

The Hourglass

Spring 2021



In Memoriam

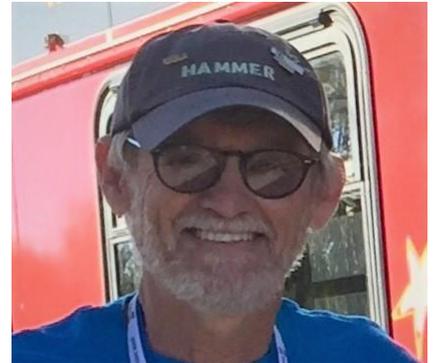
Jim West, Architectural Historian

By Linda Holden Clode

Jim West was renowned throughout the Coachella Valley as a knowledgeable and fearless advocate for the recognition and preservation of significant works in the desert by architects who gained their reputations here and those who were internationally known. He was a founding member of several valley organizations and sat on numerous committees and boards throughout southern California, making significant and enduring contributions.

The Sandpiper and Bill Krisel

Jim and his wife, fellow preservationist Karen Prinzmetal, purchased their home in the Sandpiper in 1998. They met Bill Krisel and had an enduring relationship with the family. Jim's extensive research and knowledge of Sandpiper was widely acknowledged. Jim contributed a chapter to the book, "William Krisel's Palm Springs: The Language of Modernism", co-written by Heidi Creighton and Chris Menard. Creighton notes, "With the exception of William Krisel, Jim West probably knew the development, design, landscape, hardscape and engineering of the Sandpiper better than anyone else. That's why Krisel insisted that for his monograph, the only one he would approve to write on it was Jim." Jim's extensive archival material on Sandpiper was essential to the historic designations granted for Sandpiper Circles 5-10 by the Palm Desert City Council in 2017.



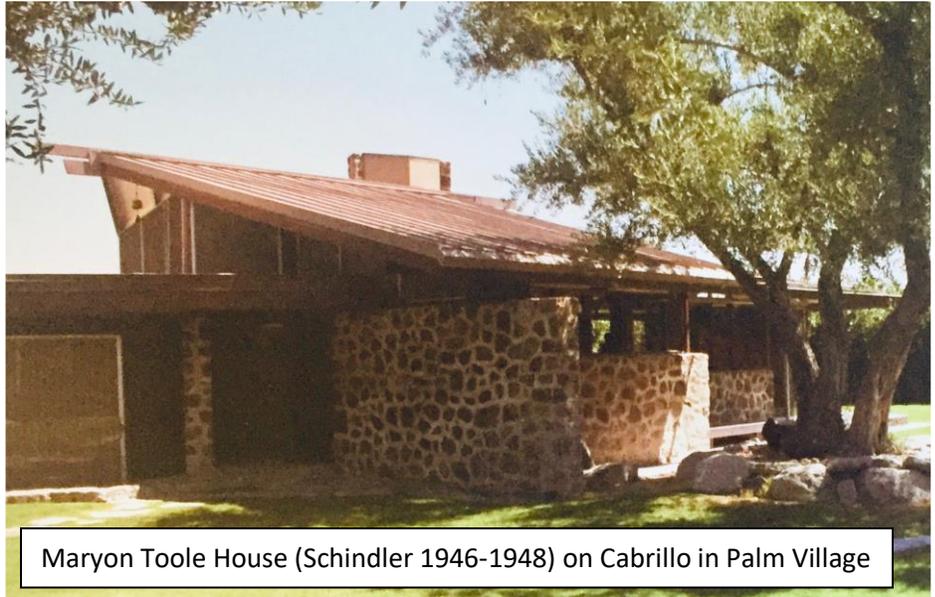
Jim often spoke at homeowner meetings, sharing his knowledge of the historical significance of the Sandpiper. Jim and Karen worked tirelessly to assist neighbors restoring their units and became the unofficial ambassadors for the complex by welcoming new owners and offering information and advice. They kept a supply of mid-century fittings and were often able to help homeowners replace a light fixture or door handle. Cim Castellon fondly recalls the "afternoon knock on my door from Jim with an overhead light frame in hand, to offer as a replacement for my missing one, as a house-warming gift."

Jim's role as an architectural historian continued to expand. While a member of the City of Palm Desert's Architectural Committee, he was involved in the historical designation of the only extant Rudolph Schindler home (1946-1948) in the valley, stating to the Desert Sun (2/24/14) that it is one of the most significant buildings in the desert.

Modernism Week

From 2003-2018, Jim and Karen, working on their own and with others, organized several tours of the Sandpiper for the Architecture and Design Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum, The Art, Design and Architecture Council of UC Santa Barbara, and for the general public during Modernism Week.

In addition, Jim and Karen created and produced the double-decker bus tours of significant architecture in Palm Desert from 2015-2018, during the February Modernism Week. I was the narrator, and we would take a trial run in their Mini. Karen would drive while I practiced my narration out loud, Jim scrunched in the back seat, stopwatch in hand, recording how long each stop on the route would be. The narration was based on extensive research conducted with Jim's thoroughness and attention to detail.



Maryon Toole House (Schindler 1946-1948) on Cabrillo in Palm Village

Palm Desert has an amazing cache of historical architecture treasures, including the commercial and residential works of William Bray, William Cody, Charles Du Bois, Albert Frey, John Outcalt, William Pereira, Rudolph Schindler, Walter S. White, John Elgin Woolf, and the teams of Patton and Wild, Wexler and Harrison, Frey and Chambers and Williams and Williams, as well as celebrity homes like Hop-a-Long Cassidy's.



Jim, Linda and Karen

In 2017 Jim and Karen designed the first Modernism Week Walking Tour with a focus on the Shadow Mountain area. A highlight of the tour was the "Lost Krisel" (discovered by Jim and Karen on a casual neighborhood walk in 2008) where tour guests had an opportunity to go into the backyard to see the rear of the house.



Jim leading the pack

Collections and Accolades

Jim developed, curated and maintained amazing collections. For the Historical Society of Palm Desert, he curated local architect John Outcault's architectural artifacts, now available to students and researchers in the Architecture and Design Collection of the Art, Architecture and Design Museum, UC Santa Barbara. He also curated an exhibition on Sandpiper for the HSPD and authored many brochures and pamphlets. He played a key role in the historical designation of the iconic "Wave House", a Walter S. White designed one-of-a-kind home in Palm Desert. At every opportunity he ensured that people who should meet, did, and that the body of architectural knowledge and artifacts continued to be strengthened and enhanced.

Photographer and author James Schnepf ("Palm Springs Modern Living", 2015) credits the introductions given him by Jim for the success of his book and feels that "Without him, it never would have happened." Indian Wells architectural modernist Linda Blank claims that access to the West/Prinzmetal archives was integral to the development of interest in modernism in Indian Wells. She notes that "...we continue to honor Jim's memory, and Karen's continuing commitment, through citations in all previous and future published Indian Wells Modernism Week programs...."



At 2:00 p.m. on October 19th, 2019, friends and colleagues of Jim and Karen met at the Historical Society's Firehouse Museum for the dedication of the "West/Prinzmetal Exhibit Room". The overflow crowd heard many wonderful tributes to the couple that day, and although Jim's illness prevented him from being there, Karen spoke eloquently on their behalf.

Jim was a dedicated scholar, an uncompromising ethical perfectionist, a great optimist, and an amazing friend who touched so many in our valley. His accomplishments will live on, but those of us who were privileged to have known him will remember his shy smile, quick wit, and his focused attention on his companion in whose presence one felt that there was nowhere else at that moment he would rather be. What a gift! And what a gift we were given to have been graced with the presence of this gentle man.

Jim slipped away peacefully on February 19, 2021.



