

CABO LIVING®



Baja Pioneers

Ed & Pat Giddings

of

CLUB CASCADAS

A Spoiled Vacation Leads to an Iconic Los Cabos Resort that is Now Celebrating its 40th Anniversary!

-by Ardith Stephanson | photos courtesy of the Giddings Family-

If it wasn't for a spoiled vacation in Costa Rica, a vital part of Los Cabos history may not have been written. Thanks to a rainy season holiday, Ed and Pat Giddings rerouted their trip to fly into little-known Baja California Sur in 1971. That first foray eventually led to building a cornerstone of Medano Beach in Cabo San Lucas, the uniquely designed and one-of-a-kind Club Cascadas de Baja, which celebrates 40 years in operation in 2026.

In the 1970s, Ed Giddings was already a well-known architect and builder of homes in southern California and in Puerto Vallarta, where he had met his wife Pat in the 1960s. She was an interior designer and their partnership meant she also worked on design for many of those homes. The couple had heard about Los Cabos from connections in California, and in magazines where they

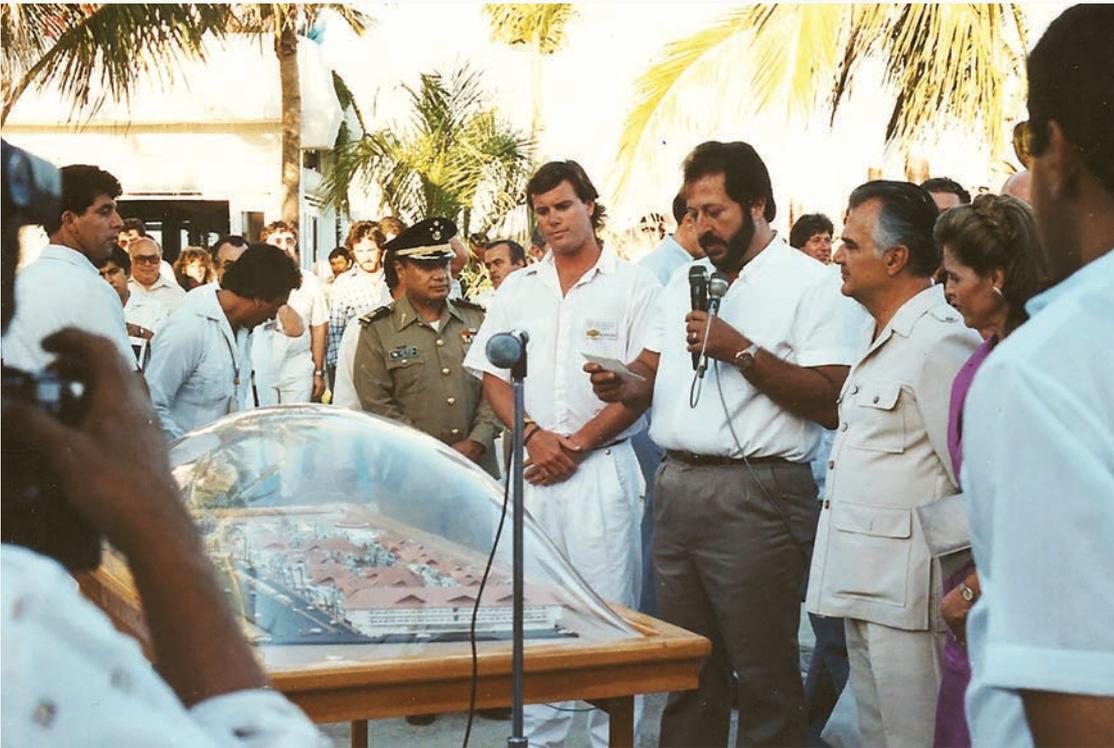
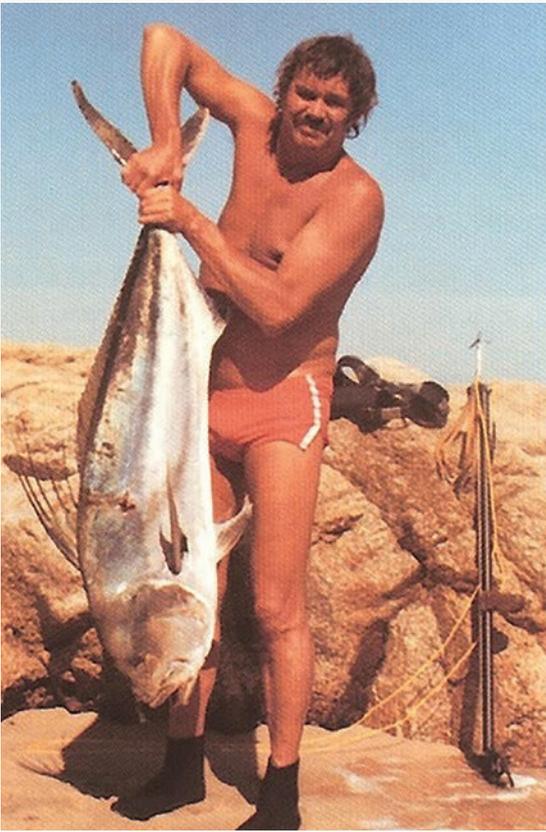
read about John Wayne and others visiting the area.

The Giddings visited Costa Rica in 1971, where Ed, an avid free diver, was hoping to get on the water and do some spear fishing. Unbeknownst to them it was the rainy season. To escape the rain, they decided to leave Costa Rica and head to Cabo, "that great place we have heard about."

