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Cliff May Ranchos of Long Beach

- Built in the 1950s
- Modernist styling
- Post & beam construction
- Clerestory windows
- Indoor-Outdoor living
- Open floor plans
- Lots designed for privacy
- Adjacent to 800 acre park
- Tree-lined parkways
- Casual, relaxed living

California's New Best Seller*

1953 houses at \$7,500 to \$11,900 have good looks, unique panel construction and an expanded future

This is the new California best seller. It is selling so fast that builders from San Diego County in the south to Chico in the north are scrambling to pay designer Cliff May and his architect partner, Chris Choate, from \$225 to \$300 per house royalty to cash in on its proved sales appeal. Others want to borrow its good ideas without paying for them.

* This article, touting the innovative features of Cliff May's ranch home designs, appeared in House & Home Magazine, July 1953.

Two big reasons explain its popularity.

1. It is designed for such easy and economical construction that it can be priced at least \$1,000 under the market.
2. This is almost the first low-cost house to offer the kind of California living everybody back East imagines all Californians enjoy. Generally this kind of house has been limited to architect-designed houses at \$20,000 and up.

Now the sales success of these homes proves once and for all that people who can afford \$7,500 for a house welcome the same chance for California living that buyers of \$75,000 houses have long insisted on.

The design and construction of these houses will take on greatly expanded significance if and when Eastern builders begin to erect them, which Cliff May says can be done for about \$1,000 more than in California.

Prefabricated package. This year May & Choate have formed a prefabrication firm which sells a package of the factory-made panels, all the precut lumber, sash, doors, cabinetwork, insulation, finish hardware, light fixtures, bath accessories, and heating. Most builders are now buying this package, along with the plans. The meteoric rise in popularity of these prefabricated houses and the flexibility of the panels may possibly change the attitude



1952 Cliff May tract home interior, featured in House & Home magazine

of West Coast builders, who have been strongly opposed to prefabrication.

While exteriors are still rough 12" redwood boards with 4" batts, windows have heavier muntins and, with a 6" wider (now 30") overhang all around, give a more solid appearance to the house. There is more window area in the new houses as additional windows have been added to bedrooms for cross-ventilation. No picture windows face the street, as some did last year. Roof pitch is slightly higher: now 2½-in-12, which designers feel looks better than the previous 2-in-12.

Interior partitions covered with plasterboard have replaced both the curving masonry wall between living

FAQs

on Historic Preservation

room and kitchen (which visiting builders liked last year) and the thin (1") partition between living room and one bedroom (which almost no one liked). Storage space has been almost doubled.

The old house had space heaters, no insulation. Most of the new houses will have central forced-air systems (builders may still use space heaters if they wish to) and all have reflective insulation. Mechanical central cooling can be installed as a \$650 to \$750 extra but no builder has yet begun installing it.

A new floor plan improves circulation. In working over their new plans May & Choate improved circulation by making the living room less of a hallway to kitchen and bathroom. They completely redesigned the kitchen, making it larger, easier to work in, and adding a ceiling exhaust fan. There was no room to eat in the old kitchen. The laundry has been moved to a utility area opening up room for eating in the kitchen of the 1953 house.

All exterior doors are now in pairs. Carports and garages have been redesigned with sloping roofs which harmonize better with the houses. A number of ingenious arrangements make carports serve as porches or children's play areas. These give builders a great deal of variation from the standard pattern.

The two-bedroom house, now obsolete in many areas, is popular with May & Choate builders. The reason: buyers can see from the model houses that the three-bedroom house is like the small one, and the extra bedroom can easily be built on later. A special panel, added to one wall, can later be knocked out and used as a door to the additional bedroom.

Competition at Lakewood. The Lakewood area near Long Beach is tough territory for a builder because one of the country's three largest building firms has its low-cost operation there. Yet when builder Ross Cortese first saw the Cliff May houses he junked plans he had completed for 800 houses, bought the May & Choate designs and, with no advertising but his model house, made sales history. Nearly 150 families that had made down payments on other houses asked for refunds to buy his.

Says Dewitt R. Lee of Walker & Lee, who are major sales agents there: "The house is commanding terrific interest and Lakewood builders are worried about it. We predict that Cortese's entire tract of 800 will be sold out before the last foundation is laid."

Thank you to Rancho owner and enthusiast Forrest Freed, who graciously made available to me his original, 1953 edition of House & Home Magazine, in which this article appeared.

RANCHO CONNECTIONS

Resources and service providers in the neighborhood

Original Cliff May Doors and Windows

Looking for original Rancho doors and windows? Rancho owner Bill Gurzi has a collection of both 5x7 swing outs and 3x5 windows. Give Bill a call!

Bill Gurzi – 562.938.9597 (no calls after 8 pm please)

Historic district designation is an ongoing topic in our neighborhood, and to help all Rancho owners and enthusiasts better understand this subject, I have posted a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page to my web site at www.ranchostyle.com. I encourage all Rancho owners to take a few minutes to review this information when time permits. In the interim, the following FAQ excerpts will acquaint you with some key points.

Will the Ranchos be designated as a historic district?

Not necessarily. A study must be done in the neighborhood—assuming the City is willing and able to fund it—to determine if there is substantial vintage architecture remaining to justify Historic District designation. This would only be the first step in a process that would ultimately include community feedback.

