

# Lilian Rice's La Cuesta: A Study in Contrasts

This is the first in a regular series featuring outstanding estates throughout Rancho Santa Fe.

By Charlie Atwell

The La Cuesta estate is a study in contrast.

The main house on Neil and Judi Bergt's 10-acre estate is a 14-room, 15,000-square-foot structure, which they have lived in for six years.

In comparison, on top of "The Hill" next to their new residence sits a modest Lilian Rice home, which is largely unchanged from its completion for the Millard family in 1928. The older home offers a warm quaint contrast to the formal elegance of the new structure.

The Bergts hired architect Ralph Alley to design their new home — his first major project in San Diego. Alley, who has done the bulk of his work in Alaska and California, used natural earthtone adobe extensively to tie the home into the landscape and property's historic nature.

During construction, two



The Millards, original owners of the Lilian Rice home on the La Cuesta estate, relax on the porch in this 1928 photo. Today, a pool sits in the front yard and the porch has been screened, but the rest of the home remains largely unchanged.

men worked full-time shaving each adobe brick to a specified smoothness and size.

All interior designing for the

home was a collaboration of Alley, Tisch Alexander of Design Source and Judi Bergt. The trio attempted to create a feeling of surprise inside the home.

The interior's soaring ceilings painted in various hues of peach, along with its arches and glass give the building a lighter, more airy feeling than is found in an adobe.

The numerous statues throughout the home also contribute to the flowing feel.

A pair of porcelain peace doves greet guests at the living room entrance. The birds, designed by Boehm, are one pair of only 100 that President Nixon commissioned to be presented as a gift on his trip to China.

features several antiques and collectibles.

The tureen and platter used for dining are exact copies of those on display at the Louvre in Paris. In addition, an English Adams Sideboard, circa 1840-50, sits against a wall of the dining room.

An ebony table inlaid with bronze on the base and a smaller table with bronze and a lacquered edge are used for dining. Placed together, the two pieces can seat 24 guests.

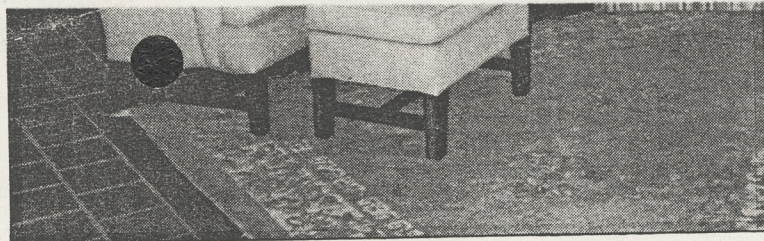
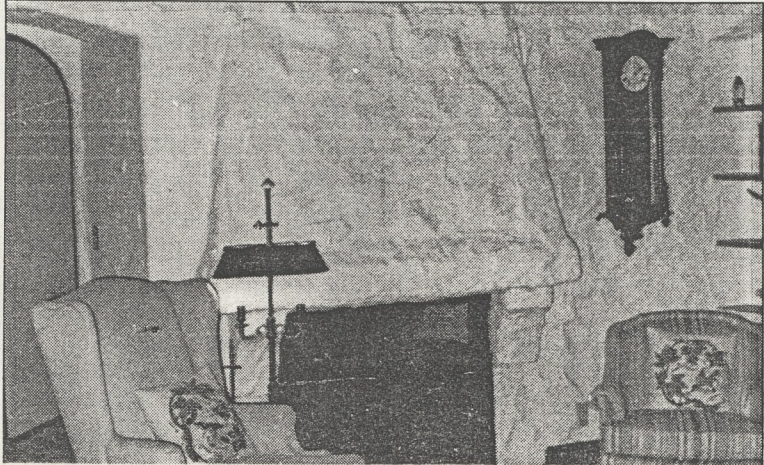
Other features in the new home include candlesticks with amethyst bases and a painting by Sydney Laurence, who is the only Alaskan artist whose work hangs in the Louvre.

