

PALM SPRINGS *Life*

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They call it "Little Eldorado"—and with good reason—but Louise Nicoletti will tell you insistently that it really isn't a big house.

There are, after all, she explains, only the one guest room, a den, the maid's room and a sitting room for her grandchildren (which she calls "the kookie room") besides her own bedroom and dressing quarters, the living room and kitchen—plus the laundry room and work area in the basement.

But such details, while accurate enough, don't give you the feeling of bigness that the house itself does; they don't tell you, for instance, that the guest "room" is actually a *suite*, large enough and regal enough for any visiting royalty, and that it is entirely separate from the main wing of the house, with the privacy of its own patio; nor that the living room measures forty by twenty, and has big walls of glass on two sides that seem to float you out into the vistas of loveliness they encompass—the verdure of the Thunderbird Country Club fairways on one side and, on the other, the masses of purple and white geraniums in the graciously formal poolside patio and the mountains beyond.

In hard facts, the Nicoletti home—high atop the hills of Thunderbird Ranch Estates—has five thousand square feet of floor area—inside—plus four thousand feet of outside porch area. It cost \$163,000, and was almost a year under construction before Mrs. Nicoletti moved in, in the spring of 1961.

The architect was William Cody, which may explain the resemblance to Eldorado Country Club—Cody also designed its incredibly opulent looking clubhouse. Indeed, there is certainly a similarity in the cantilevered balconies of the two buildings, both of which seem to float out over the landscaping. The contractor on the Nicoletti home was William Foster; the interiors are by Maxine Overbeck, and the landscaping is by Charles Darland.

Conversation pieces in the living room include a lighting fixture that was originally a charcoal brazier and now hangs suspended from the ceiling by a long elephant chain over a potted plant; a brass elephant and a Japanese writing set, both seventeenth century; and two striking portraits, one of Mrs. Nicoletti and one of her daughter, Mrs. Federico de Silva of San Marino.

The architectural feature is the walnut-paneled bar that opens into both the living room and, with the opening of a glass door partition, onto the terrazzo-terraced patio beyond.

Mrs. Nicoletti's personal suite is the last word in elegance—crystal and gold plumbing fixtures in the bath and dressing room; white marble basins and tub, and a gold and white wicker enclosure for even that most inelegant of fixtures, the w.c.

But Mrs. Nicoletti's own favorite areas of the house are the kitchen, with its pull-out shelves and wide, deep drawers, and the basement, where she has set up her own workbench.

"I'm a fixer," she says. "I fix everything." (She attributes this mechanical bent to her father, the late Cady B. Durham, an engineer who rose to become general manager and vice president of the Buick Motor Company.)

Naturally enough, the Nicoletti home has become a showplace of the desert, and Mrs. Nicoletti has come to feel a bit like a guide.

"This is the fourth time I've been around this house today," she said after concluding a photographic tour for *Palm Springs Life*. "I have a lot of friends, who keep bringing people to see it, and Cody keeps bringing people here.

"I didn't intend to build anything so outstanding—I just wanted a house I could be comfortable in."

It is certainly all of that.

Louise

Nicoletti's

*"Little
Eldorado"*

Showplace

in the

Desert

photography by paul pospesil



Mrs. Nicoletti and Gigi—the bar opens both ways.



Architectural Drama

The drama in Palm Springs architecture is captured by these Taylor-Jones shots of the Palm Springs Spa at twilight (above) and of the futuristic sculpture on the side of the Welmas Building at night.

