



M O M E N T S

T H A T S H A P E D

G R E A T E R

P A L M S P R I N G S

Since the Southern Pacific Railroad put down tracks in the desert, pioneers and visionaries have been working hard to make Greater Palm Springs the idyllic destination the world knows today.

Story by Steven Biller

T

Time sometimes seems to stand still while we lounge poolside, cocktail in hand, sun aglow, mountains texturing our view through the breezy palm trees. But this idyllic oasis didn't just appear like a mirage. No, it has a history as rich as its natural beauty, and a little time is all you need to appreciate how this fantasyland took shape on the sands of the Coachella Valley. Here's a cheat sheet with some of the most scene-shifting moments that made the desert a sweet spot in Southern California.

1876

GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHES AGUA CALIENTE RESERVATION

Section 14 (downtown Palm Springs) and a portion of Section 22 (Tahquitz Canyon) in Palm Springs are set aside by executive order of President Ulysses S. Grant as the Agua Caliente Reservation. A year later, the government dramatically expands the tribal land, creating the checkerboard map of Palm Springs, Cathedral City, and Rancho Mirage that we know today.

1876

SOUTHERN PACIFIC MAKES A STOP IN INDIO

In need of a halfway point between Los Angeles and Yuma, Arizona, the Southern Pacific Railroad arrives in what would become Indio (Spanish for “Indian”), where it builds the craftsman-style Southern Pacific Depot station and hotel that became the center of social life in the area. Indio would incorporate in 1930 and become an agricultural town.



1889

BATHHOUSE OPENS AT HOT MINERAL SPRING SITE

After the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians invite non-Natives to settle around their hot mineral spring, word of its restorative properties leads to a three-year lease agreement between the tribe and the settlers, who build a bathhouse over the waters. The tribe, which rebuilt the bathhouse in the 1930s and razed it again in favor of a modern facility in 1960, will unveil The Spa at Séc-he in the new Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza opening in 2023.

1900

GROUNDWATER DISCOVERED IN COACHELLA

Jason L. Rector, the first recorded non-Native American to make a permanent home in Coachella (then called Woodspur), and his brother Lon drill a well at the corner of Grapefruit Boulevard and Fifth Street and discover a groundwater supply that will transform the area into productive farmland.



Palm Springs Historical Society (4) Coachella Valley Mexican American Pioneers

1903

USDA SEEDS THE FIRST DATE GARDEN

Bernard Johnson imports the first commercial Deglet Noor date shoots from Algeria and transplants them near Mecca, seeding a crop that continues to thrive in the eastern Coachella Valley.

1905

JOHN MUIR VISITS THE DESERT

Naturalist John Muir, aka the “Father of the National Parks,” visits Palm Springs hoping the warm, dry air would ease his daughter’s respiratory condition. Photojournalist Helen Lukens Gaut, writing in the October 1948 issue of *Palm Springs Villager*, recalls that Muir sent a telegram to Dr. Welwood Murray, owner of the Palm Springs Hotel, where she was a guest, to arrange transportation and accommodations for himself and his two daughters. Against Murray’s advice, the Muirs camp for six days in Andreas Canyon, relying on the stream and palm trees for relief from the triple-digit summer temperatures.

1905

SALTON SEA FORMS AMID ENGINEERING DISASTER

Engineers trying to increase the flow of water from the Colorado River lose control and overwhelm irrigation canals for 18 months. The deluge fills the dry, ancient lakebed known as the Salton Sink and creates California’s largest lake, 35 miles long and 15 miles wide. In the 1950s and ’60s, the sea becomes a recreation destination; but as its salinity increases, it loses its sparkle and visitation plummets. A pair of storms in the 1970s deliver the final blow, destroying homes, businesses, and marinas along the shore. More than 40 years later, they continue decaying as the sea evaporates, creating an environmental health crisis for the region.

1909

NELLIE COFFMAN OPENS THE DESERT INN

“Mother” Nellie Coffman seeds the hospitality industry in the Coachella Valley, opening The Desert Inn with wood-framed tent structures in what would become the heart of downtown Palm Springs. (Incidentally, in 1919, when Congress

Clockwise from top left: Agua Caliente women and children in the shade of a ramada in 1898; the first bathhouse at the tribe’s hot mineral spring; John Muir; and the Salton Sea. Opposite: Early date planters.

passed the women's suffrage amendment, local women cast their first ballots at The Desert Inn.) By the 1920s, Spanish Mediterranean-style buildings replace the tents, and Coffman's vision for an elite resort comes to life. After she dies, her sons, George Roberson and Earl Coffman, sell the property. A new owner razes it in the late 1960s to clear the space for a multimillion-dollar shopping mall called The Desert Inn Fashion Plaza.

1924 EDWARD S. CURTIS MEETS THE CAHUILLA

Photographer and ethnologist Edward S. Curtis rolls into Palm Springs to document the Cahuilla people on the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation for his 20-volume magnum opus, *The North American Indian*, covering some 80 American Indian tribes. His entry on the Cahuilla describes typical tribal members' houses, methods of sourcing and preparing food, and even rituals for birth, puberty, marriage, and death. However, Curtis never determines the origin of the tribe's name, theorizing that it "is probably the Spanish rendering of Kawika, westward (literally 'mountainward')."

1926 LA QUINTA HOTEL OPENS TO THE STARS

San Francisco oyster company heir Walter H. Morgan opens the Spanish-style La Quinta Hotel with 20 guest casitas, an open-air dining room, three courtyards, and the area's first nine-hole golf course, which the public could play for a \$1 daily fee. The hotel becomes a getaway for Hollywood luminaries such as Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, and Shirley Temple. Filmmaker Frank Capra returns frequently to work on screenplays, Ginger Rogers marries Jacques Bergerac in front of the waterfall, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower visits several times with his family.

Now part of Hilton's top-tier Waldorf Astoria collection, La Quinta Resort & Club offers 800 casitas, villas, and suites; seven restaurants; luxury boutiques; a world-class spa; 41 climate-controlled swimming pools; 21 tennis courts; eight pickleball courts; five public golf courses with three clubhouses (at the resort and at sister property PGA West);



Clockwise from top: Women cast votes at The Desert Inn in 1919, El Mirador Hotel, and a Cahuilla woman photographed by ethnologist Edward S. Curtis in 1924.

a yoga studio; and a large gym with a robust schedule of classes.

1927 FRANK BOGERT ARRIVES

Frank Bogert comes to Palm Springs as a 17-year-old but leaves for UCLA and a brief career as an actor and stuntman. When he returns, he cuts himself into the scene by taking photographs of famous guests at El Mirador Hotel. Easily spotted in town with his white cowboy hat, bolo tie, and size 14 cowboy boots, Bogert emerges as a spirited

promoter of his adopted city, eventually becoming the manager of the Racquet Club, Tennis Club, and Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce. He also sits on the Tramway Authority board and founds Thunderbird Dude Ranch (forerunner to Thunderbird Country Club). Bogert is twice elected mayor of Palm Springs, serving from 1958 to 1966 and from 1982 to 1988, and works with leaders of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and other local communities, as well as the state and federal governments, to transform the village into a world-class city.

Palm Springs Historical Society (2); Cahuilla woman: Edward S. Curtis/courtesy Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library

Palm Springs Life Archive

1927 THE GRANDEST RESORT OPENS

On New Year's Eve, Hollywood celebrities and local businessmen celebrate the opening of El Mirador Hotel in Palm Springs. Its 165 rooms accommodate a who's who of guests: Albert Einstein, John Barrymore, Salvador Dalí, Shirley Temple, H.G. Wells, Charles Chaplin, and Charles Howard, owner of the racehorse Seabiscuit.

The 20-acre resort — with its Olympic-size swimming pool, tennis courts, stables, and golf course — falls into debt after the 1929 stock market crash and sells at auction for \$300,000 in 1932.

A decade later, when the United States enters World War II, the army buys and converts the hotel into Torney General Hospital. It becomes a hotel again in the 1950s and '60s until new owner John Conte transforms part of the property into a television studio. In 1972, Desert Hospital buys the entire property and

begins expanding into the modern campus of Desert Regional Medical Center.

Through all of its owners and changes, the property's Spanish colonial revival-style El Mirador Tower remains a city landmark at the entrance to the hospital.

1934 ALBERT FREY MAKES FIRST VISIT TO PALM SPRINGS

Having left New York City, where in 1931 they designed the all-metal Aluminaire House, architects Albert Frey and A. Lawrence Kocher land in Palm Springs, where they collaborate on the Kocher-Samson Building. Frey falls in love with the area and pioneers desert modernism, matching the extreme elements with nontraditional building materials that cool quickly. Frey goes on to put his modernist mark all over the city, from the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Valley Station and Tramway Gas Station (now Palm Springs

Visitor Center) to Palm Springs City Hall and a variety of residences in town. His second desert home — Frey House II, built around a massive boulder — becomes iconic. He lives there for 64 years, until he dies in 1998 at age 95. Palm Springs Art Museum plans to reconstruct the Aluminaire House downtown.

