison, 8457 Melrose Place, Los Angeles, California. Minimal information is available regarding his career. However, the location of the Douglasses Beverly Hills home and their relationship with the designer most likely brought him to Palm Springs to work on their house. His work was sympathetic to the original desert modernism of Wexler & Harrison's design. The additions and overall design concept retain the character defining features of post and beam structure, glass walls and transparency, horizontal single story frame, organic stone walls, and lack of ornamentation.

## **The Architecture**

The Kirk Douglas Estate is a single-family residence, zoned R-1-A, consisting of an approximately 4,200 square foot house, swimming pool, tennis pavilion, and tennis court. Tucked behind stone walls and gates, the estate centers on a low-slung main house designed by modernist architectural firm Wexler & Harrison, completed in 1954. Beamed ceilings, saltillo tile floors and a foyer with pecky cypress walls, lend a vintage touch to the interiors. Walls of floor-to-ceiling glass bring the outdoors inside.

A formal sitting area, living and dining rooms, a mirrored wet bar, five bedrooms and eight bathrooms lie within a single story. The kitchen has been updated. Of the bedrooms are a pair of master suites named for Kirk Douglas and his wife. Kirk's Suite features three closets and walls lined in denim blue, and Anne's Suite which has a wall of mirrored closets.

Outdoors, landscaped grounds include various patios, a garden atrium, a K-shaped saltwater swimming pool and a tennis court.

As designed by Wexler & Harrison, the modest house, approximately 3,280 square feet, sat on an original parcel consisting of approximately 19,910 square feet. When the property was purchased by the Douglasses, they eventually purchased an additional parcel of property to add a tennis pavilion and tennis court. The tennis pavilion has walls adorned with movie posters from Kirk's heyday, created by his wife, Anne. The walls are testimony to his internationally successful movie career, and they remain intact. The current parcel, as was occupied by the Douglasses, is approximately 31,000 square feet. The main residence is approximately 4,200 square feet and the tennis pavilion is approximately 760 square feet.

The period of significance relative to this historic property is 1959-1999, during the occupancy of Kirk Douglas and his family. Although modified by their designer, Michael H. Morrison, character defining features of Wexler & Harrison's desert modern design remain intact. The Kirk Douglas Estate represents significant Palm Springs history, the lifestyle of an internationally recognized movie star, and his influence on the local community of Palm Springs.

### **Changes and Additions to The Kirk Douglas Estate during their residency:**

The following additions and modifications have been made to the residence since it was sold to Kirk and Anne Douglas:

- The existing garage was converted into a bedroom and bath. 1964
- A new carport was added. 1964
- An addition was added to Anne's master suite. 1964
- The entry, great room and hall were expanded to the north. 1964
- A roof trellis was added to the south elevation of the house, with a new concrete slab. 1964
- Additional parcel of land was purchased to expand the property.
- A privacy garden wall was added to the entry. 1974
- A tennis pavilion was built. 1976
- A 6' diameter hot therapy pool was added. 1977
- Kitchen remodel. 1980

## **Local Architectural Context**

The Kirk Douglas Estate should be viewed within the context of the period Post World War II (1945-1969). The population growth accelerated in the 1950s, bringing a demand for civic necessities such as schools, libraries, museums, a city hall and police headquarters, as well as offices, stores, and housing. Palm Springs' growth as a tourist destination brought a demand for inns, resorts, and tourist attractions. Tourism also introduced a demand for affordable second homes for a growing middle class; the construction and financing methods for building such mass-produced housing tracts were already developing in suburban areas of larger cities, including nearby Los Angeles, and found a ready market in Palm Springs. Though Palm Springs was a smaller municipality, this economic climate provided many opportunities for locally-based architects, as well as several Los Angeles architects, to explore and develop a wide range of architectural types and ideas, sometimes influenced by sophisticated global design trends. These conditions and the architects' talents lead to the development of an exceptional group of Modern buildings which later came to be identified as "Palm Springs Modernism", "Desert Modernism" or "The Palm Springs School." The rise of celebrity status within Palm Springs continued during the 1950's and 1960's, with the proximity to Los Angeles and the movie studios. Many movie stars and influential persons within the film industry could venture to Palm Springs for a relaxing weekend, then easily be back to Los Angeles to continue work on films. The trend to purchase a residence in Palm Springs was rapidly occurring, and the Douglasses were influential during this trend. The selection of desert modernism strengthened the movement of this new, influential style of design, and its status was elevated beyond the middle-class.

## **Site Description**

Location: The Kirk Douglas Estate is located prominently in the Merito Vista 2 tract in what is now commonly known as Old Las Palmas. The residence is bounded on the north by West Via Lola, to the east and west by residential parcels with homes, and to the south by the tennis court of the Dinah Shore Estate. Kirk added a gate between the two properties to engage in tennis matches between the two celebrities and their friends. During the Douglasses residency, their neighbors included Robert Howard and Andrea Leeds, William Powell, Rudy Vallee, Alan Ladd, El Mirador owner Ray Ryan, Donald Duncan, Jeanette and Winthrop Rockefeller, Sydney Korshak, and Dinah Shore and husband Maurice Smith. The neighborhood was filled with many other celebrities and persons of international distinction.

## Permit History

18Sep53 – Building Permit No. 6389 (7 room frame & Stucco dwelling – 2 car garage compo roof). Tract: Merito Vista #2. Owner: R. S. Howard/Contractor: R. C. Higgins

Date unreadable – Electrical Permit No. unreadable (Temporary Service). Coast Electric & Refrigeration Co.

Date unreadable – Plumbing Permit No. unreadable (Sinks, toilets, bathtubs, showers, water heaters). S. G. LeMen Plumbing

6Oct53 – Plumbing Permit No. 5624 (Cesspool, septic tank). S. G. LeMen Plumbing

20Oct53 – Electrical Permit No. 5244 (Outlets, fixtures, heaters). Coast Electric & Refrigeration Co.

3Dec56 – Building Permit No. 9232 (Const. 18x36 Swimming Pool). Manchon Pools. Owner: Robert Higgins

14Aug57 – Building Permit No. 9938 (Addition of bedroom & bath – Frame & stucco construction – Compo Roof). Owner: R. C. Higgins

21Aug57 – Plumbing Permit No. 9984 (Bathtub, lavatory, toilet, water piping). Plumber: Owner

20Oct57 – Electrical Permit No. 8712 (Outlets, light fixtures, heaters)

29May59 – Electrical Permit No. 1703 (Meter loop, air conditioner). **Owner: Kirk Douglas**  
(NOTE: First permit showing Kirk Douglas as owner of 515 West Via Lola)

11Aug64 – Building Permit No. 7180 (Add Frame Carport/485 sq.ft. to and remodel existing dwelling). Owner: Mr. & Mrs. Kirk Douglas/Contractor: Jack Strauss. Plans were done by Michael H. Morrison, 8457 Melrose Place, Los Angeles, CA.

20Aug64 – Plumbing Permit No. 4433 (Lavatories, shower, sewer piping)

14Apr66 – Sewer Permit No. 5622 (Bathtubs, lavatories, toilets, showers, sinks, garbage disposal, dish washers)

13Aug74 – Building Permit No. 7810 (Const 55 lin ft of 6' double faced stone screen wall in front of dwelling (out of front setback). Signed by John R. Belt as "occupant of property."

30Aug76 – Building Permit No. 10482 (Interior remodel and enclose existing roofed patio for dining area. Frame and stucco const.) 112 sq. ft. add/56 sq. ft. new roofed area. Contractor: Wm. Foster

15Sep76 – Mechanical Permit No. 3996 (air conditioning). Contractor: Desert Air Conditioning

1Dec76 – Building Permit No. 11156 (Const a recreational pavilion (tennis pavilion) 19'x40' equipped with 1 1/5 bath and bar sink. Frame and stucco with stone veneer.) 760 sq. ft. auxiliary bldg. as described above. Contractor: Wm. Foster

7Feb77 – Building Permit No. 0107 (Const 6' diameter hot therapy pool adjacent to existing pool, conc gunite). Contractor: Hoams Pools

10Jun83 – Building Permit No. 1686 (Change out A/C condenser). Contractor: Paul's Air Conditioning

5Jan84 – Building Permit No. 3040 (ReRoof & insulate per city codes). Contractor: U-foam Expts.

2Jul85 – Building Permit No. 06990 (Gas Repair & re-pipe periso-metric)

**NOTE:** No recent permit history exists. No significant alterations to the house, other than interior modifications, have occurred.

## **Background / Historic Context**

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into several distinct periods, as defined by the Historic Resources Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*. These include the following:

- Native American Settlement to 1969
- Early Development (1884-1918)
- Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)
- Palm Springs during World War II (1939-1945)
- Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)

It is within the context of the period "Post-World War II Palm Springs" that the Kirk Douglas Estate will be evaluated.

## **Local Records**

Building Permits (1953-1980) and Telephone Books (1954–1959) substantiate the history of the property.

One of the earliest mentions of Kirk Douglas, the motion picture actor, is from *Palm Springs Villager* under the "Village Life" column. Here Kirk Douglas is pictured with tennis racquet in hand, shaking hands with Charles Farrell. He spent time at the Racquet Club while recuperating from pneumonia. Desert atmosphere and sunshine brought speedy recovery and he was back to playing tennis, then returning to work in Los Angeles.

Several records can be found of Kirk and his wife Anne, in the local media, enjoying life in Palm Springs circa 1956. Kirk Douglas was the Grand Marshall of the Desert Circus, and his sons Michael and Joel were the deputies.

The Douglasses spearheaded improvements to their neighborhood. They took up a collection to have the outdated septic systems converted to underground sewer lines along their street. They were advocates for the removal of telephone poles along the street, and the installation of underground cables. These projects involved a great deal of tenacity from the Douglasses. Anne eventually became known as “The Mayor of Via Lola”. The *Desert Sun* reported, the late former Mayor Sonny Bono proposed changing the name of El Cielo Road, near the airport, to Kirk Douglas Drive. The City voted against it, due to expense and inconvenience of local residents. Letters of support poured into the local newspaper. Famous Palm Springs resident, Don Meredith of the Dallas Cowboys, opined to name a mountain, not merely a street, after the internationally acclaimed movie star. Palm Springs Mayor Frank Bogert praised Kirk Douglas as one of Palm Springs' most active citizens, always involved in major functions for the city of Palm Springs. Eventually, a new street near the Palm Springs International Airport was named in Kirk Douglas' honor.

## **EVALUATION:**

**Criterion 2: Significant Persons.** Criterion 2 recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history. The criterion is generally restricted to those properties that illustrate a person's important achievements. In order to determine whether a property is significant for its associative values under this Criterion, the importance of the individual must be established along with the length and nature of his/her association with the subject property and any other properties associated with the individual.

In the evaluation of historic properties, one of the most consistent dilemmas is how to establish the importance of “persons”. Acceptable practice determines a person who has made a significant contribution is quantified as follows: A person of primary importance, intimately connected with the property receives the highest rating. An example would be a home that was built, commissioned, or occupied by a celebrity. The home would ultimately reflect the personality as well as the programmatic requirements of that person as interpreted by the architect. The Kirk Douglas Estate is an example of a person of primary importance, intimately connected with the property. Kirk and Anne Douglas retained ownership, and resided at the property for four decades.

By comparison, the programmatic requirements of a person of primary importance, loosely connected to a property, or a person of secondary importance intimately connected with a property would not have benefited from the significant person's input. This is analogous to the “Washington Slept Here” school of preservation. The connection with the property is incidental, and is not reflected in the building's design. In Palm Springs, there are innumerable examples of historic properties acquired by celebrities who had no input into their origins. Nonetheless, these properties are marketed at premium prices as the home of a famous person.



Kirk Douglas made a meaningful contribution to local history through his career as a nationally acclaimed movie star and producer whose presence in Palm Springs was an important influence in the city's history. His continuing involvement in Palm Springs cultural and philanthropic life continued throughout several decades. His personal involvement in the history of Palm Springs rises to the level sufficient to qualify the building's eligibility for local listing. The Kirk Douglas Estate qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Site on the local registry under Criterion 2.

