

# Supple's life and work simply remarkable

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Special to Palm Springs Desert Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK

That the desert should have an independent art theater is entirely courtesy of the lady from Grosse Pointe, Rozene Richards Moore Supple. A town as small as Palm Springs really shouldn't expect to have a first rate movie house, but because of Rozene's generosity, this little community has enjoyed cultural offerings much larger cities would envy.

Originally purchased to be a venue for the Palm Springs International Film Festival, of which Rozene was a founder, the Camelot Theater grew and diversified eventually becoming the locus of the Palm Springs Cultural Center. In addition to first-run movies, it hosts multiple other festivals like the Film Noir, Cinema Diverse and AmDocs.

But her substantial love of the movies is eclipsed by Rozene's passion and knowledge of radio. Rozene grew up in radio.

Her father, G.A. Richards was a very savvy and extremely successful businessman. He pioneered American broadcasting starting in the 1920s. He owned WJR in Detroit, and WGAR in Cleveland, and KMPC in Los Angeles. He loved sports and owned the Detroit Lions, developing the team along with his radio stations; the Lions won the National League football championship in 1935, while the "Goodwill Station" WJR relentlessly increased wattage from 1,000 to 10,000 and then 50,000 watts.

Rozene dove into the radio business in earnest after losing her first husband and decamping to Palm Springs to live. It was the late 1960s, during what a Los Angeles Times article described as the "dog days of summer" in a sweltering August heat, she cut a deal to buy a defunct radio station, KPAL, for \$235,000.

Twenty years later — after having built her own radio empire by turning KPAL into KPSI, pioneering new formats, particularly talk radio, and purchasing three more stations — Rozene reflected for the Los Angeles Times say-



**G.A. Richards, Rozene Supple's father, stands at his Smoke Tree Ranch house with Freddie Mandel and a Detroit Lions football and statue.**

ing, "I must have been out of my mind."

When she was only four years old, she got her first taste of broadcasting as a guest of WJR's "Uncle Neal's Kiddy Show" offering her solo rendition of "Singing in the Rain." The family then

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moved to Los Angeles from Detroit.

It was the height of the swing era, and "radio brat" Rozene naturally hung around the Los Angeles station. She witnessed the golden age of radio first hand. The most famous musicians and singers in the world were there to broadcast and she would become well acquainted with some of the biggest names in the big band business.

After graduating from Stanford University, she apprenticed in all of KMPC's departments, eventually becoming a publicity assistant. While at Stanford,



**Rozene, far right, with the ladies organizing Frank Sinatra's Valentine's Love In Benefit for Desert Hospital.** PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

she went on a date with Ric Supple. He brought her home late, and she refused to go out with him again, having gotten in trouble. Years later, after both Rozene and Ric had lost their respective spouses, they met again at a Stanford reunion, married and moved to Palm Springs.

Ric and Rozene enmeshed themselves in the desert. Donating \$1.4 million dollars to Desert Hospital for the improvement of the emergency room in honor of her father, who died in 1951. It is still called the Richards Trauma Center. Ric served on the board of the hospital. Over the next four decades, they worked for countless good causes, culminating recently in making possible the Richards Center for the Performing Arts at Palm Springs High School and their donation of the Camelot Theater to the Palm Springs Cultural Center.

Three years ago, after much solemn contemplation, Ric and Rozene decided to wind down the radio business. They were both in their nineties already. In a tribute to his boss of almost two decades, radio personality Steve Kelly wrote a Valley Voice for The Desert Sun: "I had a lovely chat recently with Rozene

Supple...I will neither bore you nor embarrass her by the listing of all the marvelous philanthropic deeds she and her husband Ric have initiated in our Valley. Instead we talked about the local radio market and how it has changed from when she got involved almost half a century ago...we have seen a departure from local family owned radio stations to a rise of corporate radio...it is not the same as having an owner who lives in the community. The age of fun, fraternal, local radio has been replaced by the soulless sound of automated machine type communications."

Rozene will have her 95th birthday later this month. She presided over the heyday of radio in the desert; was a founder of the Palm Springs film fest; worked to improve countless institutions here from the hospital and the high school; and has given the beloved Camelot Theater to the community by creating the Palm Springs Cultural Center.

Her inestimable talent, energy and kindness have enriched our lives immensely.

Happy Birthday Rozene!