1936 LA PLAZA AND PLAZA THEATRE LAUNCH A NEW ERA

La Plaza, the heart and soul of downtown Palm Springs for 86 years and counting, comes to life, the result of Harry J. Williams' doodle on the back of an envelope. The architect, who came to Palm Springs from Dayton, Ohio, to design the Carnell Building (184–196 N. Palm Canyon Drive), is invited back to draw up the open-air shopping and entertainment destination, which has 38 shops, 21 bungalows, eight penthouses, chauffeurs' quarters, and a 150-car



Harry Williams and Nellie Coffman at the Nov. 1, 1936, dedication of La Plaza in downtown Palm Springs.

underground garage. Early tenants include Sale's Plaza Market, Plaza Pharmacy, Potter's Hardware, Kubic's Garden of Edom, and Palm Springs Art Museum.

A month after Nellie Coffman cuts the ribbon on the shopping center, Earle Strebe opens the Plaza Theatre with the world premiere of George Cukor's film *Camille*, starring Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, and Lionel Barrymore. Seats go for \$10 each. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the theater becomes home to *The Fabulous Palm Springs Follies* before sitting dormant. The city of Palm Springs, which owns the structure, has launched a capital campaign to raise funds to fully restore it.

1938

MUSEUM OPENS WITH A FOCUS ON NATURE

Palm Springs Desert Museum opens in a single room at La Plaza with a focus on natural science exhibits, lectures, and hikes around the desert. Over generations, the museum moves to the Welwood Murray Library (1940s); a section of the city's library (during World War II); a space in the old Torney General Hospital (after the war); and an army surplus building on Tahquitz Canyon Way (1950s) that was razed, rebuilt with an E. Stewart Williams design (1958), and expanded (1962) to include an auditorium. The current Williams-designed building against the San Jacinto Mountains opened in 1976 and is a showcase for modern and contemporary art.

1939

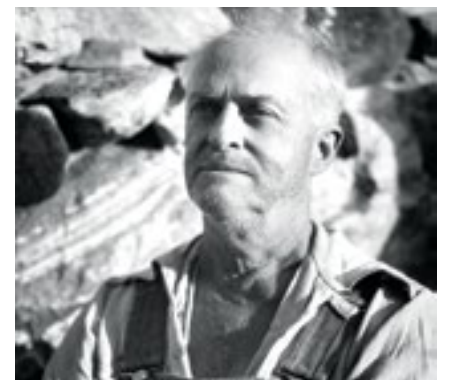
AGUA CALIENTE FORM TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Commissioner of Indian Affairs grant approval to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to form a tribal management on behalf of its members.

1939

WORLD WAR II SOLDIERS TRAIN IN THE DESERT

World War II begins and the Coachella Valley plays a role. The area known today as Palm Desert serves as a training ground for military forces under Gen. George S. Patton, El Mirador Hotel in Palm Springs temporarily becomes an army hospital, and a military airfield is established on Indian



Clockwise from top left: U.S. soldiers at Gen. George S. Patton's Desert Training Center, Frank Sinatra, Cabot Yerxa. Opposite: Palm Springs Desert Museum.

land, in Section 18, in Palm Springs. The war ends in 1945, beginning a period of transformation in the desert.

1947

OL' BLUE EYES COMES TO TOWN

Frank Sinatra signs a lucrative movie deal with MGM and comes to Palm Springs looking for a weekend crash pad. He hires E. Stewart Williams to build a modern home we now know as Twin Palms — the epitome of casual Hollywood glamour with its curvaceous pool and deck made for cocktail parties. The crooner lives in the house for a decade and spends his next 30 years at Tamarisk Country Club in Rancho Mirage. Although he has homes in Los Angeles and New York, Sinatra prefers being in the desert. He and fellow Rat Packers Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., and Joey

Bishop pack the showroom at the Riviera, and Sinatra gives generously, even putting his name on a celebrity golf tournament to build Barbara Sinatra Children's Center on the campus of Eisenhower Medical Center (now Eisenhower Health).