If the Ranchos are designated as a historic district, will I be required to do anything to my property?

No. All physical conditions which exist at the time a district is designated are "grandfathered in." No entity can require owners to change their property to conform with new regulations. The design guidelines apply when an owner requests a physical change to their property.

Would I need to seek approval from the City to remodel the interior of my home?

No. The interior of your home is your private domain and no entity can dictate how you design or decorate that space. Interior remodeling is excluded from review, as is normal exterior maintenance and repair which does not involve a change in materials or design.

How are regulations implemented?

Building permit applications are "flagged" at the counter, and applicants are requested to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness or an authorized signature. Staff handles most applications after a discussion about materials and design specifications, and the extra time required is usually brief. Since repainting does not require a building permit, compliance requires educating the community about the regulations.

Again, you can find the full historic district FAQ page by visiting my web site at www.ranchostyle.com. You can also learn more by contacting the City of Long Beach at (562) 570-6864 or visiting the City web site at www.longbeach.gov.

Free Market Evaluation of your Rancho

There are buyers for every type of Rancho, regardless of their condition. Call Doug to schedule a no-obligation assessment of your home. It will include:

- ✓ An overview of pending homes sales in the Ranchos
- ✓ A summary of recent home sales in the Ranchos
- ✓ A no-obligation consultation on the marketing of your Cliff May home for maximum exposure and value.

Call Doug Today!
562-627-1001

Aqua Cool Rancho

From the pool to the kitchen, the overriding theme of this modern and open home is aqua cool. This '53 Cliff May Rancho, home to Ken Klawitter and his partner Anthony, is the ultimate in California living. The pool and surrounding yard are the focal point of the property, and virtually the entire house can be opened to this space.

"We love to entertain, and we like to be able to relax from the stresses of the work week," says Ken. "This home, though it needed work when we bought it, clearly had all the ingredients to deliver that ideal."

This L-shaped Lanai model reflects the optimum lot design, and it has afforded its owners the opportunity to fence in the front yard for maximum use of the land, and accordingly, the ultimate in indoor/outdoor living. But to take this design advantage a step further, Ken and Anthony brought the hue of the pool into the house through features such as aqua colored kitchen cabinetry and turquoise fabric on select interior and exterior seating.

"There really is no such thing as too strong a connection to the outdoors," says Ken, "When the weather is as consistently pleasant as we experience here in Long Beach, why not enjoy it as part of your living space?"

Above: A wide view of the property's front yard, complete with aqua blue pool. The wood deck, raised to the level of the master bedroom and living room, enhances the sense of seamless connection to the outdoors. **Below:** Owners Ken and Anthony replaced the original raised windows with vintage Cliff May doors and floor-to-ceiling windows for enhanced openness and cross ventilation. The room now opens to both the back garden and the front pool area.



Enter to win a **\$50** dinner certificate for **El Dorado Restaurant**

3 Ways to Enter!



Call Doug 562-627-1001



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Complete this form and mail it to Doug (mailing address on back page).

Name _____ Phone _____

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Newsletter comments/feedback _____

Check here if you would like to be contacted about buying or selling a property.

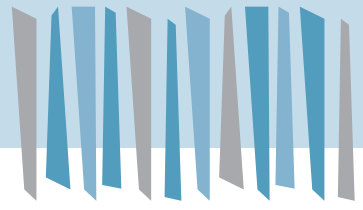
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* See the back page for details.

Doug Kramer's

Rancho Style

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Dear Rancho Neighbors,

I hope this edition of *Rancho Style* finds you all happy and well and enjoying your summer. This time of the year is certainly one of the best seasons for us Rancho owners; it is a time when we can swing open the doors and enjoy what is most special about these homes, their connection to the outdoors.

As I live and work in my Cliff May ranch home each day I am reminded of the words of the great architect John Lautner, who said, "If you want a more interesting life, you couldn't do anything better than live within fine architecture." While our architecture is not dramatic or elaborate, it is fine: it is fine in its simplicity, in its post-and-beam construction that allows for fewer walls and more glass and light; it is fine in its use of outdoor space to enhance interior space; and it is fine in its aesthetic—close to the ground and unassuming.

As you can tell from reading these newsletters, I have a passion for architecture, and that passion carries over into what I do as a realtor. It is my pleasure to serve the real estate needs of Rancho owners and to help you maximize the value of your properties. If you are considering the sale or lease of your Rancho, I hope you will contact me for a no obligation discussion of your property's value, and strategies for bringing your home to the attention of an audience that is qualified and willing to pay for a Cliff May design.

Yours Truly,

Doug Kramer

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Douglas Kramer

RE/MAX Real Estate Specialists
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Win \$50 *toward* Dinner!

Be sure to enter the August 25 drawing for a **\$50 certificate** for dinner at the El Dorado Restaurant and Lounge, a Rancho neighbor since 1956. Now under new ownership, the El Dorado—located at the corner of Studebaker and Spring—is bringing back the style and tradition of a 1950's dinner house.

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*Entry form inside.

Congratulations to Rancho owner **Rebecca Wiant**, winner of a one-year subscription to "Atomic Ranch" magazine.