

# RANCHO SANTA FE

By Jay Hovdey

No streetlights. No neon. No mail delivery. One school. A few sidewalks. Plenty of horses and farms. A rural way of life ruled by strict covenant. On paper it sounds like Amish country, where the modern world encroaches only far enough to put turn signals on the horse-drawn carriages. But this particular place is located in the heart of Southern California, an island of verdant serenity floating between the suburban sprawl of Orange County and Los Angeles to the north and the dizzy growth of San Diego to the south.

Welcome to Rancho Santa Fe.

To call it heaven on earth would be a stretch, and tasteless in the extreme. It was just last April when the jealously private community made international headlines as the launch pad for the Heaven's Gate cult of 39 quiet suicides who were determined to follow the comet Hale-Bopp to their intergalactic destiny. For days and days, helicopters circled and news vans jammed into

the tiny street where the "mansion of death"—complete with tennis courts and pool—was tucked away in the northern end of Rancho Santa Fe. When the interest abated, the ripples disappeared and serenity returned. The street was renamed. And real estate brokers picked up where they left off, trying to sell the house.

## LIVING THE HIGH LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. EBERHARDT

respite at the "Ranch" and its "Village" civic center with a small town feel. With its population of about 4,400 spread amongst 1,500 households over 6,200 acres, Del Mar race-track only a few miles down the road, and a benign climate that could grow flowers out of stone, Rancho Santa Fe has become no less than Lexington West—without the springtime thaw.

Consider this group of people who come and go at the local post office to pick up their daily mail:

Allen and Madeleine Paulson, who live at their Del Mar Country Club—a Ranch P.O. box—and have a jewel box version of their Brookside Farms just south of the Village.

Martin and Pam Wygod, who have 102 Ranch acres and a large racing stable that includes the top mares Twice the Vice and Exotic Wood.

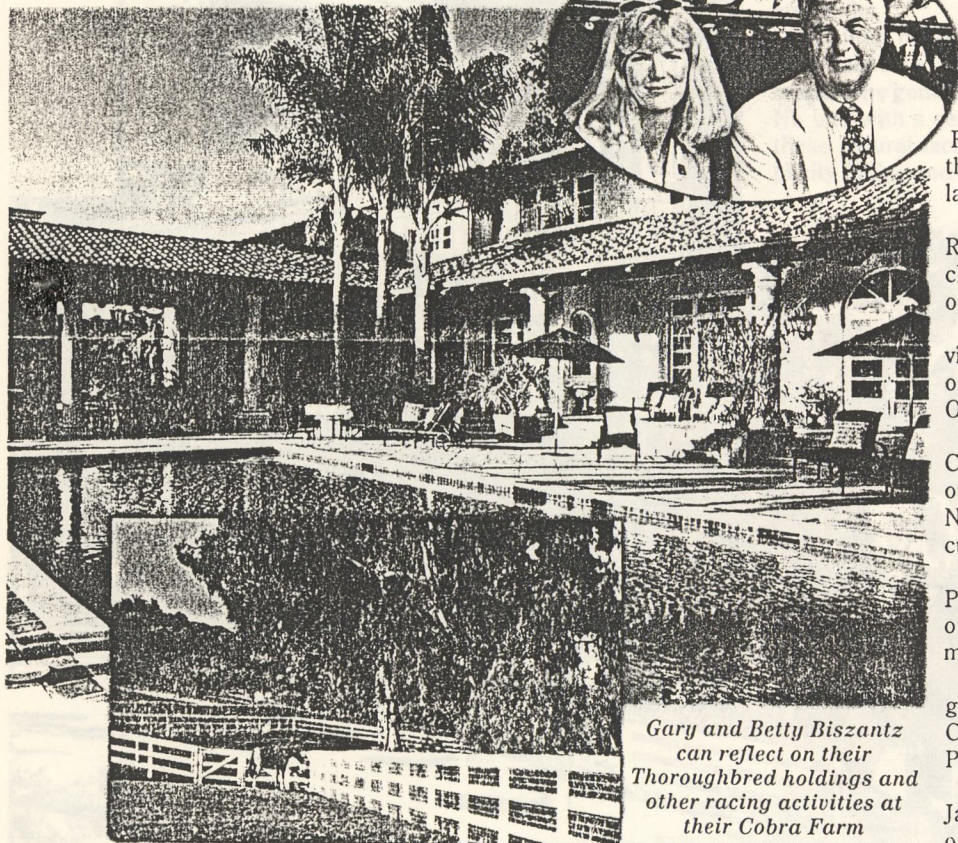
Ed and Natalie Friendly. The veteran television producer ("Laugh-in" and "Little House on the Prairie") founded the Thoroughbred Owners of California.