1948

HENDERSON BROTHERS PIONEER PALM DESERT

Newspaper editor Randall Henderson decides to headquarter *Desert Magazine*, which he launched in 1936 to share stories about the area's people and natural beauty, in a place that represents his vision for the publication. He finds his spot at the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains, where he and his brother, aviation pioneer Clifford, continue buying land — 1,600 acres — with visions of developing luxury resorts, neighborhoods,

and retail spaces. By 1948, it had a name: Palm Desert. It was incorporated in 1973. (The magazine ceased publication in 1985.)

1950

CABOT YERXA OPENS OLD INDIAN PUEBLO

Adventurer Cabot Yerxa, who settled in what is now Desert Hot Springs in 1913 and discovered a pair of aquifers — one that included a natural hot spring that would later power the town’s spas and resorts, and the other a cold aquifer that would provide fresh water — opens Cabot’s Old Indian Pueblo, a 5,000-square-foot, Hopi-style structure to house his collection of Native American and other artifacts. After Yerxa dies in 1965 and the pueblo falls into disrepair, Cole Eyraud purchases and restores the complex. After he dies, his daughter donates it to the city of Desert Hot Springs. Today, Cabot’s Pueblo Museum is open to the public as a cultural attraction.

1951

THE DESERT GETS ITS FIRST 18-HOLE GOLF COURSE

Johnny Dawson purchases Thunderbird Ranch in Rancho Mirage and establishes the Coachella Valley’s first 18-hole golf course, designed by Lawrence Hughes. Thunderbird Country Club, as it was

renamed, would host celebrities (Bob Hope, Bing Crosby), world leaders (Gerald Ford, Barack Obama), and tournaments such as the Ryder Cup and the Palm Springs Golf Classic (now the American Express tournament). It’s widely believed that the golf cart was invented at Thunderbird.

1955

TRIBE WINS LAND LEASE EXTENSION

Mayor Frank Bogert accompanies Agua Caliente tribal council chairwoman Vyola Ortner to the U.S. Capitol to argue for land lease extensions from five to 25 years to promote development on tribal lands. Ortner’s plea — “My tribe needs vitamin M — Money” — resonates, and lawmakers pass a bill that President Eisenhower signs into law. However, the victory comes at a cost. Residents of Section 14 (now downtown Palm Springs) are evicted to clear the land for development. A state attorney general report in 1968 charges “minority homes were destroyed by a city-engineered holocaust.” Ortner says, “This was our land, and we had a right to develop it.” The site is now home to the Agua Caliente Casino, Palm Springs Convention Center, hotels, shops, and restaurants as well as the Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza, which will open next year with a cultural museum and spa.

1958

COLLEGE OF THE DESERT WINS APPROVAL

Voters approve the formation of a community college district as well as a \$3.5 million bond issue to fund the development of College of the Desert. In 1961, nine buildings, designed by local architect John Porter Clark, go up on 160 acres in Palm Desert. The first students arrive in the fall of 1962.

1959

FEDS FINALIZE TRIBAL LAND ALLOTMENTS

President Eisenhower signs the Equalization Act, ending the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians’ decades-long fight for individual tribal member land allotments, which were initially authorized in 1887, and sets aside certain lands — including the popular Palm, Andreas, Murray, and Palm canyons (collectively known as the Indian Canyons) — for tribal use. Meanwhile, the Long-Term Leasing Act, which Eisenhower signs into law a month later, authorizes 99-year leases of tribal land.

These two laws dramatically change the character of Palm Springs from a tiny village into a fledgling city ripe for growth and development.



From left: Bob Hope at Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, the controversial Section 14 in Palm Springs, and College of the Desert in Palm Desert.

Palm Springs Life Archive (2), Palm Springs Historical Society

Palm Springs Historical Society (2), Palm Springs Life Archive (2)

1961

ANGELS PLAY BALL IN PALM SPRINGS

Gene Autry, the “singing cowboy,” ushers in the desert’s golden era for baseball when he brings his California Angels to Palm Springs for spring training. The city builds a stadium at Sunrise Park, and fans return year after year during the team’s three-decade stay. Sports writers converge on Autry’s namesake hotel (now Parker Palm Springs), where they angle for candid moments with Rod Carew, Reggie Jackson, and Nolan Ryan. In 1992, the team moves its preseason to Tempe, Arizona.

