

B-Bar-H Ranch Club: Old West life 10 miles from city

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"In event you fly, our Ranch wagon will pick you up at Palm Springs airport." The lovely offer of a station wagon ride from the airport for those who decided to fly, rather than drive, ended an advertisement for B-Bar-H Ranch's two-day "Get Acquainted Offer for Prospective Members" in 1958.

All the recreational facilities of the club were available for enjoyment.

"Guests at the outdoor steak fry enjoy true western hospitality at a social hour and complimentary punch bowl followed by a sumptuous dinner in the Golden Saddle Room." A strong drink could be had at the Branding Iron Cocktail Bar.

To make a reservation, one could call, or write to Post Office Box BB, Palm Springs. Of course!

The ad continued with more to offer than just a station wagon ride from the airport.

"Here is Romance, Steeped in the Legends of the Old West. The pleasures of a vacation in the land of sunshine are an experience of unforgettable enjoyment. Lazy blue skies invite you to engage in a choice of an endless variety of recreation...golf driving range, putting green, tennis, badminton, swimming, ping pong, square dancing, bridle trails, shuffleboard, children's playground, entertainment.

"When you long to get away from the humdrum routine of city dwelling; when you seek escape from the rigors of wintry climates; when you seek active diversion or genuine rest and relaxation in the world's most perfect winter climate, you will find your wish fulfilled at B-Bar-H Ranch Club. Located in an authentic atmosphere of the true Western ranch, combined with the comforts of the finest metropolitan hotel."

B-Bar-H ranch was located 10 miles from Palm Springs, an easy station wagon ride, framed by majestic snow-capped mountains through a vast ex-



The Original B-Bar-H gates soon to be designated as historic in the county of Riverside PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ppanse of rolling sand dunes, sagebrush and cactus.

Started during the Great Depression, B-Bar-H Ranch was named for Hollywood mogul Lucienne Hubbard and his son-in-law Charles Bender. The men purchased the land from the Southern Pacific Land Company in 1927 and began promoting the natural hot mineral springs, soon becoming an invitation-only resort.

"Let there be no two strangers between these walls" was the motto of B-Bar-H and Charles Bender, the genial original manager. "Informal ranch life is emphasized. Guests dwell in luxurious cottages, decorated in dude style and surrounded by verdant grass yards. The Ranch is in a date grove and guests may pick the fruit off the trees. There is a swimming pool, filtered with clear, cool spring water that comes directly from the mountains. A tennis court adjoins the pool and there are badminton and paddle tennis courts as well as pool tables and other means of recreations for the guests. The main building has a liv-

ing room with an immense fireplace. Smaller rooms have pianos and card tables."

And, of course, the western-style cocktail bar.

Horses were included in the daily rate and guests could ride as many times as they wished during the day. "All-day rides are planned frequently and there is a picnic once a week to some nearby picturesque spot when the chef and his retinue bring barbecued steaks and rack of lamb, steaming plates of casserole potatoes, enchiladas and big piece of apple pie to satisfy ravenous appetites following a fast canter of the desert. Cowboy guides are also included without extra charge. On moonlight evenings there are night rides and often guests arrange small party rides to interesting destinations."

In February 1939 a correspondent from the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph reported, "...this is being written from our temporary headquarters, the B-Bar-H ranch. I have already been initiated into the Order of Pamperers, founded here a

season or so ago by Publisher M. Lincoln Schuster. The code of the Pamperers is never do today what can be done tomorrow — and the favorite byword is: 'Well, give me until tomorrow — and I'll give you a definite maybe.' There is a laziness in the air. Walt Disney, who has just left, was finally persuaded to mount a horse ... the order of the day is complete inactivity — something I do not find very difficult to fall in with."

In 1940, the lazy atmosphere of the Ranch was purchased by Jay Kasler for \$42,000. Kasler was a prominent businessman and entrepreneur. The Ranch would become the center of high society activity and desert amusements during the next decade.

In January 1946, the gymkhana was free to the public, but a collection was taken up at the door with all proceeds going to the Palm Springs hospital fund. The gymkhana featured broomstick polo matches, girls egg race, children's musical chairs, bareback and saddle races, jackpot calf roping, amateur calf stopping, stake races, rescue races and bell calf roping.

In the middle of the next decade, the Ranch announced a new manager for the fabulous resort, "Bill Taylor has taken over the reins relinquished by Alexander Nord." Nord was to devote his time to promotional work on the sale of land in the newly opened B-Bar-H Ranch Estates. "Taylor has big plans for increasing the popularity of the resort. The weekly free dances and jamborees held in true Western style, will continue to be a feature, and later in the season, it is planned to resume the Poolside Barbecues, instituted by Nord, that proved such a drawing card last season."

But the draw was becoming less persuasive. The Hollywood crowd, noted Pamperers, like Bob Hope, Darryl Zanuck, and Bing Crosby moved east to Palm Springs.

(One exception was Mary Pickford who built a large home on the Ranch in 1948, which she would later donate to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for their Post 1534.)