The Lilian Rice home consists of three bedrooms, three baths, a living room, office and cantina. The structure is now used as a guesthouse, pool house and office.

One change from the original design is the exterior of the home, which is now stucco, giving a more earthy feel and tying it to the new home.

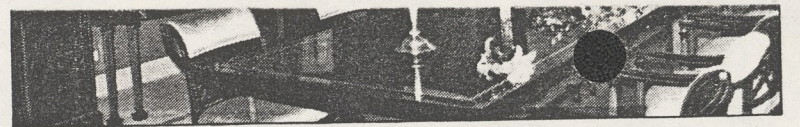
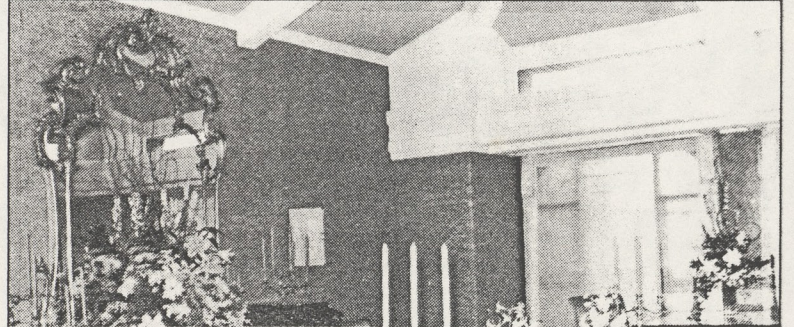
When the home was built, the owners never cut the first few rows of orange and lemon trees so they could look out over the fruits while viewing the other Lilian Rice homes dotting the hillside across the way.

The housekeeper's quarters on the estate has six rooms, making a total of 26 rooms and 11 bathrooms.



The living room of the Lilian Rice home offers a warm feeling to guests at Neil and Judi Bergt's estate.

Photo by Jennifer Nelson



The dining room of the new home on the estate features a tureen and platter, which are exact replicas of those on display at the Louvre in Paris, and an ebony dining table inlaid with bronze in the base.

Photo by Jennifer Nelson

while other birds can be spotted throughout the grounds.

Even the property cannot escape a fowl decor, with a large stained glass window of snow geese.

The home also looks over the San Dieguito Reservoir, providing the family with a view of the Canadian Snow Geese that spend winter there.

The dining room in the home

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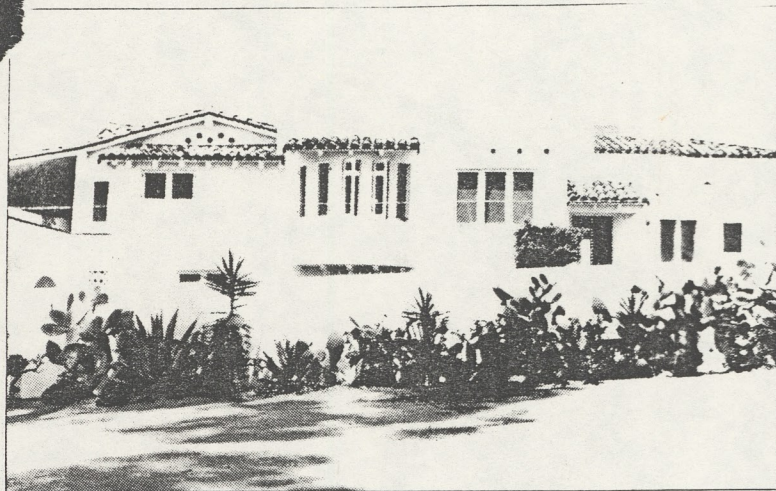
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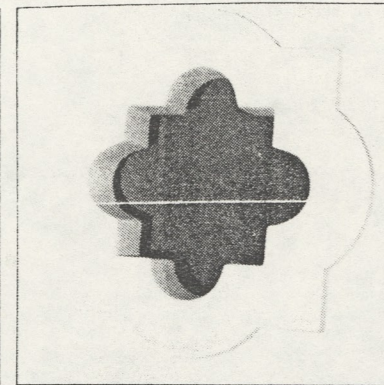
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The Spector home on Las Cuestas, one of Lilian Rice's grander designs, was used as a private boarding school in the '30s.