1963

NEW SPA PUTS TRIBE IN SPOTLIGHT

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians’ all-female tribal council leases 8 acres in the heart of their reservation to Samuel Banowit and Palm Springs Spa Inc., a partnership that birthed the Agua Caliente Spa and

Hotel, which included a 30,000-square-foot health center on the spot of the ancient hot mineral springs. The site is now home to the forthcoming Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza, which includes The Spa at Séc-he and the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

1963

THE TRAMWAY REACHES GREAT HEIGHTS

Dignitaries from around the world converge on Chino Canyon, north of town, for the first rides from the sandy desert floor to the alpine peak of Mount San Jacinto on Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the brainchild of electrical engineer Francis Crocker, who realized the wildly popular and enduring attraction with the help of Earl Coffman. The tramway, which gained historical engineering landmark designation in 1983, now draws almost a half-million visitors annually to ride the rotating tram cars and indulge in hiking, rock climbing, snowboarding, and expansive views of the Coachella Valley.

1964

COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS TAKE OFF FROM PALM SPRINGS

The first scheduled commercial airline flights start at Palm Springs Municipal Airport. A year later, construction begins on the main terminal, designed by local architect Donald Wexler. In 1986, the city council votes to change the facility’s name to Palm Springs International Airport. *Smarter Travel* has since named the small and easy-to-navigate PSP to its list of “America’s Most Stress-Free Airports,” and the city’s Historical Site Preservation Board has granted Class I designation to the west façade of the main building.

1965

GRAPE BOYCOTT LAUNCHES MOVEMENT FOR FARMWORKERS RIGHTS

Filipino farmworkers launch the first strike against table-grape growers. The 10-day event involves several Coachella



Clockwise from top left: Palm Springs International Airport, Palm Springs Spa, Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, Gene Autry (left) at Angel Stadium at Sunrise Park.

Valley vineyards and 1,000 farmworkers, who would win a \$0.15 per hour increase, boosting their pay to \$1.40 per hour, according to the book *Coachella: A History of Coachella and its People* by former *Desert Sun* journalist Jeff Crider. The demonstration precedes the biggest grape worker strike in California history, and Cesar Chavez emerges as the chief spokesman for farmworker rights as founder of the United Farm Workers labor union. He is credited with securing the first collective bargaining agreements as well as mandated rest periods, clean drinking water, hand-washing stations, and clothing to prevent workers from pesticide exposure. Chavez would organize many marches and protests in Coachella and use the UFW office at 722 Vine St. in downtown Coachella whenever he was in town. Today, a colorful mural created by The Date Farmers artist collaborative commemorates the grape boycott on the side of the building.



Clockwise from top left: Farmworkers march from Coachella to Mexicali, the Annenberg estate, President Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan at Eisenhower Medical Center, and Desert Fashion Plaza.

1966
THE ANNENBERGS
COMPLETE SUNNYLANDS

Walter and Leonore Annenberg move to Sunnylands, their new, 25,000-square-foot winter house designed by A. Quincy Jones. Known to locals by its pink perimeter wall, the property includes the main house, guest quarters, a nine-hole golf course, and 13 manmade lakes. With an ambitious goal to turn Sunnylands into the “Camp David of the West,” the Annenbergs entertain eight U.S. presidents and scores of world leaders, entertainers, intellectuals, friends, and family through the years. After both Annenbergs die, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands opens the property to the public as Sunnylands Center & Gardens. It continues to host high-level meetings and retreats, and its magnificent gardens, inspired by impressionist paintings, welcome visitors throughout the year. Guests can also tour the main house.



1967
SHOPPERS FLOCK TO
DESERT FASHION PLAZA

Home Savings and Loan Associated acquires and razes the historic Desert Inn property to build Desert Inn Fashion Plaza, a mall anchored with a 20,000-square-foot I. Magnin department store. It becomes the shopping and gathering place of a generation. In the 1980s, to retain its shine as Palm Desert’s El Paseo Shopping District and Town Center mall began presenting competition, a new owner renovates and expands Desert Fashion Plaza, dropping Desert Inn from its name and adding stores and a six-story hotel with underground parking. By the time Saks Fifth Avenue relocates to El Paseo in 2001, however, Desert Fashion Plaza is finished. Demolished in 2014, the property is being redeveloped as The Block by Grit Development. Tenants include Kimpton Rowan Palm Springs, West Elm, Sephora, Johnny Was, H&M, Kiehl’s, and Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar.

1970
THE LIVING DESERT OPENS
IN PALM DESERT

Several trustees of Palm Springs Desert Museum (now Palm Springs Art Museum) establish a 360-acre wilderness preserve with a kit fox, tortoises, lizards, and a pair of bighorn sheep. That is followed by a garden mimicking the Mojave Desert, greenhouses, and model trains. Now situated over 1,200 acres in the cities of Palm Desert and Indian Wells, the conservation-oriented attraction represents the deserts of the world in its African Safari, Wilds of North America, and Australian Adventures habitats.

1970
SLIM AARONS SHOOTS
“POOLSIDE GOSSIP”

Slim Aarons, the photographer of socialites, celebrities, and jet-setters, captures “Poolside Gossip,” the iconic image of Lita Baron, Helen Dzo Dzo, and Nelda Linsk enjoying a leisurely day by the pool at the Palm Springs house designed by Richard Neutra for Edgar J. Kaufmann. The view, which shows the women locked in conversation, cocktails in hand, becomes instantly recognizable as an emblem of modern, monied American culture in the ’70s.

Protest: Clementina Oloque; Annenberg estate: Julius Shulman © J. Paul Getty Trust; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Palm Springs Historical Society (2)

Getty Images



Slim Aarons’ “Poolside Gossip” has become as iconic as the Richard Neutra-designed Kaufmann House, where he shot the photograph.

1971
DONORS PROPEL EISENHOWER
MEDICAL CENTER

Eisenhower Medical Center opens almost 10 years after frozen-food company founder W. Clarke Swanson collapses while playing golf with former President Eisenhower in Rancho Mirage. His widow, Florence, convinced that Swanson would have lived had there been a hospital closer than Palm Springs, called on Bob and Dolores Hope, who donated 80 acres of prime real estate and rallied an influential group of benefactors — including Walter Annenberg, Frank Sinatra, and Leonard Firestone — to make significant contributions to build the hospital. The medical center steadily adds services, capabilities, and facilities to meet the needs of the region and, in 2018, rebrands

as Eisenhower Health to emphasize its reach, with primary, urgent, and specialty-care centers located throughout the valley.

1972
DINAH SHORE LENDS HER
NAME TO LPGA EVENT

Best known as an actress, singer, and talk-show host, Dinah Shore is revered for her commitment to promoting women’s golf, championing the LPGA Tour and especially the Colgate Dinah Shore golf tournament at Mission Hills Country Club (her home course in the desert). The tournament lives 50 years, until its last round as the ANA Inspiration earlier this year. (Incidentally, Leonard DiCaprio now owns Shore’s Donald Wexler-designed house in the Old Las Palmas neighborhood of Palm Springs.)

1978
MISSION HILLS HOSTS
DAVIS CUP

Mission Hills Country Club becomes the first venue west of Cleveland, Ohio, to host a Davis Cup final. The U.S. team prevails over Great Britain, 4-1, with Buster Mottram earning the Brits’ only point in an epic 4½-hour match against Brian Gottfried. But a 19-year-old John McEnroe wins the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, beating Mottram and British star John Lloyd in singles matches. Stan Smith and Bob Lutz win in doubles.

1979
ICONIC BOB HOPE
HOUSE COMPLETED

John Lautner rendered the Bob Hope House a decade earlier. The circular



Betty Ford confronts addiction, Amy Alcott and caddie Bill Kurre start a tradition, and Sonny Bono (with his wife Mary) launches the Palm Springs International Film Festival. Opposite: John McEnroe wins big at Mission Hills Country Club.

24,000-square-foot residence looks like a spaceship atop the Southridge development with its massive, gravity-defying roof and 60-foot-wide oculus. Ron Burkle purchases the property in 2016 for \$13 million. (Lautner later designs the nearby Elrod House as well as a hotel in Desert Hot Springs.)

1982

BETTY FORD CENTER OPENS

The famous nonprofit treatment center for people with alcohol and drug addictions — founded by former First Lady Betty Ford, Leonard Firestone, and Dr. James West — opens in Rancho Mirage. Celebrities who have spent time recovering at the center include Elizabeth Taylor, Drew Barrymore, Jay-Z, Lindsay Lohan, and David Hasselhoff.

1984

COACHELLA ELECTS FIRST LATINA MAYOR

Members of the Coachella City Council select Yolanda R. Coba as the first Latina mayor in the Coachella Valley. Coba, a councilwoman from 1980 to 1989, serves two one-year terms as mayor, between 1984 to 1989.

1987

TREVINO HITS HOLE-IN-ONE

In a Skins Game field that includes Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Fuzzy Zoeller,

Lee Trevino hits a hole-in-one at one of golf's toughest holes: the par-3 No. 17 on the Pete Dye-designed Stadium Course at PGA West in La Quinta. The hole is known as Alcatraz — an island green situated 165 yards away from the tee. “Can’t get any prettier than that!” he immediately exclaimed. Trevino won the made-for-TV tournament.