After flying to Mexico City, with a goal to re-route their trip to Cabo, even the Mexicans helping them at the airport had not heard of the area. One employee was able to get details and booked them a flight to La Paz. From there, they drove to Cabo, and

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(ABOVE) | Ed Giddings with a roosterfish speared near Puerto Vallarta. Ed in the center studying the plot plan on the beachfront in Cabo San Lucas that would later become Club Cascadas, 1972. Mark Giddings and President Miguel de la Madrid on either side of the sales manager, with microphone. Pat Giddings at Club Cascadas.

that view of the bay was love at first sight. It reminded Ed of the early days in Puerto Vallarta, where he had developed Ocho Cascadas Resort and was building homes in the hills when he met Pat.

The couple spent a few weeks in Cabo before returning home to California. Not long after, a developer from Dallas called Ed to be part of a project to build a resort in the arroyo next to the current site of Cascadas de Baja. As their son, Mark Giddings tells the story, Ed said: “Pat, can you believe this! He’s asking me to develop where we just were!”

The developer flew Ed and Pat to Cabo in his private jet, where Ed tried to discourage him from building in the wash, which was sure to be flooded when the rainy

season arrived. The developer was not to be deterred, and started building based on Ed’s plans, but the foundations and block walls were soon ruined by the summer rains in the mid 1970s.

In the meantime, Ed was able to acquire the property next to the arroyo from the son of former President Miguel Alemán. Over the next decade, the Giddings family visited Los Cabos often, staying in the few resorts that were in the area, such as Hotel Cabo San Lucas, Finisterra, Hacienda, Palmilla, and Twin Dolphins. Mark carried on the family tradition by visiting Los Cabos on surf holidays after he turned 16 and could drive to the tip of Baja Peninsula and enjoy the area on his own.



That property next to the arroyo? Ed had acquired it in 1971, and decided to develop it in the early 1980s. He asked Mark to be the eyes and ears of the project, which was an easy decision for the young man who had come to know Los Cabos after many visits there. Construction began in the fall of 1985, and Club Cascadas de Baja opened in the fall of 1986. That initial phase included the restaurant, pool, and the first four buildings with 10 units.

Over time, the Giddings family continued to build the resort based on sales, so it was a few years before it was fully completed. The entire five acres was fully built in 1990.

But there's a back story to Club Cascadas

that began decades earlier. Ed was building houses in Puerto Vallarta when Pat visited the area and was astonished by the beauty of his architecture. She rented a horse to get a closer look, and wanted to meet the developer who locals called a "crazy American."

Puerto Vallarta was small enough in the early 1960s that there were only a handful of taxis. Pat and Ed ended up sharing a cab one day, and he invited her to a cocktail party. They quickly fell in love and were married in Mexico City. Mark was born in Puerto Vallarta in 1963, before the family established a home base in Newport Beach, California, where the Giddings had two more sons.

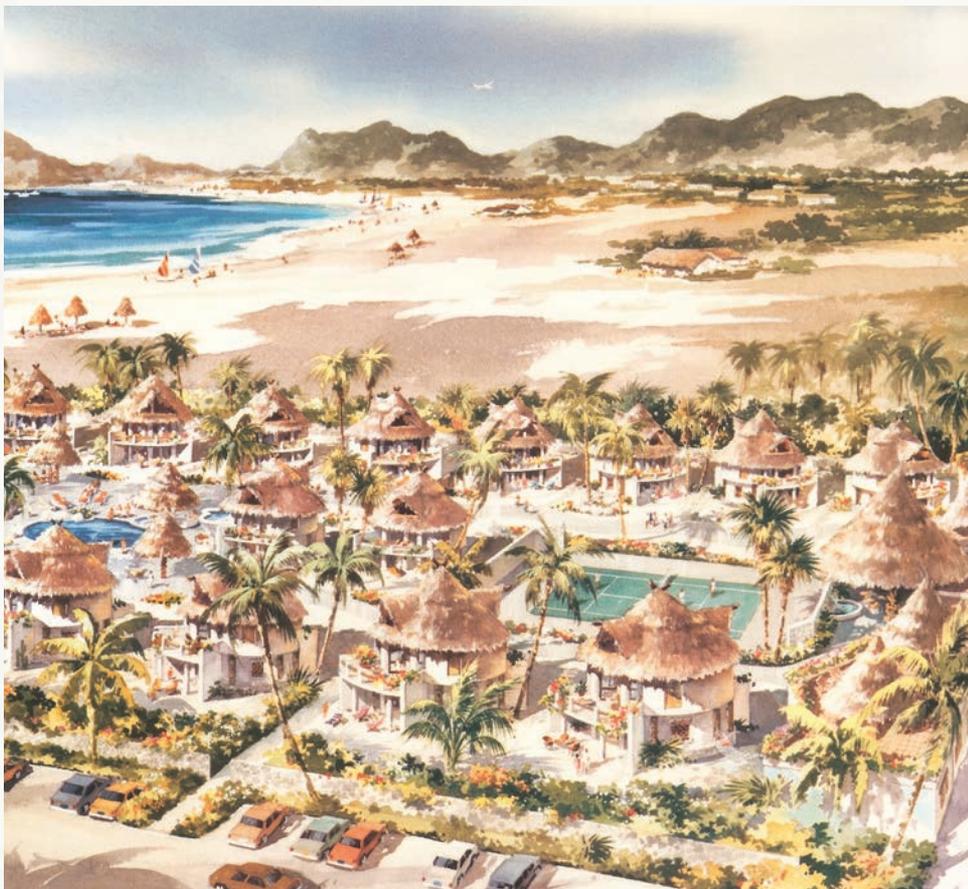
There was another love story budding, too,

(ABOVE AND BELOW) | *Construction of Club Cascadas. During construction in 1985, a large tree had been found nearby. This tree was used as a supporting pole of the first beach palapa.*

one which formed the basis for the unique architecture and design of Club Cascadas. Ed and Pat fell in love with Mexico and its people, and that shaped the designs of homes they built together in Mexico and in southern California.