## **ARCHITECTURE** (Criteria 3 – 6)

**Criterion 3:** *(That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history).*

The Kirk Douglas Residence was designed by locally prominent architects, Wexler & Harrison. The stylistic markers of the building place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. The Kirk Douglas Residence represents a prime and intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such the Kirk Douglas Estate may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important mid-century architecture. *This historic trend exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The Kirk Douglas Estate qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 3.*

**Criterion 4:** *(That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or) Type, Period, and Method of Construction: "Type, period, or method of construction" refers to the way certain properties are related to one another by cultural tradition or function, by dates of construction or style, or by choice or availability of materials and technology. To be eligible under this Criterion, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics" a pattern of features common to a particular class of resources. "Distinctive characteristics" are the physical features or traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.*

The Kirk Douglas Estate is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that embody the Mid-Century Modern Style such as overall horizontality, expression of structure, expansive amounts of glass, use of organic materials, etc. Additionally, the Kirk Douglas Estate is eligible under this criterion because it represents an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at mid-century. The Kirk Douglas Estate qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 4.

**Criterion 5:** *(That (a): represents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or (b): that possesses high artistic value).*

**5a: Work of a Master:** A master is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill. The property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his work, or a particular idea or theme in his craft. A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect. For example, not every building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is eligible under this portion of Criterion 5, although it might meet other Criteria.

The Kirk Douglas Residence, built in 1954, was one of Wexler & Harrison Architects first residential commissions in 1952. Although several modifications occurred during the occupancy of the Douglasses, their designer Michael H. Morrison sensitively retained character defining features of Wexler & Harrison's desert modern design. The current condition of the house maintains the design attributed to the period of the Douglasses residency.

The Kirk Douglas Estate exemplifies Wexler & Harrison's early residential work. The concepts of natural materials, an open floor plan, the use of large glass areas that face away from public view while providing outlooks to private gardens throughout the private site, are displayed here. Outdoor spaces contribute as much to the design as indoor spaces, and thin projecting overhangs for shade are evidence of the architects' guiding principles that have been retained throughout the years, and remain timeless design.



Architects Donald Wexler (left) and Richard Harrison (right).

**5b: Properties possessing high artistic values:** High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture.

The design of the Kirk Douglas Estate provides shelter and shade from the harsh desert sun, and allows fresh air to circulate throughout the expansive site and buildings. This convergence of interior and exterior space was a common practice in midcentury modern design.

The influence of Kirk and Anne regarding community qualifies as a distinction of community design relative to the underground sewer lines, and relocation of telephone utility lines from above ground to below ground. Their efforts enhanced the aesthetic conditions of the view-sensitive neighborhood, and continue to be a significant enhancement to the Palm Springs lifestyle.

As the work of Masters, and for its high artistic values, the Kirk Douglas Estate qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 5.

**Criterion 6:** (That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction). This Criterion was created to address the resources contained within a potential historic district. As such, Criterion 6 does not apply. Hence, the Kirk Douglas Estate does not qualify under Criterion 6.

## ARCHEOLOGY

**Criterion 7:** (That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory). The Kirk Douglas Estate does not qualify for listing on the local registry under Criterion 7.

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## 7. Integrity Analysis (using U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards)

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## INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

## LOCATION

Location is the place where an historic property was constructed or the place where an historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often important to understanding why the property was created or why something happened. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historic events and persons. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved.

The Kirk Douglas Estate is located prominently in the Merito Vista 2 tract in what is now commonly known as Old Las Palmas. The residence is bounded on the north by West Via Lola, to the east and west by residential parcels with homes, and to the south by the tennis court of the Dinah Shore Estate. The overall site remains in tact. ***The Kirk Douglas Estate remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect.***

## DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Kirk Douglas Estate's essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived mostly intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing have survived with a large portion intact.***

***Though additions were built when the Douglasses took ownership, the additions are seamlessly integrated with the original architecture, and have been done using the same architectural vocabulary, and quality of construction, as the original structure.***

## **SETTING**

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The views of the mountains remain as stunning as originally designed. The landscape organically engages with the interiors of the structures, as originally intended. The setting of The Kirk Douglas Estate continues to reflect the architects' original design relationship of site and structure.***

## **MATERIALS**

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. ***The Kirk Douglas Estate's materials successfully represent the best of mid-century modern design, with high quality but simple stucco, stone, wood and glass. Later changes were done using the same materials and quality of construction and are done in such a way as to not negatively impact the overall historic fabric of the original building.***

## **WORKMANSHIP**

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***A privacy wall was added to the street façade, in 1974, by the Douglasses. It retains the artisan's masonry skill evidenced in the original home, as do the additions to the main residence, and the construction of the tennis pavilion. The workmanship of The Kirk Douglas Estate is comprised of high- quality finishes and materials, stone masonry, stucco, glass detail, and wood detailing.***

***The residence continues to express a high degree of period workmanship.***

## **FEELING**

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***A celebration of Kirk's movie career remains proudly displayed in the tennis pavilion. The Kirk Douglas Estate is sited on a prominent lot which takes advantage of panoramic mountain views to the west. Accordingly, the residence and contributing structures retain their original integrity of feeling.***

## **ASSOCIATION**

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it *is* the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***The Kirk Douglas Estate is an important example of a custom-designed modern, private residence in Palm Springs. Accordingly, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community.***

**INTEGRITY SUMMARY:** The Kirk Douglas Estate appears to be in excellent condition partially due to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. This integrity analysis confirms that the building and site of The Kirk Douglas Estate still possess several aspects of integrity. ***Though a significant addition has been made to the original Wexler design, the additions were designed using sympathetic materials and workmanship. In summary, the residence still possesses a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Site.***



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## 8. Bibliography

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Attached is a list of books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application and other documentation that may be relevant.

### Books

Bricker, Lauren. *Steel and Shade – The Architecture of Donald Wexler*. Palm Springs: Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011

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Hine, Al. "Palm Springs is Perfect." *Holiday*, February 1953: pp. 98-104.