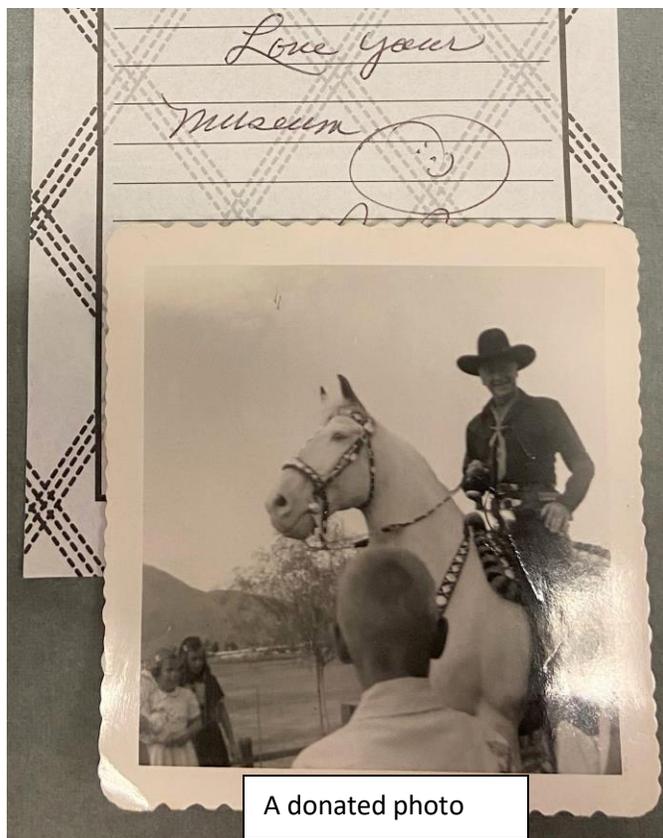
President's Letter

Each day it seems we are closing in on a new sense of normalcy in a "Living with Covid" world. My wife and I escaped a couple Sundays ago for a socially distanced dinner in Oak Glen. The temperature when we left was in the mid 50's. Today in the desert it was in the mid 90's. Looks like we might be heading for a one-week springtime again.

Progress at the Firehouse continues to march on, as our opening date of October 8 gets a bit closer. If you would like to participate more at HSPD, we have a new Committee that is forming. Palm Desert's 50th Anniversary is coming up in two years (2023) and we are actively seeking those who would like to get involved. The 50th Anniversary Committee is in the very early stages so if you have some time and some fun ideas, we're all ears. And if you haven't yet, please check out our YouTube Channel, the Historical Society of Palm Desert. Our latest video is some raw footage of an interview with Marian Henderson talking about the soon-to-be built Bob Hope Cultural Center. Let us know what you think.

Speaking of 1973, our own Scout Troop 1973 has added two more to the Inaugural Class of Female Eagle Scouts. Both sisters, Essence & Araya, have successfully passed their Eagle Boards of Review. Congratulations! Congratulations also goes out to Emma, our first Eagle in Troop 1973, who was voted Sunrise District's Scout of the Year at the latest Sunrise District Dinner held in late March. We hope to be able to post pictures of their Eagle Courts of Honor once they are able to celebrate again. Let's talk again this summer.

Rob Pitchford



Archivist's Report

Do you have any photos of life in Palm Desert, especially before 1975? We have been digitizing all the photos in our collection, including parties at the Shadow Mountain Club and major events in Palm Desert history, and we would love to see your pictures of family life back then. If you have snapshots of life in Palm Desert, bring them in and we will digitize them, get them back to you, and add them to our growing collection. Contact the Historical Society at hspd.firehouse@gmail.com, or call 760-346-6588.

Rochelle McCune

Membership Update

In July 2020 the Board voted to change the membership year from annually on the anniversary of joining, to annually at the HSPD's fiscal year, which is **July 1 – June 30**. This change will help our all-volunteer Board keep up with the administrative duties of membership renewals. Between August 2020 and this April, members whose year is up will be offered the option of a pro-rated

dues amount to continue their membership through June 30. Then in June everyone will receive a membership dues reminder at the same time, for the following fiscal year. If you have any questions, please email to hspd.firehouse@gmail.com or call 760-345-6588.

Grants Committee Update

The Historical Society of Palm Desert is partnering with the California State Library to digitize portions of our collection and place them online for easy access for researchers and the public. We submitted the early editions of the Palm Desert Post newspaper in our possession (up to 1967), but the Library did not have the funds to digitize this large collection. Continuing to seek public access for these editions of the Post, we contacted the California Digital Newspaper Collection (CDNC) at UC Riverside (<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/>) to see if they would be interested in these editions. The CDNC had “reels” (photos of pages, not the paper copy) of all Post editions already in their possession, but since the Desert Sun owns the copyright, having purchased the Post many years ago, the CDNC had not moved to acquire permission and digitize the reels. At our instigation, CDNC staff acquired copyright permission from the Sun recently, and are in the process of providing the reels in their collection to Newspapers.com (<https://www.newspapers.com/>), a fee-based digital collection of historical newspapers. While they won't be free, these and all editions of the Palm Desert Post will soon be accessible for a modest fee to students, researchers and the general public. And our paper editions are available for viewing. Just make an appointment to come in to the Historical Society, where our archives are open to the public.

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AND TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE SOCIETY'S
ARCHIVES AND ARTIFACTS THROUGH
EXHIBITS, PUBLICATIONS, PROGRAMS AND
EVENTS**

Advertising in The Hourglass

Advertising space is available in The Hourglass to HSPD members at the following rates: ¼ page \$25, ½ page \$50, full page \$75. Rates subject to change. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject an ad based on its suitability for publication in The Hourglass. Revenue from the ads will be used to offset the cost of newsletter publication and to further the mission of the HSPD.

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