That love of traditional Mexico also

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shaped their design of the one-of-a-kind property at Club Cascadas.

"They loved Mexico, and they loved the people," Mark says. "They would go all over Mexico to get materials for the homes in Mexico, or for homes built in southern California. Mom was requested to do interior

design for many of the homes dad built. For the Club Cascadas project, we would get most of our supplies from mainland Mexico: bamboo, palm trunks, interior finishings. Our material all came over on ferries, and unloaded right where the marina is now."

Ed would watch the ferries come in with his binoculars, including workers hanging off the boat, arriving in Los Cabos because they heard there was work available. A few hours later, the supplies and workers would arrive at the site.

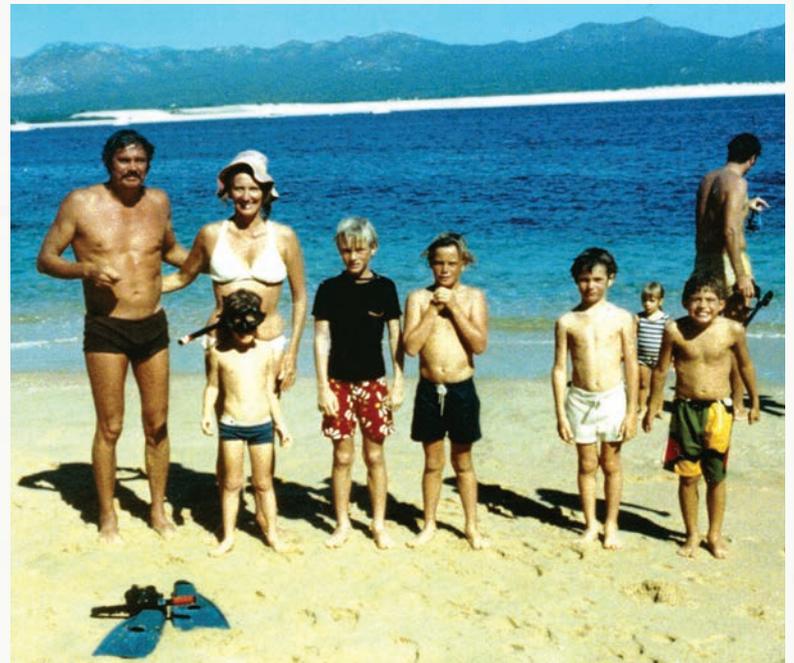
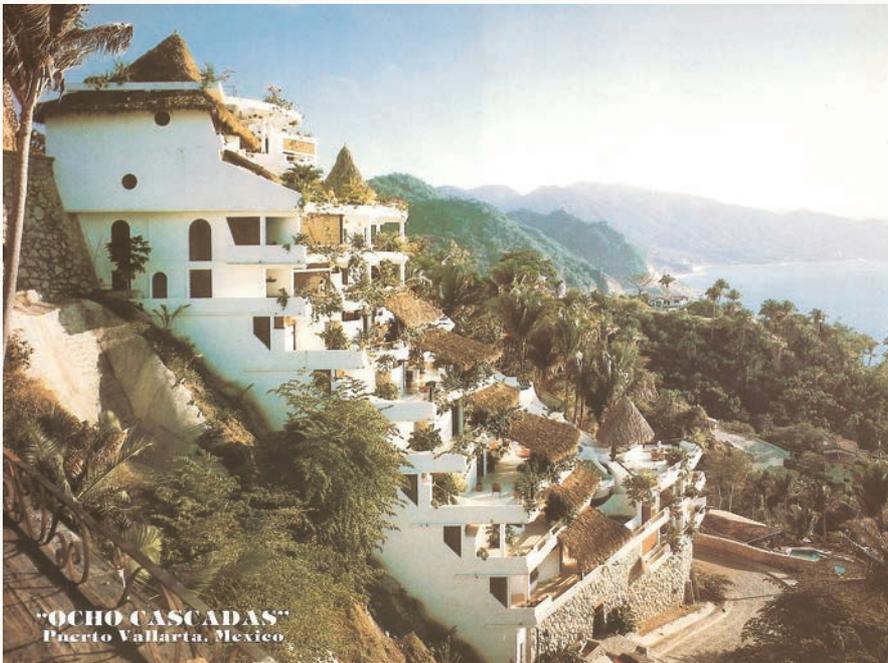
The family also hired a lot of people from Cabo. Back then, everybody was a fisherman

or the wife of a fisherman, but many found work at the new resort.

"We needed workers," Mark says. "We extracted some of the locals for work. We needed maids, maintenance men, and more. We were the biggest employer for a long time. Dad and mom always wanted to give back to the community. We were a big resort in a small village, so they would help at Christmas time, they would help charities, they believed in giving to the community."

It was a similar project to their build of Ocho Cascadas in Puerto Vallarta, which sold out and fully operational by 1984.

(BELOW) | *Ocho Cascadas in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.*
Construction of Club Cascadas.





What was different was that Ocho was a small resort in a large vacation area. When Club Cascadas de Baja opened, it was a large project in a small resort area.

Los Cabos has changed a lot since then, but the appeal of Club Cascadas has only grown.

