

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

History: The Sinatras, and a royal Easter in Cathedral City

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The congregation sat quietly wondering about the empty, roped-off pews in the back. Just before the start of the Easter Mass, the door to St. Louis Catholic Church in Cathedral City opened and in strode Frank and Barbara Sinatra with guests in tow.

Sinatra was dressed for the occasion in lavender trousers, lavender shirt and a white jacket. With him were Princess Grace and Prince Rainier of Monaco and their children Princess Caroline and Prince Albert, the heir to the throne. The party was filled out by Veronique and Gregory Peck, Cary Grant, Barbara Harris and Georgiana (sister of Lorreta Young) and Ricardo Montalban.

Allene Arthur covering the event for the newspaper wrote, "That's a noteworthy collection of worshipers in anybody's pew." Indeed.

Arthur continued, "A couple of church members said they were so preoccupied checking out Princess Grace's hairdo and Cary Grant's suntan that Mass didn't really get full attention this week."

The appearance was explained, "St. Louis church, they say, has always been close to the Sinatra heart. One of his daughters was married there, and his mother was a devoted supporter. How natural, then, to take his famous house guests there for Easter Mass."

The night before at Sinatra's Tamarisk Country Club home there had been a party to celebrate the silver wedding anniversary of Princess Grace and Prince Rainier. "Among the local guests at the party for 40 were Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Davis of Rancho Mirage - he the recent purchaser of 20th Century Fox, Dan and Natalie Schwartz also of Rancho Mirage, and artist Gant Gaither of Palm Springs who attended the couple's royal wedding 25 years" before.

The paper covered the anniversary party as the social sensation of the season. "Princess Grace and Prince Rainier of Monaco celebrated the 25th anniversary of their wedding and fairy-tale ro-



Royal family of Monaco, Grace Kelly, Stephanie, Caroline, and Princes Rainier and Albert at Palm Springs Aerial Tramway circa 1963. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

mance with champagne, dinner and dancing this weekend at the Tamarisk Country Club home of an old friend, Frank Sinatra. Sinatra, who co-starred with the former Grace Kelly in 'High Society' before her marriage, and his wife Barbara threw a party for the royal couple Saturday night."

"The Monte Carlo marriage of the debonair European prince and the beautiful, blond film star set Hollywood aflutter in 1956. Princess Grace, daughter of a Philadelphia bricklayer-turned-millionaire, gave up her acting career to marry Rainier and live in Monaco, a small seaside principality wedged between the French and Italian Rivas."

Despite leaving the screen, Kelly maintained her ties to Hollywood by serving on the board of directors of 20th Century Fox. Marvin Davis, a Denver

oilman, was in process of buying the studio pending the approval of the shareholders and was an honored guest at the anniversary party.

"The guests feasted on champagne and wines, caviar, stuffed artichokes, pepper steak, baked potatoes and asparagus... guests adjourned to another part of the house where the royal couple was presented with a 3-foot-long, four-layer banana cake before tables were swept away and guests danced to a four-piece orchestra until 4 a.m."

The royal couple had "slipped quietly into town Wednesday night on Sinatra's private Lear jet following visits to Japan and Hawaii." Princess Grace was en route to her Fox board meeting later that week.

Her Hollywood fame was only eclipsed by that of her royal status, but

her desert connections were personal. Hollywood fashion icon and Palm Springs resident Helen Rose designed her famous wedding dress.

After the surprise Easter appearance, "long years of planning and collection for a new church and rectory are being brought to a beautiful conclusion."

The congregation, "the meek and the mighty," were set to celebrate the church's 25th anniversary too with improvement plans.

"Princess Grace and Prince Rainier made (the church) their spiritual headquarters during their visit here last Easter arising at dawn to celebrate the first ecumenical sunrise service held in the valley."

Mrs. Anthony Sinatra, Frank's mother, "is a busy and faithful worker for the church. Red and Georgia Skelton also give freely of their time and talents. Bob and Delores Hope have recently moved into the parish with their new Southridge residence."

The new church was designed by Joseph Dameron, a noted La Jolla architect and featured an altar surrounded by semi-circular pews encouraging participation by the worshipers. The altar was of Carrara marble and was procured by Mrs. Sinatra from the Sanctuary of the Immaculate Heart College Chapel in Hollywood.

Fifteen panels of floor-to-ceiling in thick, hand-wrought pieces of stained glass were installed created by the famous Gabriel Loire and manufactured in France, echoing the Rose Window of Notre Dame Cathedral itself. Fourteen stations of the Cross and a life-sized crucifix were carved by craftsmen in Oberammergau, Germany. "The general contractors, Phillips and Warren say that the construction schedule is right on target and the building will be completed in October."

Ready and resplendent for the next royal visit.

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