

# Palm Springs' early influencers

## A trio of boosters helped put city on map as resort area

**Renee Brown**

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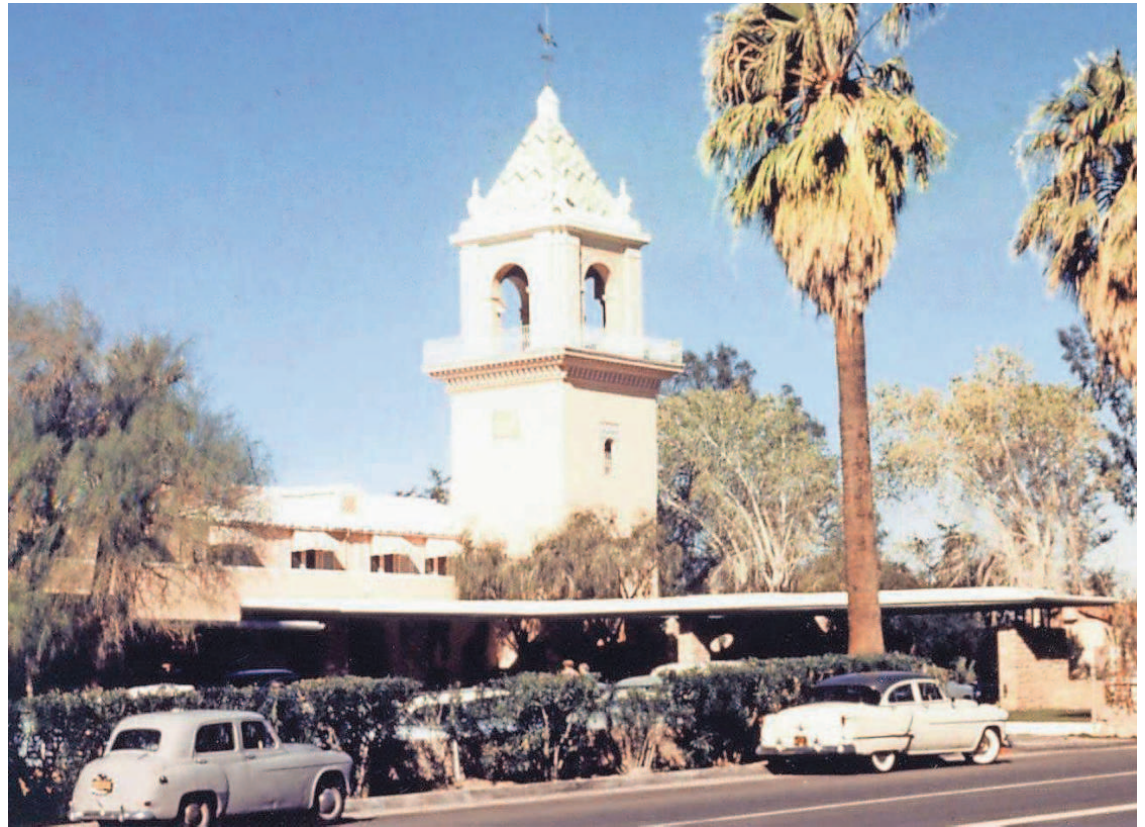
Throughout the history of Palm Springs there have been a few exceptional individuals who have taken on the task of promoting the city.

Three of the most dedicated were Frank Bogert, Tony Burke and Ray Ryan. Because of their efforts Palm Springs became known worldwide as the place to go and enjoy fun in the sun during the winter season.

Frank Bogert arrived in Palm Springs in 1927, freshly graduated from UCLA. He brought his string of 60 horses from Lake Arrowhead. He stabled the horses and offered trail rides for \$1 per hour to guests at The Desert Inn and other hotels. Bogert fell in love with Palm Springs and within a relatively short period of time he got a job as the publicist and photographer for the newly opened El Mirador Hotel.

Tony Burke also worked at the El Mirador and Bogert and Burke both began taking photographs of the many movie stars including Mary Astor, Claudette Colbert and Clara Bow, who were guests at the hotel. They sent the photographs to newspapers, magazines and even to the movie studios. Many of these photographs made it into newsreels shown at movie theaters nationwide. Bogert made promoting Palm Springs his life's passion.

Bogert became the manager of El Mirador in 1956. He went on to manage the Palm Springs Tennis Club, the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, the Racquet Club and the Indian Wells Country Club for Desi Arnaz. He also purchased a piece of property from Raymond Cree and founded the Thunderbird Dude Ranch which evolved into



El Mirador Hotel, circa 1952, helped draw visitors. PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY/SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

Thunderbird Country Club. Bogert served as mayor of Palm Springs from 1958 to 1966 and again from 1982 to 1988. He wrote two books, *Palm Springs First Hundred Years* and *View from the Saddle*. When asked he always pointed out that he wasn't a great manager but with each position he held, he felt that his vision for the city of Palm Springs came closer to becoming a reality.

While working at El Mirador Hotel, Tony Burke realized that Albert Einstein, who was staying with Samuel Un-

termyer, would be of interest to people all over the world. He took photos of Einstein and his wife walking through the gardens of the hotel. He sent stories about Einstein's visit complete with pictures to his contacts in the media. Burke said in his book, *Palm Springs Why I Love You*, "We knocked out the idea that Palm Springs had to be in Florida." Tony Burke, transitioned from being a publicist to selling and developing real estate throughout the greater Palm Springs area.

Another of the "influencers" who spent a majority of his time promoting the city of Palm Springs was Ray Ryan, who along with 24 other investors purchased the run-down El Mirador Hotel. A wealthy oilman from Texas, Ryan bought out his partners and gave the hotel a million dollar facelift, designed by architect Paul R. Williams, and painted it pink in 1958.

He then purchased the Villager, a lo-

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Tony Burke hangs onto a car and a horse circa 1936.

## Influencers

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cal magazine and in 1959 sold it to his rival, Palm Springs Life, when he realized the city could not support two magazines. The deal between Ryan and Palm Springs Life's owners Jerry Birmingham and Earl Cordrey included unlimited advertising for Ryan's future development projects.

A charismatic promoter, Ryan was comfortable taking a risk with his money and was able to attract other investors as well for two of his largest developments, Bermuda Dunes Country Club and the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club. Bermuda Dunes Country Club included a golf course, clubhouse and a fairway housing development. The North Shore Beach and Yacht Club consisted of a 400-boat marina, a yacht club building designed by Albert Frey and a housing development.

His promotional expertise included hobnobbing with the rich and famous and promoting the city on his various trips around the country and around the world where he sang the praises of his desert home. He was involved in many financial endeavors worldwide including being a founding member of the Mt. Kenya Safari Club with his good friend and partner William Holden. In 1977, Ray Ryan was killed in what was reported to be a "gangland slaying" when his car was blown up while he was on a visit to his hometown, Evansville, Indiana.



Frank Bogert and Lucille Ball. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY/SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN