

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
CHR Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 2 Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder)

**P1. Other Identifier:** El Rancho Harpo

**\*P2. Location:** Not for Publication Unrestricted

**\*a. County** Riverside

**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad**

**Date:**

**\*c. Address** 71-111 La Paz Road

**City** Rancho Mirage

**Zip** 92270

**\*e. Other Locational Data:** Assessor's Parcel Number Block: Lot:

**\*P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries.)

*Capped by a medium pitched front gabled roof, this one-story residence is reflective of the postwar Ranch architectural style. Stucco finishes exterior surfaces. Of wood frame post and beam construction and irregular in plan, the house features dramatic floor to ceiling plate glass windows on its north and south elevations beneath the gable peak. The dwelling's entrance is located near the east end of the primary (north) elevation. A large enclosed three-car garage with its west elevation sheltered by deep overhangs supported by triangular brackets is located east of the entry area. At the rear of the residence the building's flared wings encompass a large swimming pool and a wide covered terrace. The expansive property is landscaped with a decorative pond, an entrance bridge, grassy lawns, various plants, numerous palms, and other mature trees. Evidence indicates that the dwelling's southeast wing has been modified, but the remainder of the dwelling appears mostly original.*

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** (list attributes and codes) HP2. Single-family Property

**\*P4. Resources Present:** Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a. Photo



**P5b. Description of Photo:** (view and date)  
North elevation  
October 2008

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**  
historic  
1956/ Source: Tax Assessor

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**  
Private

**\*P8. Recorded by:**  
Peter Moruzzi  
Moruzzi Historic Resources Consulting  
2935 Angus Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

**\*P9. Date Recorded:**  
October 2008

**\*P10. Survey Type:**  
Intensive Survey.

**\*P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none")

*City of Rancho Mirage, Historic Resource Survey, Leslie Heumann & Associates, 2002-2003.*

**\*Attachments:** None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record  
Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record  
Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list)

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

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\*CHR Status Code 5S1

\*Resource Name or #: 71-111 La Paz Road

B1. Historic Name: *El Rancho Harpo*  
B2. Common Name: *71-111 La Paz Road*  
B3. Original Use: *Single-family Property*

B4. Present Use: *Single-family Property*

\*B5. Architectural Style: *Ranch*

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations):  
*Constructed in 1956.*

*Note: No building permits exist prior to incorporation of the City of Rancho Mirage in 1973.*

\*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:  
*None.*

B9a. Architect: *Wallace Neff*

b. Builder: *Unknown*

\*B10. Significance: Theme *Country Club Era*

Area *Rancho Mirage*

Period of Significance: *1951 - 1973* Property Type: *Single-family Residence* Applicable Criteria: *B, C*

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

*This modern Ranch style single-family residence is of the type and style erected in Rancho Mirage during the city's "Country Club era." It was designed by famed Los Angeles-based architect Wallace Neff in 1956 for the well-known comedian Harpo Marx and his family. Marx occupied the dwelling, which he dubbed "El Rancho Harpo," until his death in 1964. Wallace Neff (1895-1982) was a distinguished architect whose client list included many Hollywood celebrities and renowned businessmen. His design for the subject property was based on the popular Ranch architectural style of the 1950s and exhibits several of its character-defining features including a front gabled roof, post and beam construction, open floor plan, generous use of plate glass windows, and deep overhanging eaves. The property's original owner, Harpo Marx, was one of the most famous and recognizable comedians in America at the time of the dwelling's construction, having starred in many movies with his brothers during the 1930s. Marx was also one of the founding members of the Tamarisk Country Club in Rancho Mirage.*

*Therefore, due to the significance of the subject property as an excellent example of the work of architect Wallace Neff on behalf of famed comedian Harpo Marx, the residence meets local landmark criteria related to architectural merit and historic personages. As such, the property was approved as a Rancho Mirage Historical Resource in 2007 (a "5S1" California Historical Resource Status Code).*

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) \_\_\_\_\_

\*B12. References:

*Alan Hess and Andrew Danish, Palm Springs Weekend, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 2001. Adele Cygelman, Palm Springs Modern, New York, Rizzoli International Publications, 1999.*

B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: *Peter Moruzzi*

\*Date of Evaluation: *October 2008*

Sketch Map