“Back then, the people in town, the locals, and the politicians, asked ‘Why are you building on the outside of town? Why aren’t you building in the bay?’” Mark chuckles at the memory. “We never felt that was far away anyways, and if you look now, we are smack dab in the middle of it.”

In an environment of increasingly larger resorts and big-name chain establishments,

the quaint, family environment of Club Cascadas has proven staying power. In 2026, it will celebrate 40 years in operation in the heart of Medano Beach in Cabo San Lucas, with many lifetime members that are now third- and even fourth-generation annual visitors. That popularity and enduring appeal is due in large part to the philosophy and vision of Ed and Pat.

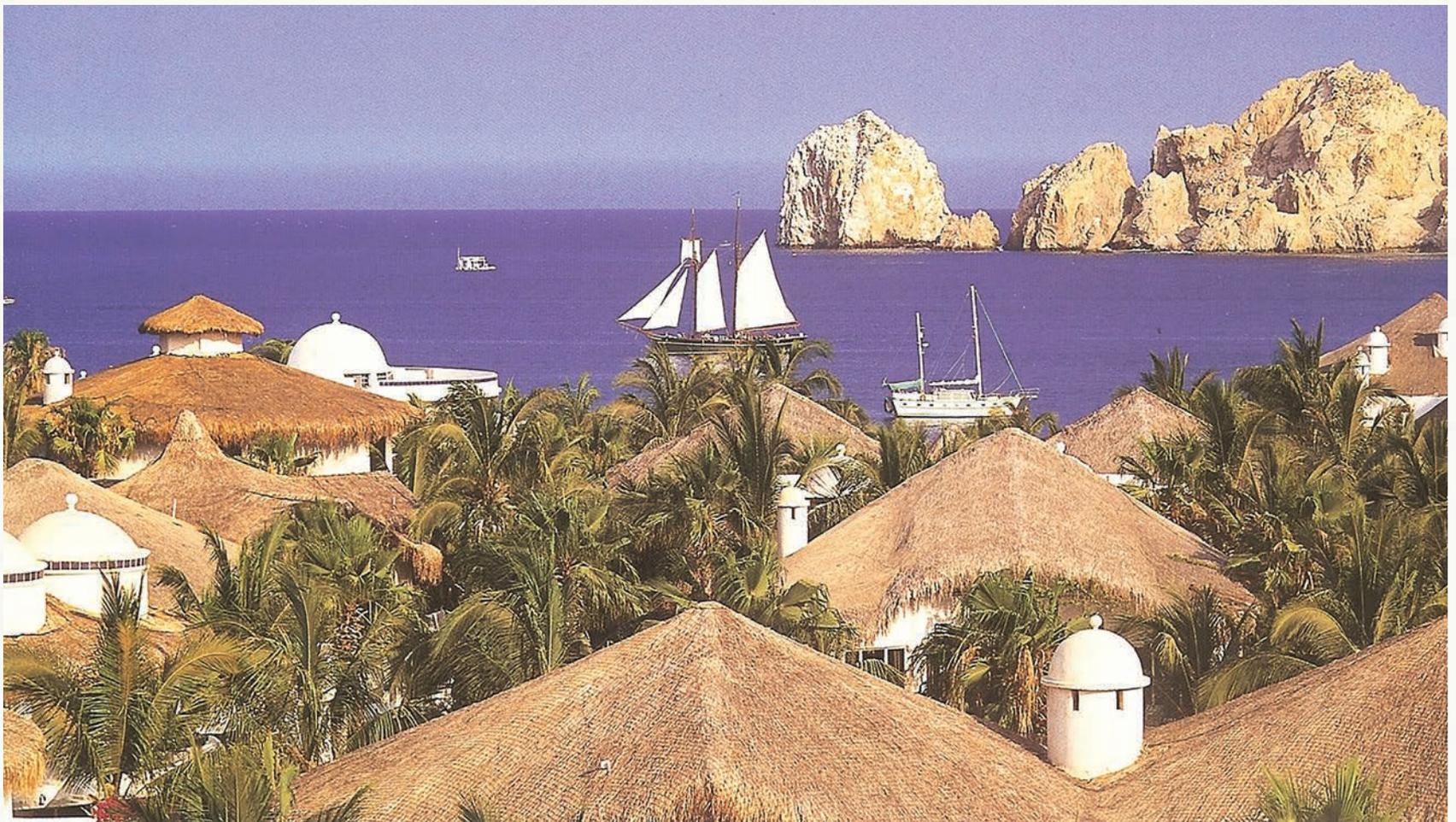
“We are like the little engine that could,” explains Mark, who has been part of the family business since construction began in 1985. “In Cabo, we have stayed the course through hurricanes, power outages, the financial situation of America or Mexico, every president, and never failed

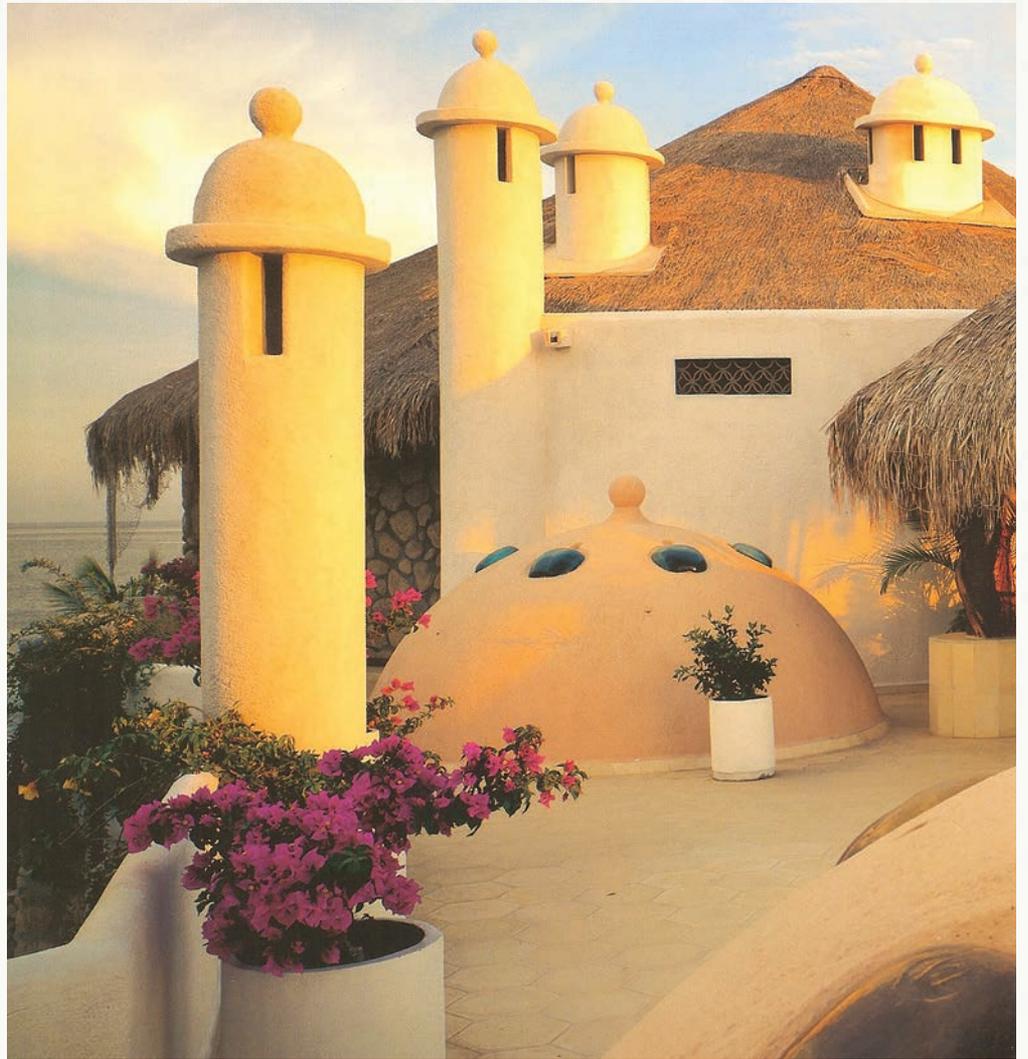
(ABOVE AND BELOW) | *Ed and Pat Giddings at Club Cascadas in 1991. Land’s End view over the rooftops of Club Cascadas.*

our members — not once, in any way. Our restaurant didn’t serve poor food, our maintenance didn’t suffer, we dealt with it all.

“My mom would always say we want to

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(ABOVE AND FAR RIGHT) | THIS PAGE: Pat and Mark Giddings. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** The spa at Casa Giddings. The open master bedroom, on the third level, at Villa Perla. Ed Giddings with builder and good friend, Saturnino.

be the Outrigger Canoe Club on Waikiki because they never changed. There are now giant skyscrapers on both sides, and in the middle, The Outrigger Canoe Club. And where do people want to go in Waikiki? The Outrigger Canoe Club. She put that in her mind — whatever we do, we want to be the place that people want to come to.”

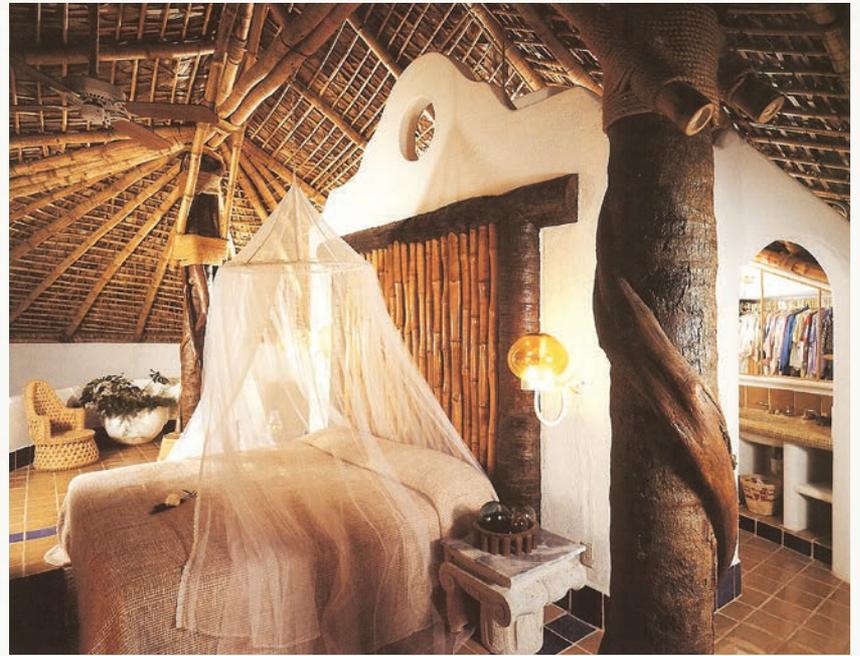
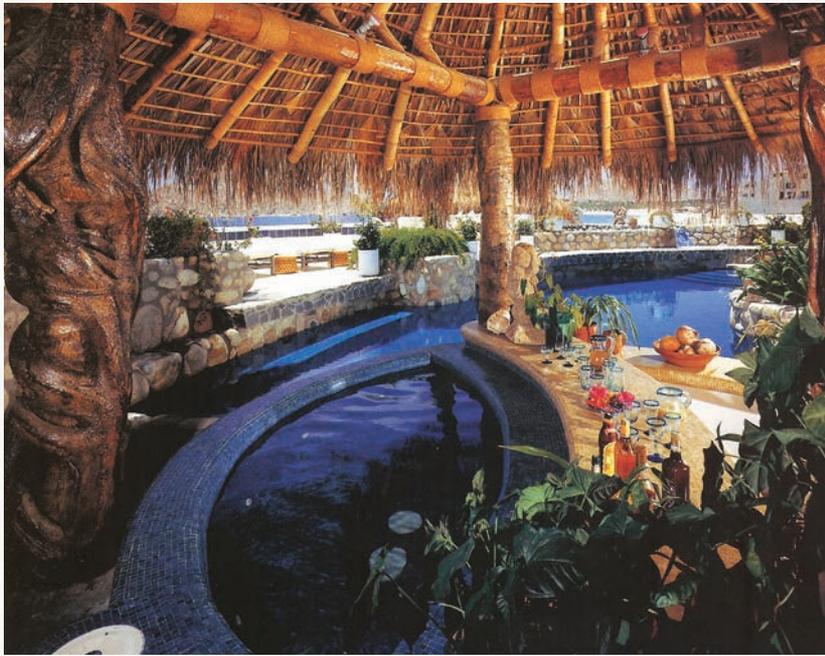
Similar to the Outrigger Canoe Club, there are much larger resorts now flanking Club Cascadas, and hundreds more properties available in the area for travelers to choose from than there were in the 1980s. But Club Cascadas has proven staying power and appeal, and there are several reasons for that.

First is the design itself. Ed loved to use natural materials in his architecture, so the resort’s design incorporates rocks and

stones from rivers, palm trunks, and local vegetation, and an uncommon curvilinear construction, as described by Pat in a video looking back at the history of the resort.

“He always felt that architecture was a form of art, and that it was really a sculpture, and he loved curvilinear forms,” Pat explains. “And so in his architecture, you will see that so many of the buildings are really art forms.”

Club Cascadas is designed to be like a Mexican village set in a palm grove, with 24 separate round buildings housing guest rooms, several larger buildings with a maximum size of four stories, and a peaceful ambiance of trees, flowers, and quiet sitting areas between the buildings. Each villa has a unique layout, there are



pools, fitness facilities, a tennis court, and a mini-mart, and the popular restaurant opens to Medano Beach.

The design also reflects the couple's love of Mexico, and when the resort was inaugurated, Mark says that then-President Miguel de la Madrid declared the property was "What a Mexican resort should look like, and I hope Cabo continues to follow suit."

The membership plan has added to its staying power. Original members bought in to a plan that would have expired in 2015. In 2002, the Chief Operating Officer at the time suggested what has become known

as The Legacy Program. With a new 100-year fideicomiso in place for the property, it was suggested that members could re-buy in 2002, and be granted membership in perpetuity from 2015 and beyond.

Attorneys said the idea was a stretch, and people would not want to buy in, so the COO suggested a discounted price. About 40% of owners acted immediately, and by year three, that number was up to 80%.

The final step of the Legacy Program happened in 2018. That was when the Giddings family turned the resort over to its members, the Association de Cascadas. Members have a lifetime ownership, and

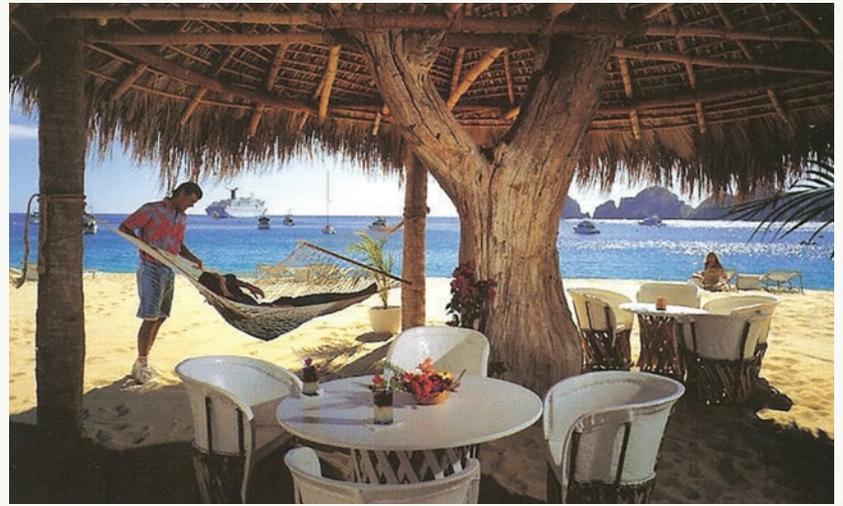
there's a board of directors that are all owners. All the profits from the resort go back into the Association, so maintenance fees have only risen once in over a decade.

"That's the crown jewel, the cherry on the top, that really created the legacy for my mom and dad," Mark says. "Any time there is a sale anywhere in the resort — minus the commission — the money goes back into the coffers of the club."

As a result, this is truly a member-owned resort with a family vibe. There are fourth

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(ABOVE AND BELOW) | *Left to right, Greg, Peter, Pat, David and Mark Giddings. The first beach palapa at Club Cascadas. Three-story villa, Villa Perla Two.*

generation kids swimming in the pools, and many members visiting with the same friends in the same week every year. Members can trade, sell, rent, or will their unit, or go to the property at other times, but that's not often the case.

"Most of our members have had this relationship for years," Mark says. "It's a sense of community. But it wouldn't be a

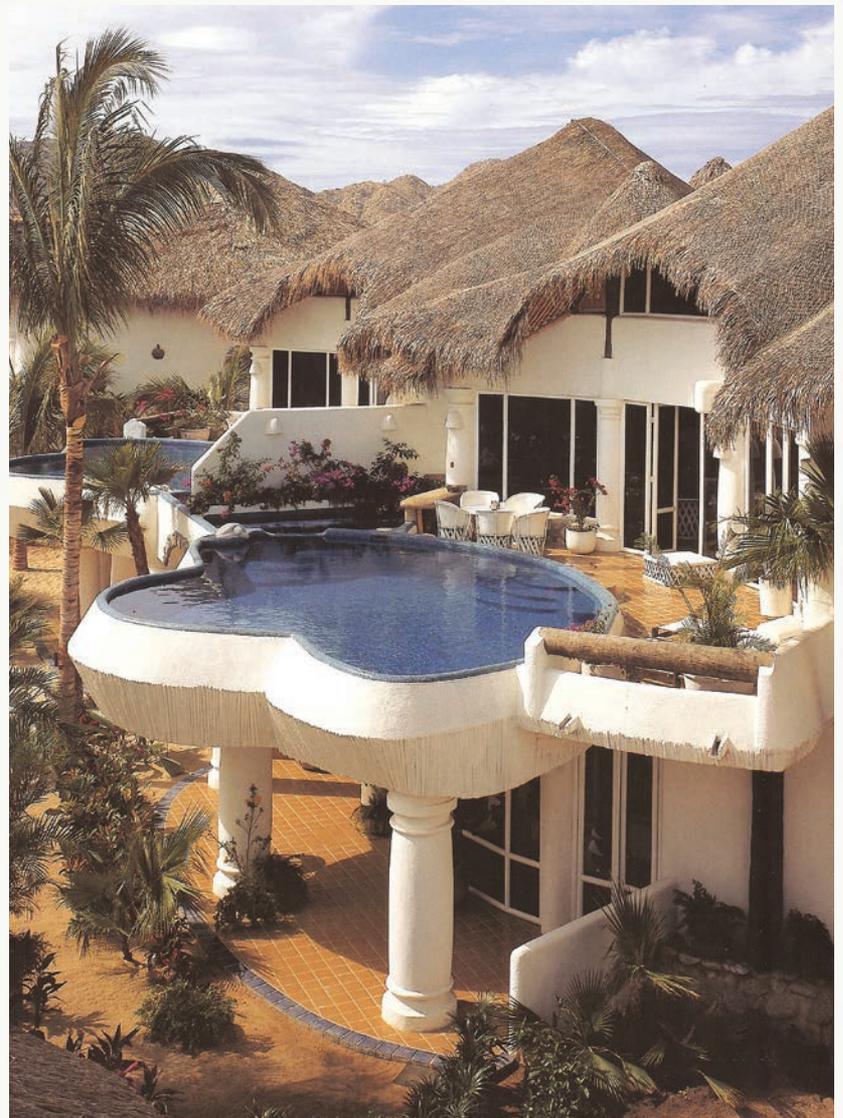
sense of community if it didn't look good, it's not a sense of community if it's not running well, it's not a sense of community if maintenance fees go up every year. We have had one maintenance fee increase in 13 years."