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Howard Johns, "The Great and The Beautiful". *Palm Springs Life*, June 1999

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#### Other Sources Consulted

- City of Palm Springs (Planning and Building Departments)
- *The Desert Sun*
- *Palm Springs Villager*
- Palm Springs Phone Books, 1954 – 1960
- Palm Springs Historical Society
- Palm Springs Public Library
- Riverside County Assessor's Office

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#### **9. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: 0.75 acres

Property Boundary Description: Real property in the City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California, described as follows:

Parcel 1, as shown by parcel map no. 8336 on file in book 33 page 52 of parcel maps, records of Riverside County, California. Excepting therefrom that portion lying within Lot 20 of Merito Vista, as shown by map on file in book 12 page 94 of maps, records of Riverside County, California.

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#### **10. Prepared By**

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Name/title: Susan Secoy Jensen ([susan@secoyarchitects.com](mailto:susan@secoyarchitects.com))

Organization: Submitted on behalf of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Street address: 1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195

City: Palm Springs

State: CA

Zip: 92264

Telephone: (760) 837-7117

e-mail address: [info@pspreservationfoundation.org](mailto:info@pspreservationfoundation.org)

#### **Consultant's Qualifications:**

Professional Qualifications Standards: The Code of Federal Regulations, 36

CFR Part 61 defines the minimum education and experience required to perform historic preservation identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities. The minimum professional qualifications in architecture are a professional degree in architecture plus at least two years full -time experience in architecture; or a State license to practice architecture. The minimum professional qualifications in Historic Architecture are a professional degree in architecture or a state license to practice architecture, plus one of the following:

1. At least one year of graduate study in architectural preservation, American architectural history, preservation planning, or closely related field.
2. At least one year of full-time professional experience on historic preservation projects. Such graduate study or experience shall include detailed investigations of historic structures, preparation of historic structures research reports, and preparation of plans and specifications for preservation projects.

Susan Secoy Jensen received her Bachelor of Architecture from Kent State University in 1986, and her Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design from UCLA in 1994. Graduate studies included historic preservation studies in Mexico City, and adjacent communities. She has been actively engaged in the architectural profession, specializing in historic preservation and modern design, since then. Secoy Jensen has been a licensed architect in the State of California since 1991. She possesses an in-depth knowledge of procedures and standards utilized in the identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment of historic properties. She has owned and managed Secoy Architects, Inc. since 1996, specializing in modern and adaptive reuse projects.

(Consultants Qualifications, continued)

#### Memberships and Professional Affiliations:

Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, Board of Directors & Advisory Board  
Palm Springs Historical Society  
American Institute of Architects (AIA), member since 1991  
Architecture and Design Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum  
City of Orange Design Review Committee, former member and Chair  
City of Orange, Old Towne Preservation Foundation  
NCARB certified  
Lambda Alpha International former member of Executive Board  
Palm Springs Architectural Advisory Committee, former member and Chair  
Palm Springs Southridge Neighborhood, former member HOA Board of Directors

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## 11. Required Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed application form. **Do not mount any exhibits on a board.**

1. **Attachment Sheets.** Include all supplemental information based on application form above).

2. **Maps:** For Historic Districts, include a sketch map identifying the proposed districts boundaries.
3. **Photographs:** Eight (8) sets of color photographs showing each elevation of the property and its surroundings.
4. **Non-owner's Notarized Signature:** If the applicant is not the owner, a notarized affidavit shall be provided (see following page).
5. **Site Plan:** One 1/8" to 1/4" scale drawing of the site, and eight reduction copies (8 ½ x 11 inches) The site plan shall show all of the following: Property boundaries, north arrow and scale, all existing buildings, structures, mechanical equipment, landscape materials, fences, walls, sidewalks, driveways, parking areas showing location of parking spaces, and signs. **Indicate the square footage and use of each building and the date(s) of construction.**
6. **Public Hearing Labels:** Three (3) sets of typed self-adhesive labels of all property owners, lessees, and sub-lessees of record. **The labels shall include the Assessor's parcel number, owner's name and mailing address of each property with 400 feet from the exterior limits of the subject property.** Additionally, all Assessor Parcel Maps clearly indicating the 400-foot radius and a certified letter from a title company licensed to conduct business in Riverside County, California shall be submitted.

Note: If any property on this list is owned by the United States Government in trust for the Agua Caliente Indian Tribe or individual allottee, copies of notices with postage paid envelopes will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to notify the individual Indian land owners of the public hearings.

# Appendices

## I. Owner's Letter of Support

July 25, 2017

City of Palm Springs  
Historic Site Preservation Board  
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

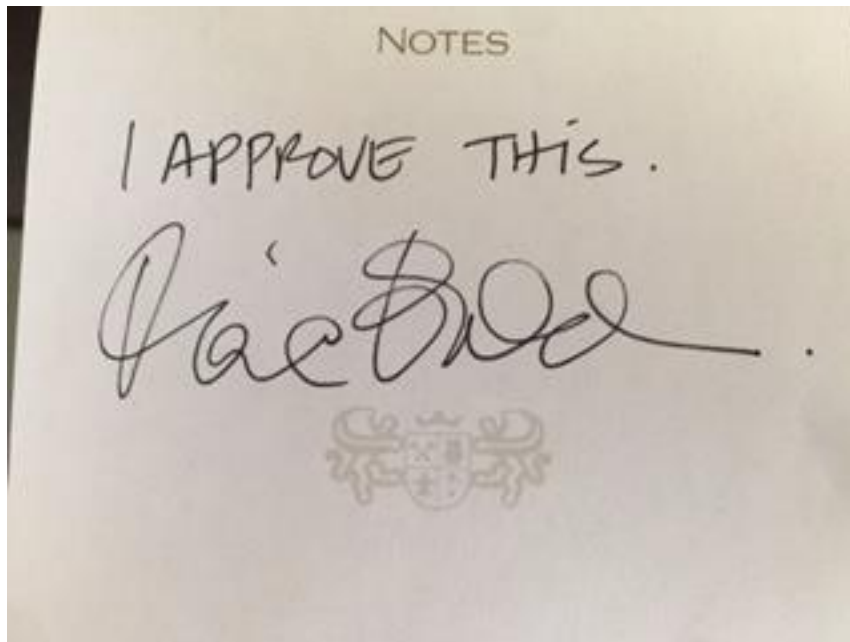
Dear Honorable Board,

As the current owner of the Kirk Douglas Residence at 515 West Via Lola, I enthusiastically support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of my property by the city of Palm Springs. I have asked the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to assist me in the preparation of the required nomination paperwork.

If you have any questions, please contact me by email at [dianeald@rogers.com](mailto:dianeald@rogers.com).

Sincerely,

Diane Bald



# II. Assessor's Map

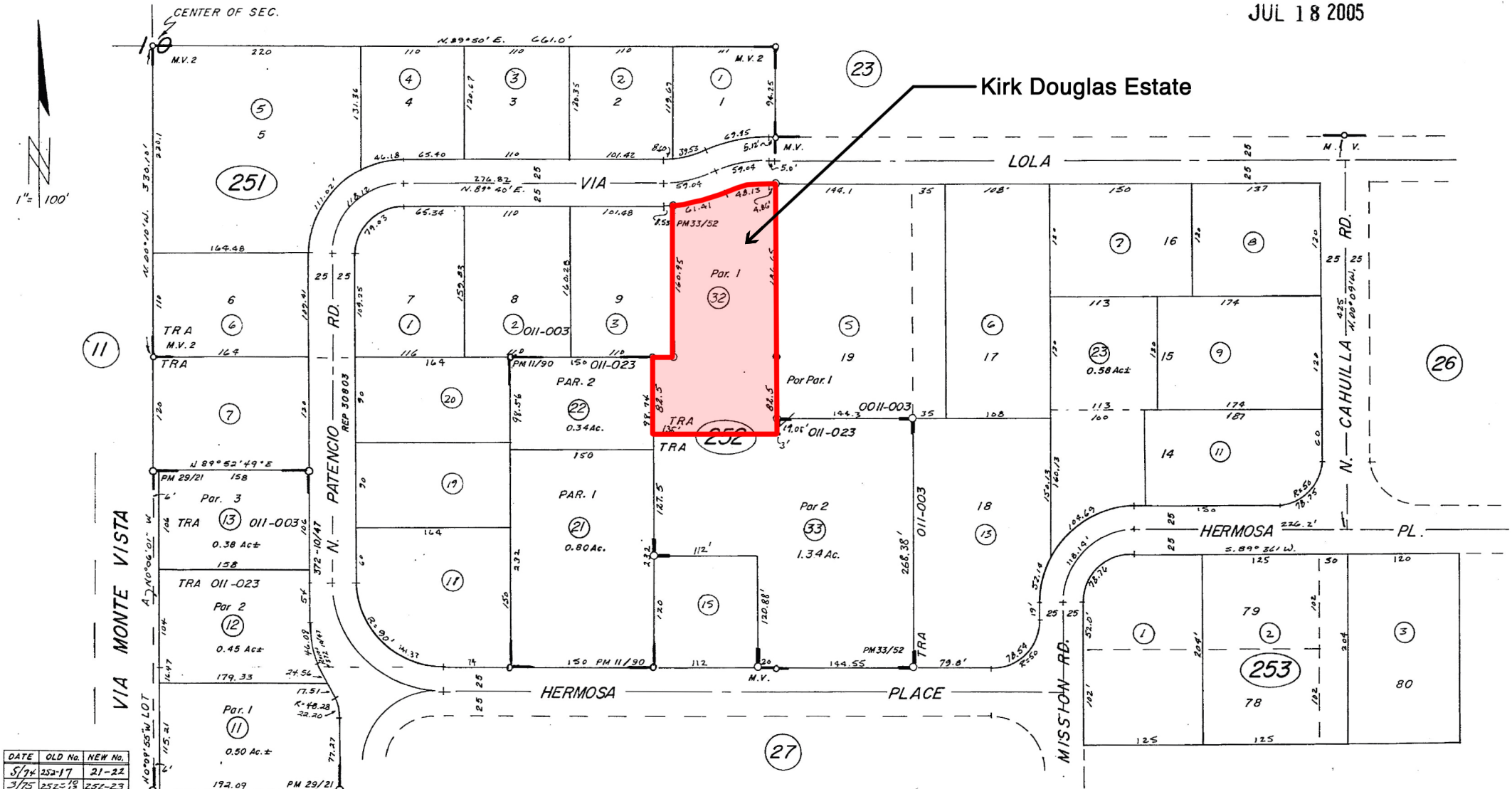
505-25  
29-13

T. C. A. 011-003  
011-023

Por. NW<sup>4</sup>SE<sup>4</sup> SEC.10 T.4S. R.4E.

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY. NO LIABILITY IS ASSUMED FOR ACCURACY OF THE DATA SHOWN. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL MAY NOT COMPLY WITH LOCAL LOT-SPLIT OR BUILDING SITE ORDINANCES.

JUL 18 2005



M.B. 12/94 MERITO VISTA

M.B. 21/2 " " NO. 2

P.M. 11/90

Parcel Map 7217 PM 29/21

P.M. 33/52 Parcel Map No. 8336

DATA: PALM SPRINGS STREET MAPS  
R.S. 39/49

JUL 29 2005

ASSESSOR'S MAP BK. 505 PG. 25  
RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIF.

(NOT)



### III. Grant Deed

DOC # 2016-0229762

06/06/2016 10:34 AM Fees: \$28.00

Page 1 of 2

Recorded in Official Records

County of Riverside

Peter Aldana

Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

**RECORDING REQUESTED BY:**

First American Title Ins. Co.

**AND WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:**

Diane Bald  
153 Richview Ave.  
Toronto Ontario Canada M5P1V9,

\*\*This document was electronically submitted  
to the County of Riverside for recording\*\*  
Received by: ALYCIA #778

THIS SPACE FOR RECORDER'S USE ONLY:

Title Order No.: 5176025

Escrow No.: 034370-JE

AP#: 505-253-032 TRA 011-003

GRANT DEED

THE UNDERSIGNED GRANTOR(S) DECLARE(S)

**DOCUMENTARY TRANSFER TAX is \$3,850.00**

[X] computed on full value of property conveyed, or

[ ] computed on full value less value of liens or encumbrances remaining at time of sale.