1988

McCALLUM THEATRE OPENS

McCallum Theatre opens with *America’s All-Star Tribute to Bob Hope*, a star-studded, nationally televised NBC special. The red curtains have since lifted for performers spanning generations, from George Burns and Johnny Cash to Jennifer Hudson and Janet Jackson. In addition to record-setting ticket sales, the theater has a model education program and a crowd-pleasing choreography festival.

1988

AMY ALCOTT TAKES A VICTORY SPLASH

Excited after her win at the Nabisco Dinah Shore Championship golf tournament, Amy Alcott along with caddie Bill Kurre jump into Poppie’s Pond, surrounding the 18th green at Mission Hills Country Club. Alcott wins again in 1991 and jumps in with Shore. The plunge becomes a tradition for tournament winners and their caddies.

1990

STARS COME OUT FOR THE FILM FESTIVAL

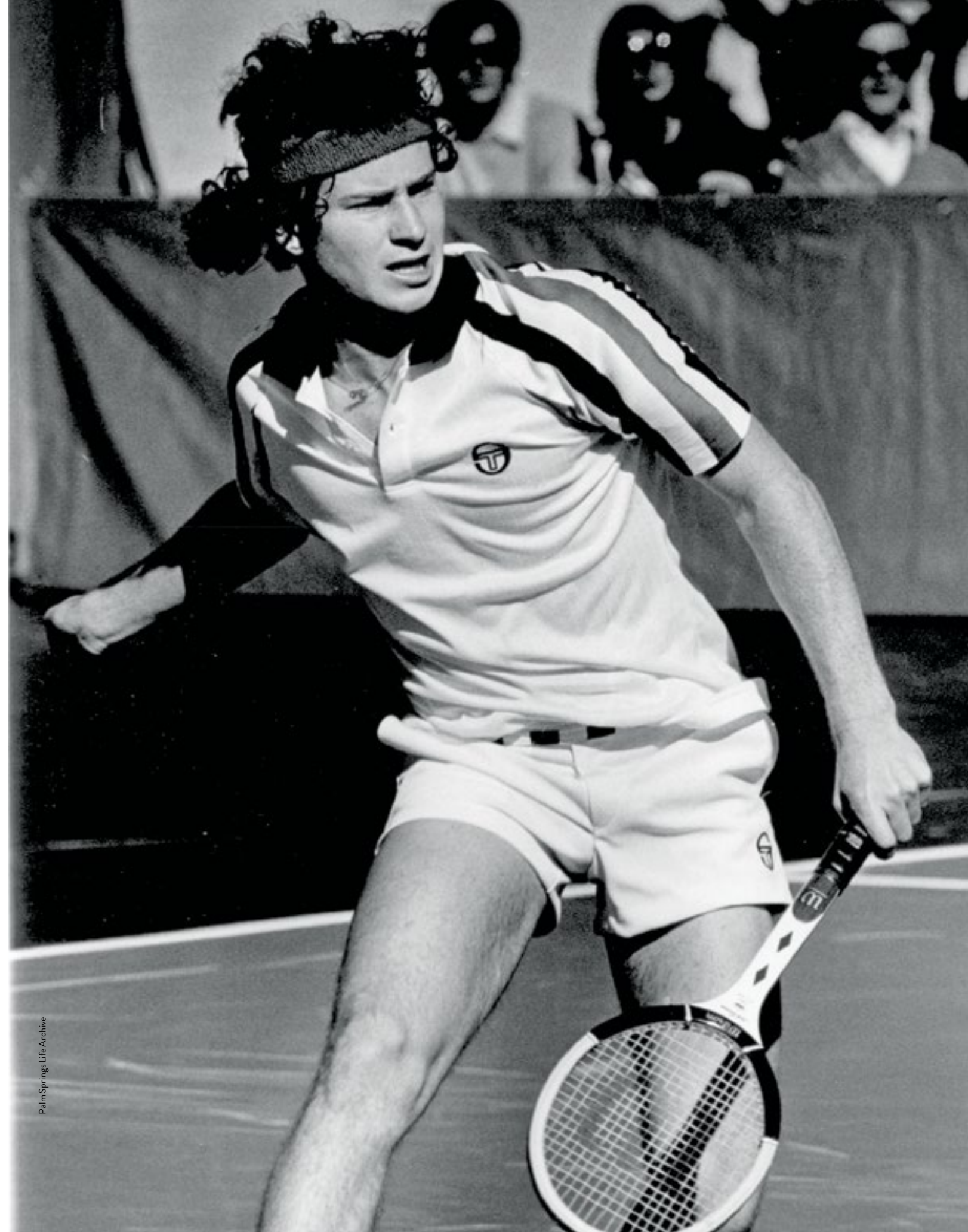
Mayor Sonny Bono makes good on his promise to bring back Palm Springs’ glamour by launching the Palm Springs International Film Festival. It draws more than 17,000 film patrons in the first year, which features *Cinema Paradiso*, the eventual Best Foreign Film winner at the Academy Awards. Today, the festival and its star-studded awards gala attract more than 135,000 attendees over 11 days of programming.

