

# THIS PALM SPRINGS POWER COUPLE MADE THEIR MARK

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"It's the Aquarian Age, according to astrologers. So, Mickey Wheeler, being an Aquarian, decided to name her new art studio after her sign of the zodiac. Next week she begins giving lessons in her Aquarius Art Studio and Gallery, located in her hacienda on Wawona Road. Mickey has been painting, but quietly, for years and has had several awards and one-woman shows to her credit. While living in Los Angeles, she studied at Chouinard, one of the top art schools on the West Coast." The Desert Sun reported this little bit of news in November 1969.

Palm Springs was already well-acquainted with Mickey Wheeler, so her little business adventure was definitely noteworthy.

Aquarian women are reportedly cool and glamorous, intelligent and fiercely independent. Mickey Wheeler fit that description. The fact that she had studied at Chouinard made her imminently qualified to teach painting. The school, started by Nelbert Chouinard, another independent woman, was world-renowned. Walt Disney sought out Mrs. Chouinard at the inception of his studio to teach his animators to draw superbly. Mrs. Chouinard was known for her particularly high standards, having quipped that talent was more important than tuition. Having studied at Chouinard, Mickey Wheeler's credentials were solid.

"After her husband, publisher George Wheeler, died last June, Mickey started casting about for something fascinating to do with her time. She'd always been a great help to George in work related to his Wheeler's Desert Letter but had still managed to find time to paint. So, what could be more natural, after the sale of the Letter to publisher Milt Jones, than to return to her first love, painting? And why not do what she is equipped to do so well, teach? Accordingly, she will open her first classes next week and has been busy mapping out her teaching



Mildred "Mickey" Wheeler

schedule. It was fun chatting with her at a small luncheon given by Edith Carlson the other day at Seven Lakes Country Club. A former newswoman and P.R. gal herself, Edith decided to have all the press women around town for a chatty time together. Her guests included Pat Oliver, Marj Pohl White and Pat Anderson. Hildy Crawford had been invited, too, but couldn't make it at the last minute because of a death in her husband's family. The group made a gay gathering and practically laughed its way out of the dining room. Noisy, but fun."

Mickey Wheeler had been the toast of Palm Springs society since she and her husband, George Wheeler moved to town after World War II.

George O. Wheeler was born just before the start of the 20th century in Minnesota, grew up in Canada and by the time he was in his 20s, he was the managing editor of the Vancouver Sun. He worked at other papers and ended up moving to Los Angeles.

During his two-decade tenure in the Southland, Wheeler founded and published a chain of newspapers which included the Seven City Star, the Florence Messenger and the Bell-Maywood Industrial Post.

In 1946, he moved to the desert and purchased the Palm Springs Villager, which had been published only twice when he took it over from William Fox.

Wheeler expanded and developed the magazine. It became important. He and Mickey were prominent citizens. Their activities were front page news.



George Wheeler

And in June 1955 the magazine rated an above the masthead headline: "The Villager Magazine Sold by George Wheeler."

A year later he began publishing Wheeler's Desert Letter, a weekly newsletter for investors interested in the area. Wheeler was president of the Palm Springs Shrine Club, member of the Racquet Club, and Greater Los Angeles Press Club. He was named "Mr. Villager" in 1955 by Mayor Florian Boyd for his many contributions to the community.

In June 1969, at the age of 72, he died, leaving his wife of 42 years to decide what to do with herself.

For more than 20 years living in Palm Springs, Mickey had been plenty busy. She was a mother. She entertained. She tirelessly worked for charities. She served on many charity boards and was president. She helped her husband in his publishing concerns.

Society reporter Hildy Crawford noted in June 1957, "Mickey and George Wheeler, who celebrated their August 5th wedding anniversary in Paris last summer, will revisit their honeymoon land when they go to Canada for their 30th anniversary. They'll leave here after the Fourth motoring north in leisurely fashion and George will revisit many old haunts like the editorial offices...where he was news editor when he was 22 years old. Their plans also include trout fishing (just can't picture Dresden-like Mickey catching fish.)"

The couple traveled every summer. "George and Mickey Wheeler currently

on a trip through Europe are now motoring through Switzerland, which they term the 'most delightful country imaginable.' En route across the Atlantic on the Swissair plane, they were passengers with Chief Justice and Mrs. Earl Warren and chatted with them at breakfast in Shannon, Ireland."

In 1960, she was president of the Palm Springs Woman's Club and oversaw its redecorating.

"Togetherness" was the theme of a working party held at the clubhouse by members of the Palm Springs Woman's Club Tuesday when the project was to completely redecorate the club lounge. Attired in suitable costumes for painting, upholstering or any job assigned to them, the women were greeted at 10 o'clock by the new president, Mrs. George Wheeler, and all went to work. At noon, past president Mrs. Herbert Burns appeared with a delightful lunch for all the workers with the feature being a smartly decorated chocolate cake with the words 'Get to Work' used in the decoration. Work went better than ever after lunch and by 3pm the room was completely redecorated and painted and it was a proud group of workers who left the clubhouse."

Mickey and George had naturally been big supporters of the Desert Art Center. In 1952, together they reorganized the bylaws and expanded the group. The list of trustees was impressive, including all the most attractive people in town, all of Mickey's many friends.

Her schedule was crammed full of students. Mickey was invited to every party and event in town. She painted and exhibited with other prominent desert artists. "Mickey Wheeler has been prominent in art circles for many years. She won a special award at the fall Civic Arts Show and participates regularly at the Desert Fashion Center exhibits." She provided private art lessons until the age of 93.

Vivacious and charming Mildred "Mickey" Wheeler died in 2010 at age 103, having spent 40 years after her husband's passing, making art.