Gary and Betty Biszantz, proprietors of Cobra Farm. In addition to their large Thoroughbred holdings, he was a founder of the National Thoroughbred Association and is currently a director of TOC.

Sid and Jenny Craig, owners of champion Paseana and Epsom Derby winner Dr Devious, whose Rancho Paseana serves as a model lay-up and training facility.

Emmanuel and Laura de Seroux. He engineered the sale of Lammtarra, Timber Country, and Cigar, and manages the Paulsons' bloodstock.

Edmund and Bernice Gann, owners of Japan Cup winner Pay the Butler and many other stakes winners, whose Cedar Hills



Gary and Betty Biszantz can reflect on their Thoroughbred holdings and other racing activities at their Cobra Farm

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"We do allow people who don't have horses," McGregor added with a mischievous smile. "There are all kinds of celebrities, people who are well known. But people could care less about who is next door. Proximity to fame is no big deal, everyone has accomplished so much."

For association fees, home owners pay 15 cents per each \$100 of assessed property. For their money they get a private security patrol, fire department, 30 miles of riding trails, and maintenance of green belt areas lush with acacias, eucalyptus, pepper trees, mesquite, and a dozen types of palm. There is a K-8 "public" school that has the reputation and resources of the very best private schools. Membership in the Golf and Country Club is automatic. Dues are \$25,000 a year.

## *Ties that bind*

The roots of the community were established in the early 20th Century. The Santa Fe Land Development Company, a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, bought the land for \$100,000 from the heirs of the original Spanish land grant holders and started planting eucalyptus trees to harvest as railroad ties. The trees were a bust as ties, but they made great shelter and created a forest of possibilities. In 1922, Santa Fe land planner L. G. Sinnard presented the idea of an "intensive, high-class horticultural development" to his employers, pitching it as a great lure for upscale investors and a potential boon to east-west rail business. They liked the idea and set engineers and architects to work.

Five years later, Rancho Santa Fe was incorporated. Winding roads were carved in harmony with the terrain. The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe, originally called La Morada, sat at one



*Ed and Natalie Friendly (at right, with friend) enjoy the comforts of their "Little House" in the "rural community" of Rancho Santa Fe*