1998

VOTERS OK INDIAN GAMING

California voters pass Proposition 5, legalizing Indian gaming on tribal reservations in the state. Today, tribes operate casinos in and around the Coachella Valley: Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (Agua Caliente Casinos in Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Springs), Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians (Augustine Casino in Coachella), Cabazon Band of Mission Indians (Fantasy Springs Resort Casino in Indio), Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians (Spotlight 29 Casino in Coachella and Tortoise Rock Casino in Twentynine Palms), Morongo Band of Mission Indians (Morongo Casino Resort & Spa in Cabazon), and Cahuilla Band of Indians (Cahuilla Casino Hotel in Anza).

Ford and the Bonos: Palm Springs Historical Society; Alcott: Keith Hailey/Popperfoto; Getty Images



Palm Springs Life Archive



Monument: Tom Brewster; Desert X: Lance Gerber; Coachella: courtesy Visit Greater Palm Springs



Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument (left) and artist Claudia Comte's Desert X installation, "Curves and Zigzags." Opposite: Coachella music festival.

1999

GOLDENVOICE LAUNCHES COACHELLA FESTIVAL

The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, better known as "Coachella," debuts at Empire Polo Club in Indio with headliners Beck, Tool, and Rage Against the Machine. Tickets sell for \$50 for each day; about 17,000 tickets sell for the first day, and 20,000 for the second. Twenty-three years later, festival attendance over two weekends tops 250,000 people and gross revenue exceeds \$110 million. Goldenvoice later establishes additional music festivals at the site, including the annual Stagecoach country music festival, which launched in 2007.

2000

INDIAN WELLS TENNIS GARDEN OPENS

The home of the BNP Paribas Open — a joint event of the men's ATP World Tour and the women's WTA Tour and the fifth largest tennis tournament in the world — opens after event owners Charlie Pasarell (a former No. 1 player) and Raymond Moore raise the money to fund the \$77 million development. The tournament, which dates to 1978, makes its tennis garden debut as the Pacific Life Open in 2002. Oracle Corp. co-founder/CEO and

part-time Rancho Mirage resident Larry Ellison purchases the event and the venue in 2009.

2000

MOUNTAINS BECOME A NATIONAL MONUMENT

When developers set their sights too close to the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains, concerned citizens win public and tribal support to create a national monument, protecting the land for future generations. President Bill Clinton signs legislation on Oct. 24, 2000, making the monument — which stretches from Palm Springs to La Quinta — the first jointly managed monument, overseen by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service in cooperation with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and other jurisdictions.

2006

FESTIVAL CELEBRATES DESERT MODERNISM

Modernism Week launches as an adjunct to the Palm Springs Modernism Show & Sale and the Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture & Design Council Symposium. Now, the 11-day annual affair packs some 350 events, including the show and sale, tours of

iconic homes and neighborhoods, lectures, and parties.

2017

DESERT X LURES EYES OF THE ART WORLD

A free-to-the-public exhibition of site-specific art rouses attention from near and far with its global roster of art stars creating eye-popping installations around the Coachella Valley. Doug Aitken's "Mirage," aka "the mirror house," located in Palm Springs' Chino Canyon, becomes a viral sensation on Instagram. The biennial exhibition also features locally based artists Armando Lerna and Phillip K. Smith III. The fourth Desert X exhibition opens in March 2023.

2022

COACHELLA VALLEY SCORES A PRO HOCKEY TEAM

The Coachella Valley Firebirds, an affiliate of the NHL's Seattle Kraken and the 32nd franchise in the American Hockey League, begin play at the new Acrisure Arena. Head coach Dan Bylsma, a Stanley Cup winner with the Pittsburgh Penguins and one-time NHL coach of the year, leads the franchise with Jessica Campbell, the first female assistant coach in the AHL.