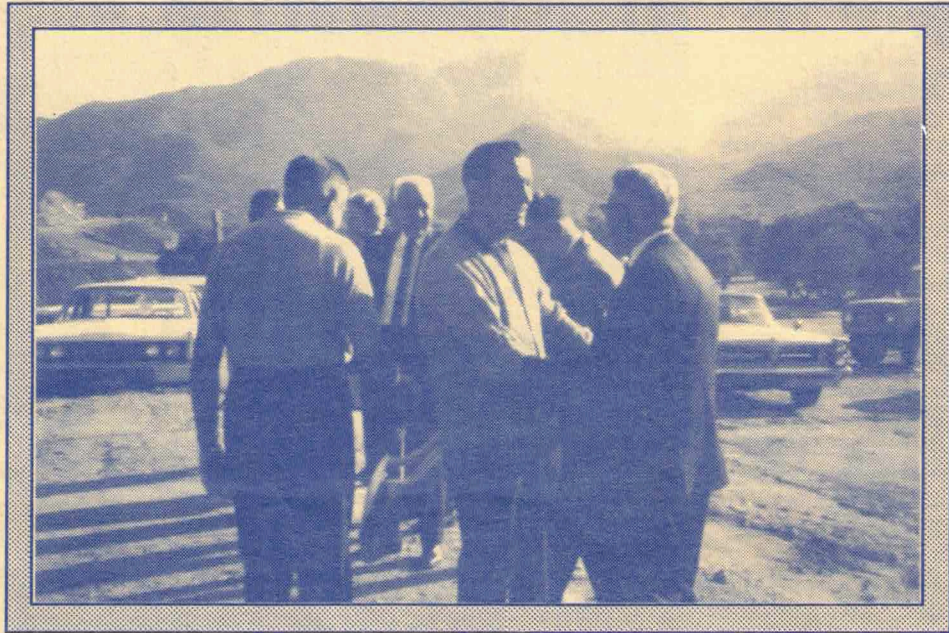


# "How It All Started"

## 1965

Esquire Oaks Mobile Home Park  
79 Spaces



♪ Lawrence Welk's Country Club ♪  
Mobile Home Estates  
459 Spaces

1986

Champagne Village  
Land Ownership Conversion by Park Homes Inc.  
Robert O. Holland – Owner/Developer

Compliments of

**WELK VILLAGE  
REALTY**

NICK RUSCETTA – OWNER/BROKER

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Call (619) 749-1000

*Independently Owned and Operated*

*Not Affiliated with The Welk Group*

The latest of the stars of stage and screen to interest themselves in mobile home parks from a business angle is "Mr. Wunnerful"—otherwise known as Lawrence Welk. The nickname comes of course from Mr. Welk's pronunciation of the word he so frequently uses in introducing his entertainers or in thanking them for the excellence of their performance. This pronunciation is as distinctly Lawrence Welk as are his satorial elegance, and heartwarming smile.

Some of Mr. Welk's predecessors, financially interested in mobile home parks, are Bing Crosby, Art Linkletter, Fess Parker, and Welk's Champagne Lady, Norma Zimmer. Norma and her husband have for some years been owner-operators of a park.

Lawrence joined the movement when he bought Esquire Oaks Mobile Home Park on Highway 395 seven miles north of Escondido, California. This happened to be where my wife Shirley and I were living at the time. We stumbled upon the park by accident; it was quite a new park, not fully developed and not widely publicized.

In April of last year we were driving by on the highway and glanced into a grove of live oak trees; there we saw this beautiful green golf course surrounded by mobile homes. We stopped in for a closer look. Our interest blossomed into enthusiasm. The enthusiasm resulted in a decision: "This is the place!" In May we moved in.

A month later Mr. Welk took over as owner. Although we did not know it, Mr. Welk had been investigating the park at the same time we were—with somewhat different objectives. He started his examination on April 1, and thereon hangs a rather amusing incident.