The unique design of the quatre foil provides a natural air conditioning and keeps the Spector home on Las Cuestas cool in the summer.



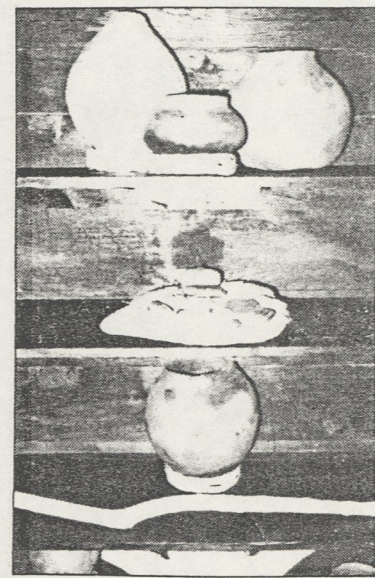
This four-piece patio dining area, surrounded by antique wares, faces the southern entrance of the Clotfelter home.



Martha Hilton's home on La Gracia, one of the homes featured on the Planned Parenthood Auxiliary home tour May 6, is a Lilian Rice designed residence.



Leith Clotfelter demonstrates the metate, an ancient Indian appliance for grinding corn for tortillas.



These pots, once used as storage facilities for the Ollas Indians as they migrated around the San Diego mountains and escarpment, now reside in Leith and Tom Clotfelter's home.

Photos by Jennifer Nelson

## A Tour of Rice Homes



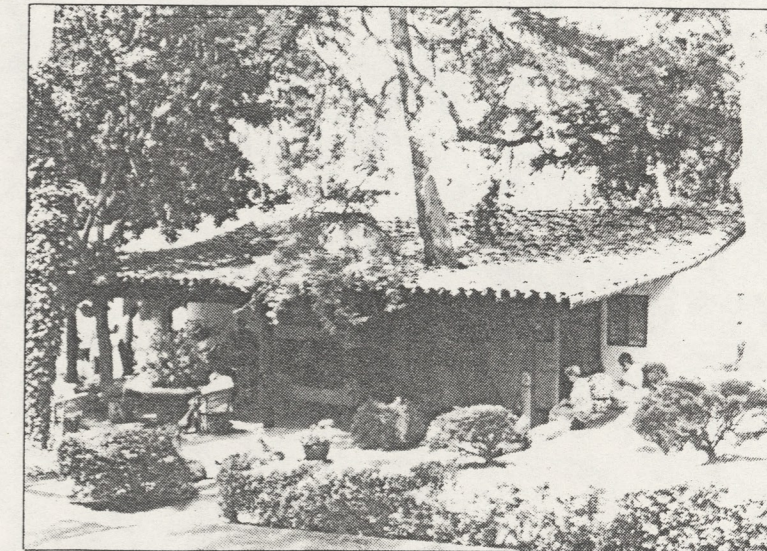
Susan and Rob Lankford stand in front of the Elmer Cord Home on Via de la Valle, which architect Thomas Sheppard remodeled in the '70s. Built in the original Santa Fe eucalyptus grove and one of many hilltop Rice designs, the home is surrounded by some of the oldest trees on the Ranch.



This unique configuration is a doorknob at the Lankford home.



The Reymart Roland-Holst country home, which is located on the top of a rise, has a beautiful view of the Village.



The Lankfords' guesthouse has eucalyptus trees providing shade from the inside and out.

Photos by Jennifer Nelson