[ ] Unincorporated area [X] City of Palm Springs **AND**

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged,

Mark Leonard Dietrich, Successor Trustee of The Todd M. Jenkins Trust dated July 20, 2004

hereby GRANT(s) to:

Diane Bald, Trustee of ~~The~~ Budman Family Trust dated August 28, 1998

the real property in the City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California, described as:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION ATTACHED HERETO AS EXHIBIT "A" AND MADE A PART HEREOF

Also Known as: 515 W. Via Lola, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dated May 12, 2016

The Todd M. Jenkins Trust dated July 20, 2004

By: Mark Leonard Dietrich, Successor Trustee

A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of the individual who signed the document to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF Riverside

On May 23, 2016 before me, Sherrie L. Wells

appeared Mark Leonard Dietrich

A Notary Public personally  
who proved to me on the

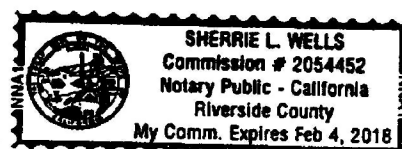
basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature Sherrie L. Wells (Seal)

MAIL TAX STATEMENTS TO PARTY SHOWN BELOW; IF NO PARTY SHOWN, MAIL AS SHOWN ABOVE:



**Exhibit "A"**

**Legal Description**

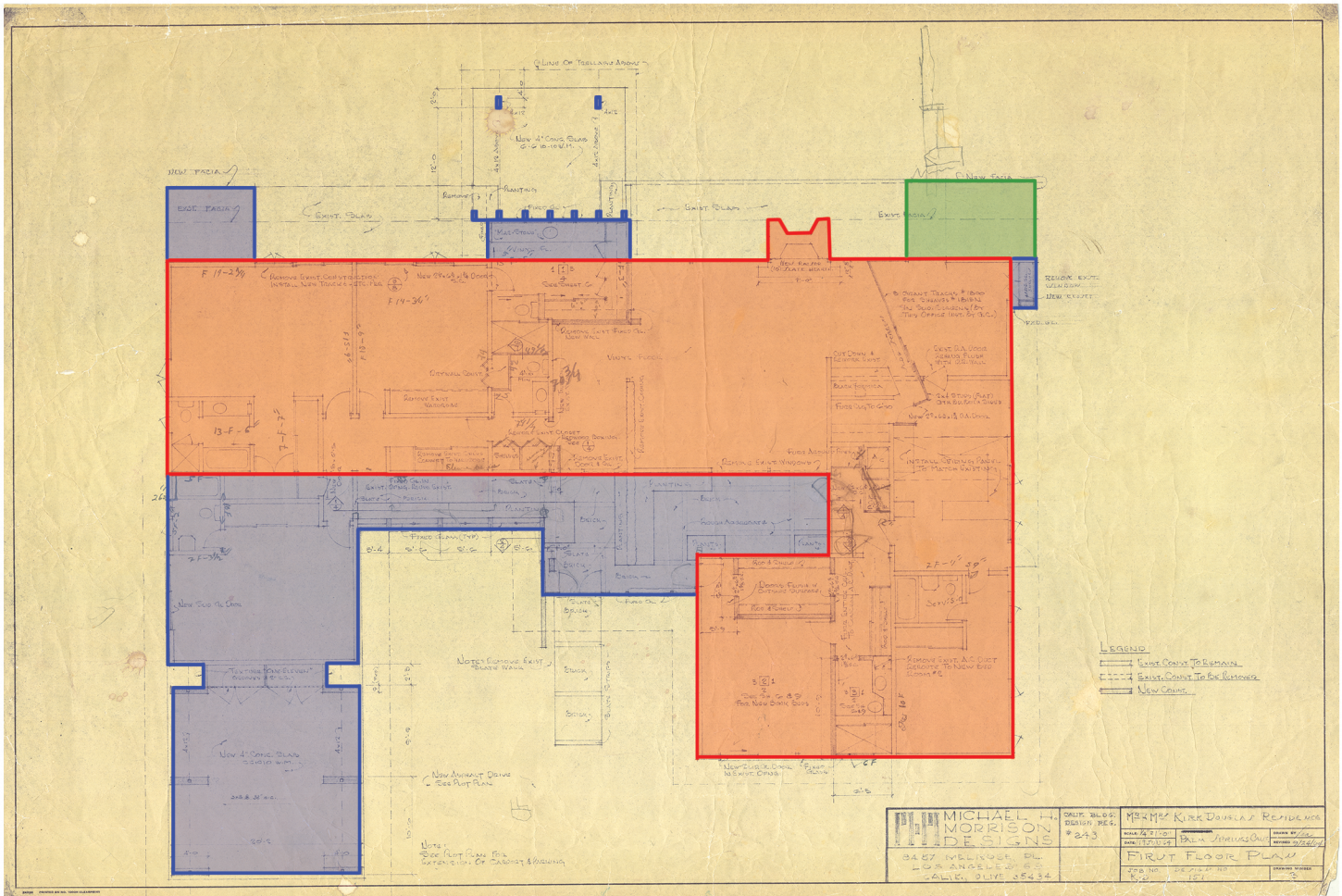
A.P.N.: 505-252-032-8

Real property in the City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California, described as follows:

PARCEL 1, AS SHOWN BY PARCEL MAP NO. 8336 ON FILE IN BOOK 33 PAGE(S) 52 OF PARCEL MAPS, RECORDS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.

EXCEPTING THEREFROM THAT PORTION LYING WITHIN LOT 20 OF MERITO VISTA, AS SHOWN BY MAP ON FILE IN BOOK 12 PAGE(S) 94 OF MAPS, RECORDS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.

## IV. Changes to Footprint of House

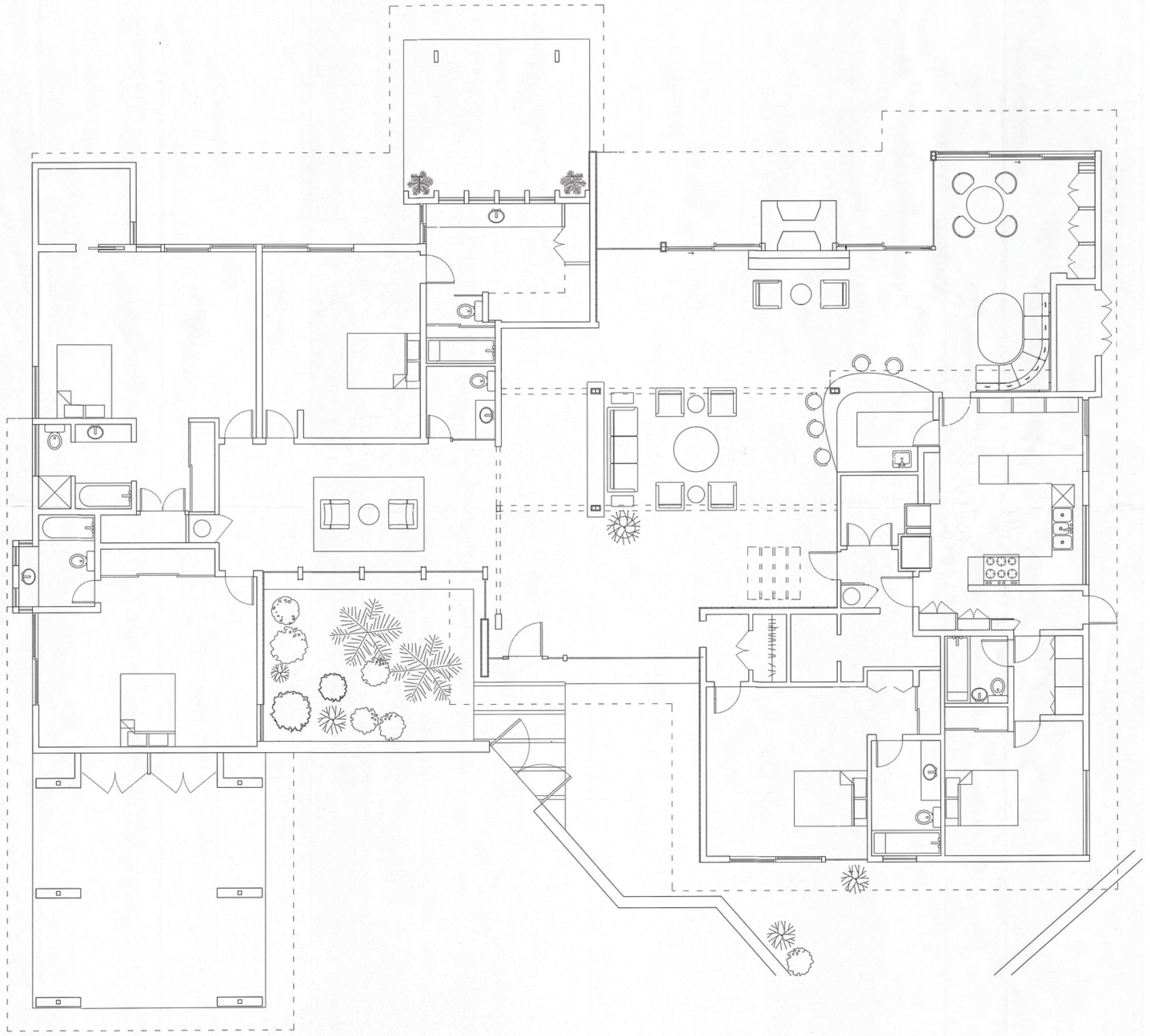


= Original Footprint 1954

= Area of Addition 1964

= Area of Addition 1976

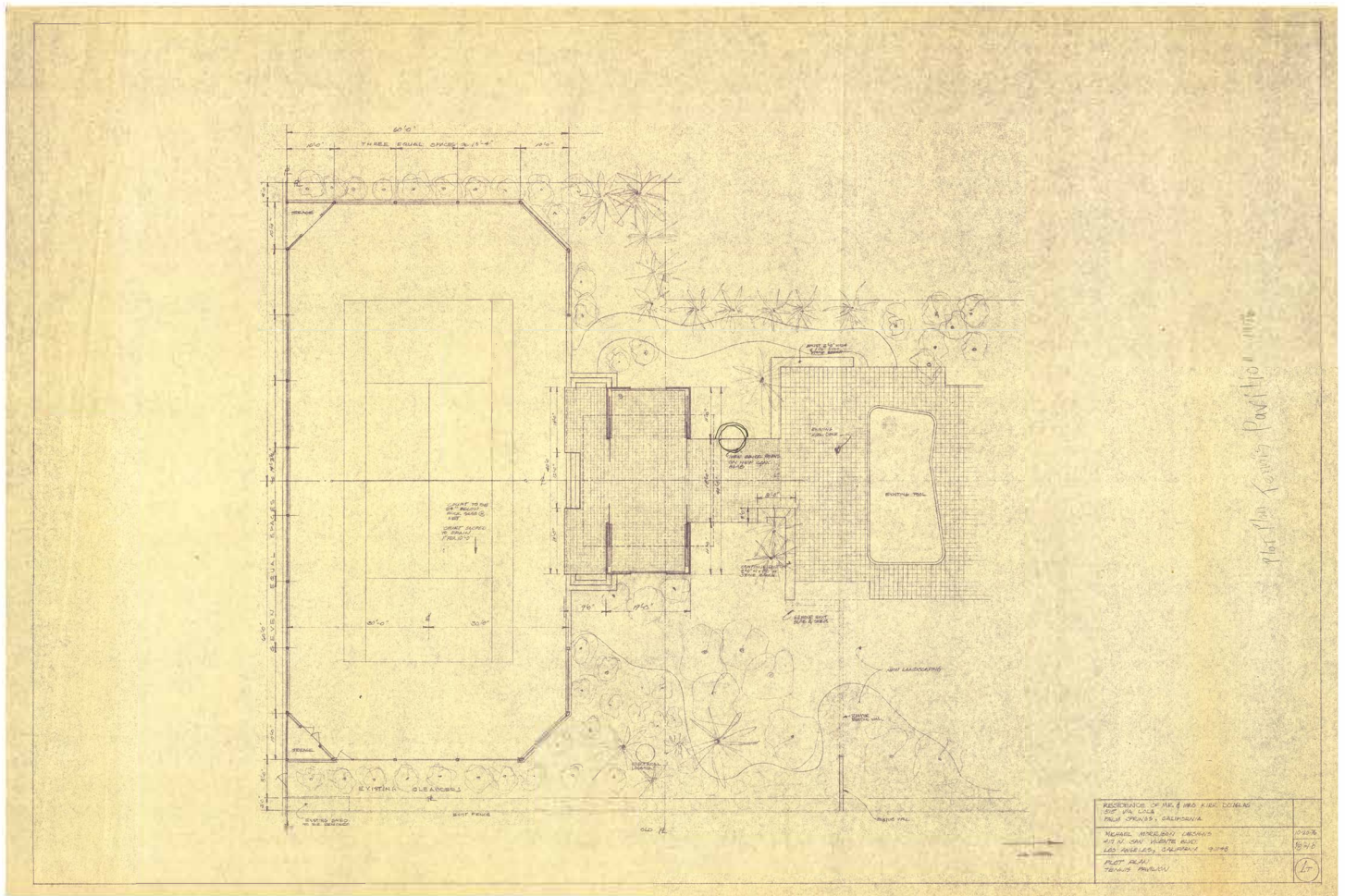




Current Owner's Floor Plan

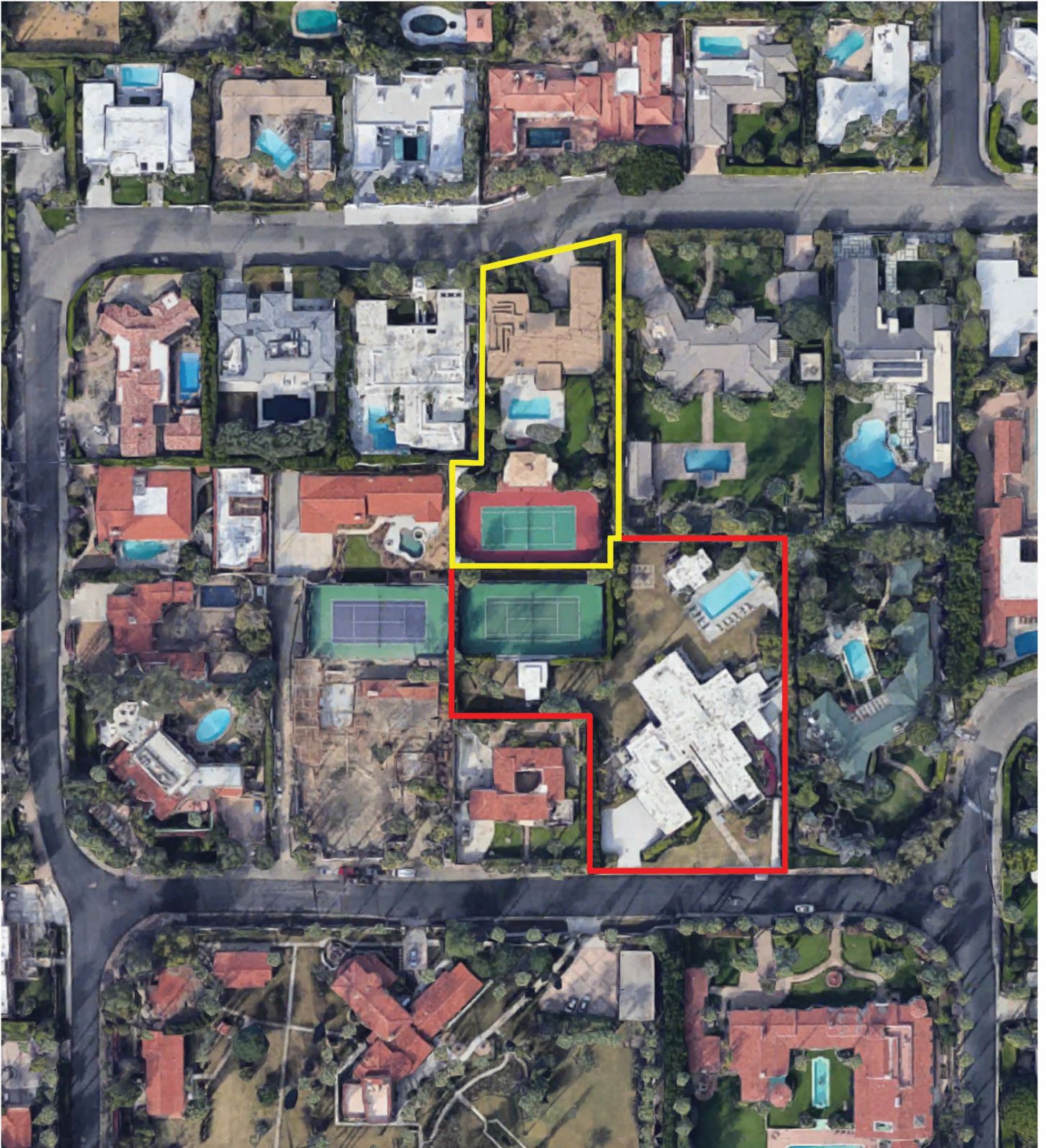









## V. Aerial Photo



 = Kirk Douglass Estate

 = Dinah Shore Estate



## VI. Photographs of Significant Images



Main Residence, South Elevation





Pool and Tennis Pavilion





View from Tennis Pavilion





View Looking West at Mountains and Tennis Pavilion







Street View of Main Residence, North Elevation







View Looking South Towards Tennis Pavilion



Aerial View of Estate Looking Southwest





Main Residence Backyard





Interior Tennis Pavilion, Wallpaper Art Created by Anne Douglas showcasing Kirk's Movie Posters





Kirk's Suite





Anne's Suite