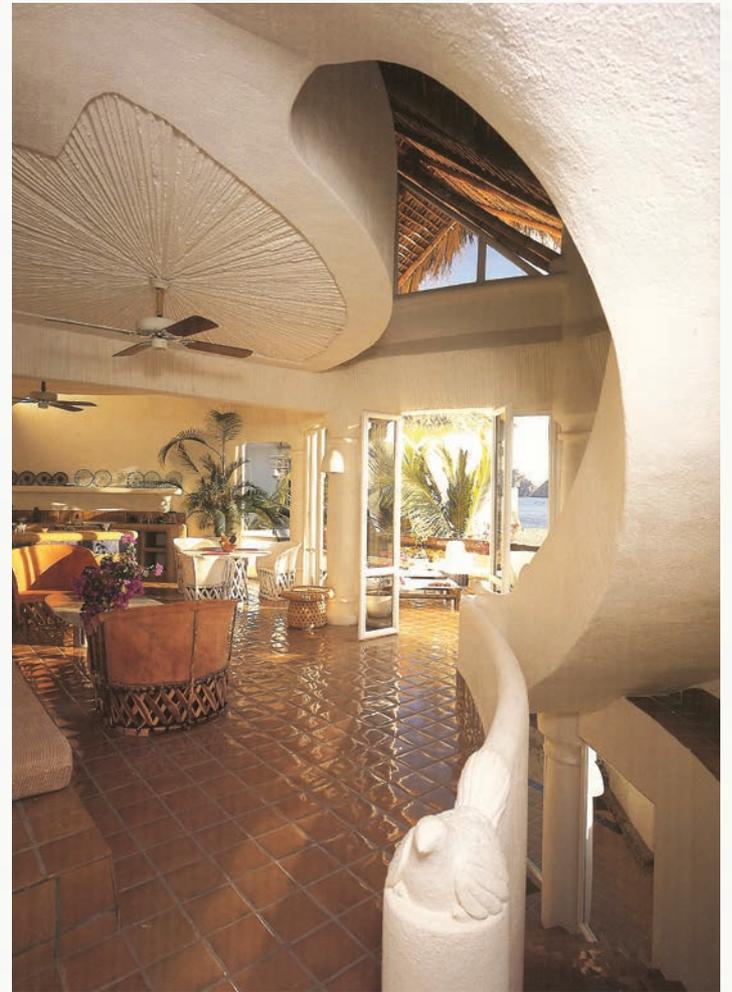
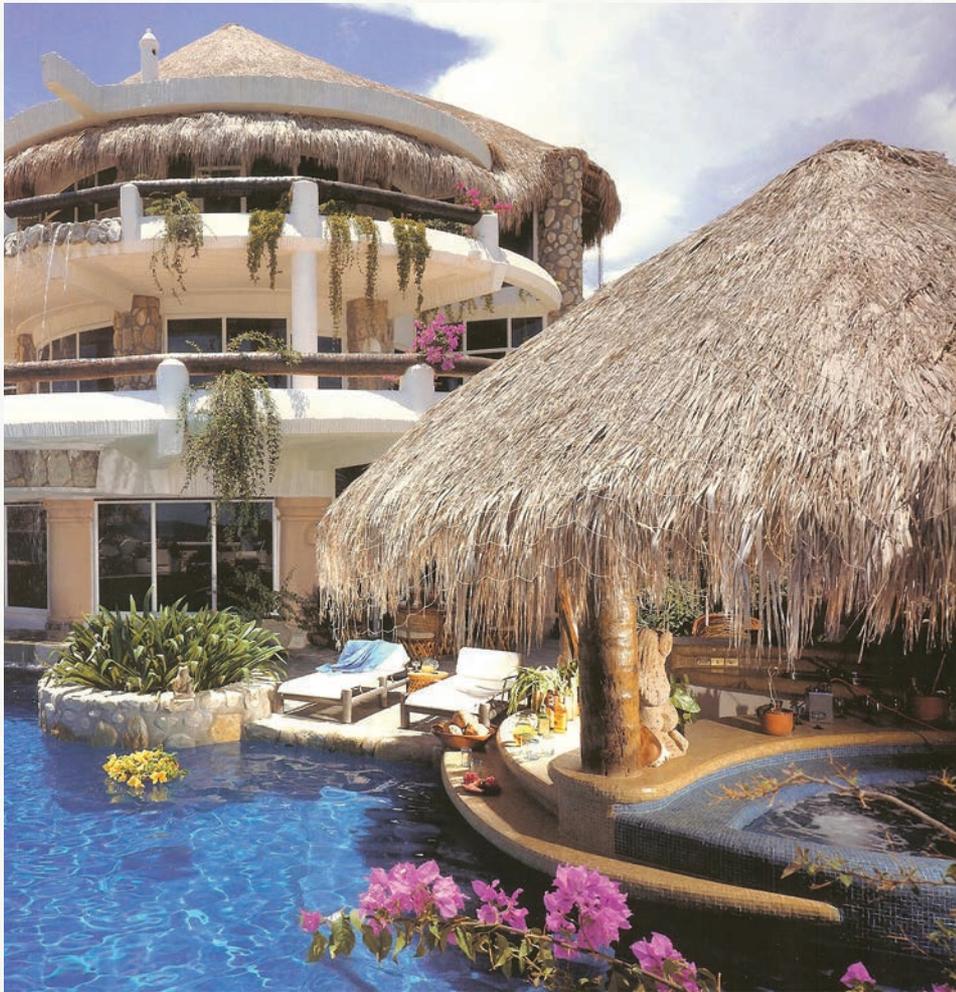
Pat is now 96 and living in California, in the same home she's been in for 45 years. Ed passed away in 1993 at just 64 years old, when he had a heart attack while at Club Cascadas for business. He had accomplished his life's goals, however. As a child of the depression who often talked about having nothing, he wanted three things: to provide

for his family; to have enough money to be comfortable; and to have a ranch, which he purchased in Colorado just before his death. He and Pat had an unbreakable partnership with a legacy that carries on in Cabo.

Club Cascadas de Baja continues to be the crown jewel of Medano Beach. It's more than the "little engine that could." It's part of the engine that has driven the success of Los Cabos as a tourist destination. And it's keeping up with the times as it moves forward.

In 2025, a renovation of every part of the property was completed, but in keeping





with the original vision of Pat and Ed. That includes all 120 units in 27 buildings, as well as the pools, jacuzzis and more. The 10-year project cost \$25 million, but has brought the property to modern standards while keeping to the original design.

The original welcoming environment has remained as well.

“From 1985 on, mom taught the staff to be kind, and when you walk through the resort, you will feel that the staff *are* still so kind,” Mark says. “Some of our staff have been with the resort for 35 years, some

30 years, most are 20-25 years. They stayed because of the philosophy that my mom started and management has carried on. And when there is an opening, they would rather promote from within instead of hire from outside.

“Mom taught the staff that if they treat the members like family, the members will treat them like family.”

As they get set to celebrate 40 years with those members, Mark looks back with pride at the little engine that proved it could, without the big name of a resort chain, or

(ABOVE AND BELOW) | *Ed and Pat Giddings in front of the renowned Alfonso's restaurant in 1987. Family evening boat outing.*

the capacity of thousands of rooms, or the many-story skyscraper structures that are now common in Los Cabos.

“I love what my mom and dad did,” Mark concludes, “and I am so fortunate to have been a part of it for 40 years.”

Members of Club Cascadas de Baja are sure to agree.

El Fin!