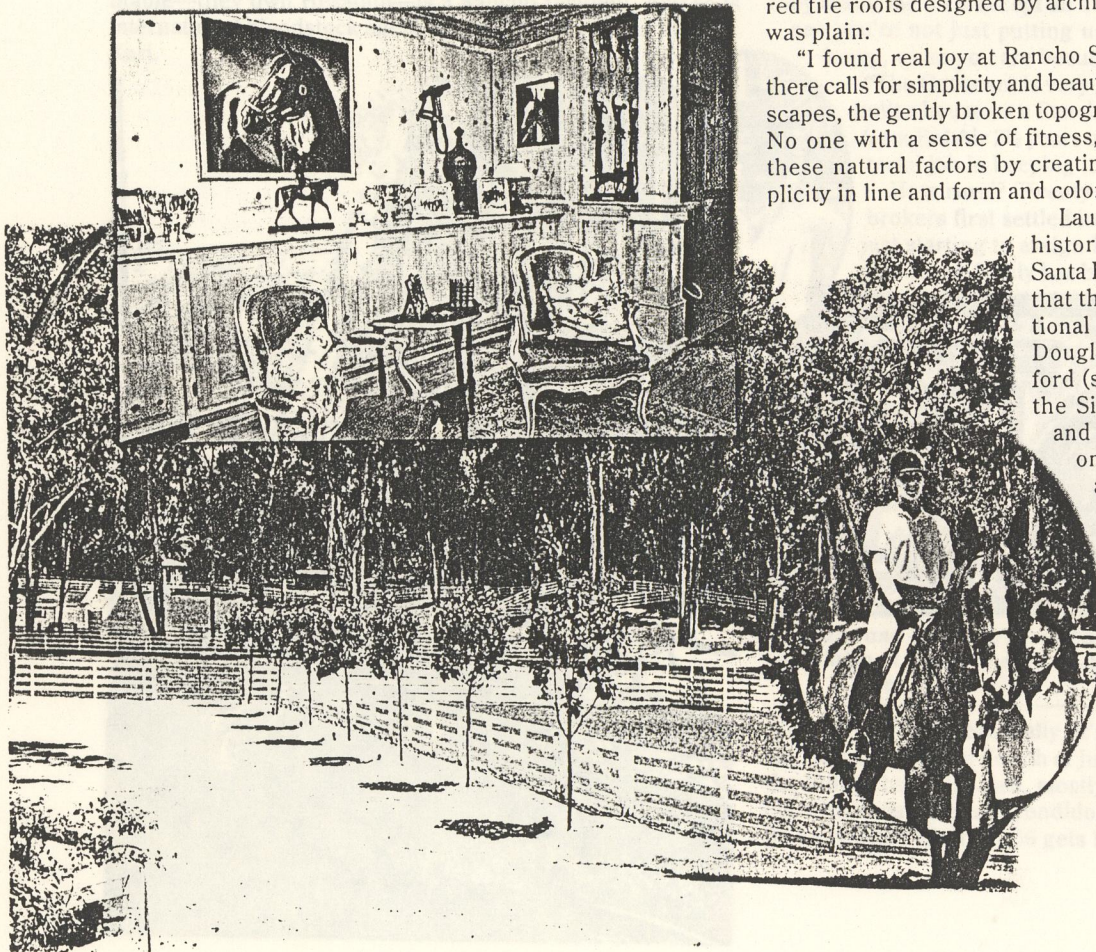


end of the Village and immediately became a drawing card. At its heart was a 10-square block civic center with low, Spanish colonial style buildings of arches, adobe, white stucco, and red tile roofs designed by architect Lilian Rice. Her mantra was plain:

"I found real joy at Rancho Santa Fe. Every environment there calls for simplicity and beauty—the gorgeous natural landscapes, the gently broken topography, the nearby mountains. No one with a sense of fitness, seems to me, could violate these natural factors by creating anything that lacked simplicity in line and form and color."

Lauren Farber, in her text for the historical compilation "Rancho Santa Fe: a California Village," notes that the project got its first promotional shot in the arm in 1926 when Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford (sort of the Bruce and Demi of the Silent Era) bought 800 acres and called it Rancho Zorro, after one of his movie roles. In 1932, as the development struggled through the Depression, Bing Crosby stepped in and bought 50 acres, then really put the place on the map in 1937 with the first of his

*At the Rancho Santa Fe version of Allen and Madeleine Paulson's Brookside Farms, Madeleine created a 12-acre training facility for horses ridden by her daughter Dominique*





*Sid and Jenny Craig's Rancho Paseana, named for one of their champions, is a model lay-up and training facility*

Farm has been a Ranch landmark for years.

Jack and Margaret Robbins. He is an original director of the Oak Tree Racing Association and a widely respected veterinarian.

Tom and Marguerite Cavanagh, owners of such stakes winners as Native Fancy, Caterman, Summer Siren, and more recently Blushing Heiress.

Broadcaster Dick Enberg, a partner in horses with Gary Biszantz, calls Rancho Santa Fe home. So does Joseph Fenley, Thoroughbred owner and a commissioner of the California Horse Racing Board, and Mary Bradley, owner of such Thoroughbred stars as Cougar II and Swingtime.

Hall of Fame trainer Ron McAnally finds solace in his Rancho Santa Fe home. "Trainers don't retire—you know that," he said, but he and his wife, Debbie, now have the perfect place to do it if it ever happens. Shari Lukas, Wayne's ex, has started a new life there. Ron Judy, a partner in the Three Sisters Stable—they own Hesabull—is a Rancho resident. And so is international bloodstock agent Will de Burgh and his wife, Kari.



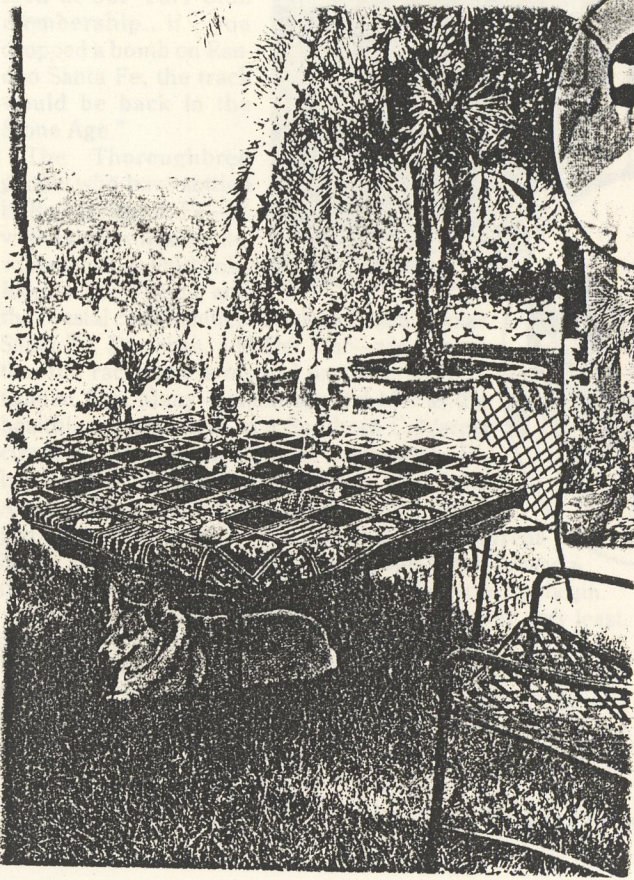
That's just a partial list, but pretty posh, full of self-made successes and independent thinkers who are willing to live on septic systems and toe the line to the 51-page Protective Covenant and the aesthetic demands of an all-powerful Art Jury. The governing Association maintains a "dark sky" policy that precludes street lights and illuminated tennis courts. Horse owners are restricted to one horse per acre, with few exemptions. Renovations and construction are rigorously reviewed.

"I love it, and the horses love it—that's the main thing," said Madeleine Paulson, who created a 12-acre training facility for the jumpers ridden by her daughter, Dominique. "They screamed when I first started doing everything. Then later they asked me if I'd accept an award. It's different when they see you're not just putting up something cheap and in a hurry, when you are beautifying the land."

"The Covenant is very strict," said Ed Friendly, who built a house on a Rancho Santa Fe hilltop and moved from Bel Air 2½ years ago. "And they've done a masterful job in keeping it as a rural community."

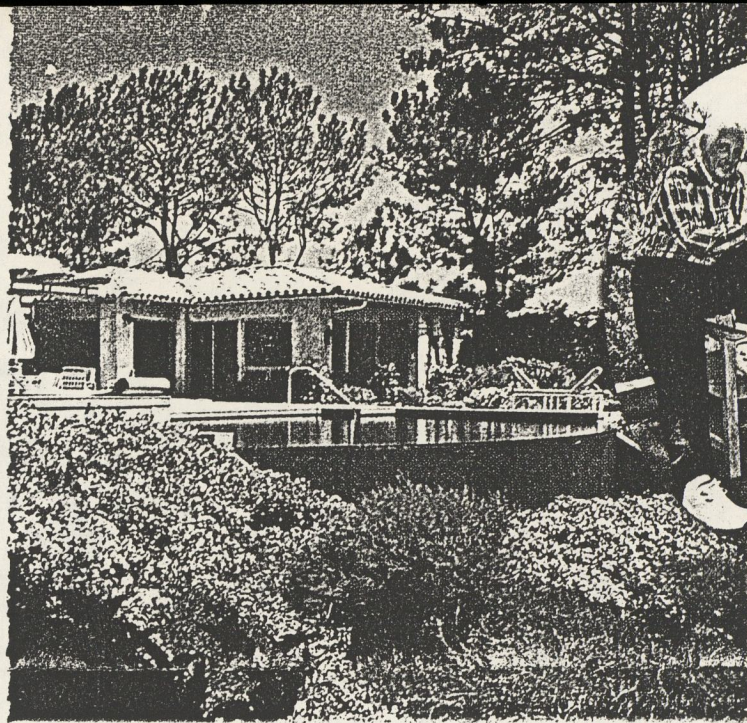
How rural? Twenty years ago, when real estate brokers first settled in Rancho Santa Fe, they were just starting to assign house numbers. Ann McGregor, whose family has been in the Standardbred business and whose son-in-law, Bill O'Donnell, is in the Harness Racing Hall of Fame, contends that even with the growth of surrounding regions, the ambience of the Ranch has survived.

"When we moved here the average age seemed like it was about 80," McGregor said. "Now it's more like 44. And more people live here year-round rather than seasonally. It's like a small town, complete with an old-fashioned Fourth of July parade. The traffic through the Village has increased, mostly from surfers taking a short cut to the coast from Escondido. Hopefully some of that will get away when Highway 56 gets built south of here."



*Shade and a beautiful view are available at Emmanuel and Laura de Seroux' place*





Harper is not anxious to leap into an expanded season.

"We've got a fun, tight meet," Harper said. "I'm not sure how much you can increase a racing calendar before you have an impact on your daily averages. One sure thing I know happens every summer. The first half of the meet everyone is going to ask me why can't we get more days. But they do say that more in the beginning of the meet than at the end."

Don't look for the pressure to ease. With so many people who have so much invested in racing living so close to the track, Del Mar will be the target of grand plans and expansion speculation. Last year, with the backing of the TOC, Friendly proposed a radically altered California racing calendar that would have given Del Mar a longer summer season.

Don Robbins, president of Hollywood Park, took one look at the proposal and thought he had an angle.

"What would it take," Robbins asked Friendly, "to get you to move to Inglewood?"

He already knew the answer. ■

Bing Crosby Pro-Am golf tournaments, held at the Rancho Santa Fe Country Club.

Crosby, of course, was also one of the builders of Del Mar racetrack. And it is the racetrack that provides the hook for much of the racing migration.

Joe Harper, president of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, is a former resident of Rancho Santa Fe. He is back on the Del Mar beach, where he has owned property for years, but he wouldn't trade his Rancho Santa Fe experience for the world.

"It's a very tight community," Harper said. "We made a lot of good friends there. And if you look at our Turf Club membership...if you dropped a bomb on Rancho Santa Fe, the track would be back in the Stone Age."

The Thoroughbred people who have settled in Rancho Santa Fe—as well as such nearby developments as Fairbanks Ranch, The Farms, and the coastal communities of Solana Beach, Lomas Santa Fe, Encinitas, and Del Mar—are hoping that the racetrack is instead on the brink of a Golden Age. Many of them see Del Mar as the healthiest component in a Southern California circuit that has traditionally been dominated by Hollywood Park in Inglewood and Santa Anita Park in Arcadia. They feel the time is ripe for Del Mar to expand its season from the traditional 43 days. Currently, the season must wait for the local agricultural association to complete its summer fair before the races can begin.

"I hope it happens," said Gary Biszantz. "At the very least, we should have year-round training down here."

"I think it's inevitable," Ed Friendly insisted. "San Diego County has just exploded. If it weren't for the fair, which ends on the Fourth of July, you know Del Mar would run July 4 to Labor Day."

*Martin and Pam Wygod have 102 acres, a large racing stable, and other amenities*