Lawrence (that is what he encourages us to call him) and his friend, Bert Carter (now manager of our park), were driving by and, like us, were attracted by the handsome green fairways under the trees. Up to that time Lawrence hadn't the slightest thought of ever owning a mobile home park. But this was so beautiful it fascinated him.

They drove on by, however. When they had gone a mile farther—that is, down to the famous "Golden Door" health resort—Lawrence said, "Say, let's go back and look at that place." At the clubhouse they inquired for the owner but were informed by a woman resident he was not at home. "However," she added, "his wife is downstairs. Would you like to see her?" "Possibly," said Mr. Welk. "You might ask her if she is interested in selling."

When it was reported to the owner's wife that Mr. Welk was upstairs and wanted to know if she would sell out, she laughed, "Yes, I know. I've had April Fool jokes played on me by ex-



Many of the mobile home sites are situated lakeside. At present there are two lakes on the property, with more being planned in expansion of the golf course.

perts." She was, however, persuaded to investigate. And thus began the chain of negotiations that ended in Lawrence's acquisition of the park. Lawrence told Bert Carter, "This is a place I can be proud to have my name associated with."

When Lawrence bought the park he changed its name to *Lawrence Welk's Country Club Mobile Home Estates*. If that name sounds a bit overwhelming to you, you might ask yourself, "How is the man going to do justice to the place with anything less for a name?" After all it is Lawrence Welk's, and that name means a lot to millions of people. It does have a country club atmosphere and country club setting, in about as beautiful a piece of California as the state has to offer.

The word "estates" is a variable term meaning many different things in various connections. But these lots are as big as, if not bigger than, any mobile home lots one is likely to find. Our lot is fairly typical and it is approximately 69 feet by 100 feet with streets both front and rear.

It has a cluster of four live oaks on one side and a huge lone oak on the other side. We consider it quite estate-like.

Lot rentals are from \$50 to \$125 a month, the highest priced ones being on the golf course.

The question most often asked us is "Is Mr. Welk there very often?" The answer is yes. When he became owner he also became resident—on a part-time basis. He is not yet retired. But he is doing the eminently sensible thing: retiring a little at a time. So many of us, when we retire, do so in one big jump, and that is a good deal like jumping off a cliff. Gradual retirement, meanwhile developing some new interests, is far more sensible. That is what Lawrence Welk is doing. At 62 he is arranging his work so he can be away part of the time building up his health and preparing for the day when he can't work any more. According to Mr. Welk, it is doubtful if he ever will fully retire—that is not as long as there is any ability to make

music left in him. "As long as people want to hear me," he says, "I must make music."

Meanwhile Lawrence maintains a 1,400 square-foot mobile home in his park, and as he frequently states, "I never miss an opportunity to come down and enjoy it." He frequently brings along guests whom he houses in the park's motel units. Sometimes he brings some of his entertainers to play for us, and to enjoy an outing themselves. When he is at the park he enters joyously and wholeheartedly into the social activities (of which there are many; this being an active park, those who wish may find something to do socially at practically any time).

Here's an example of Lawrence's participation: a while back we staged an old-fashioned box social, to which Lawrence accepted our invitation and made a special trip to be on hand. At our request he auctioned off the boxes, injecting a bushel of fun into the process. Later that evening at our dance, as you would expect, he danced with all the ladies—much to their delight. When he is at one of our potlucks he dons a chef's hat and pitches in to help serve.

The truth is, we who live here get the feeling that this business venture of Lawrence's has a lot of sentiment in it, and that not infrequently the sentiment outweighs the economics involved. He is one landlord who obviously derives great happiness from keeping his members happy. The word "members" is deliberately chosen; we get the feeling that we are members of a club.

As everybody knows—that is, everybody who lives in a mobile home park—the spirit of a park depends largely upon the park manager and the park manager's wife. Here's an odd twist. Our manager, says, "my boss." Here is the pitch. Bert was West Coast manager for Chrysler Corporation when the Dodge Division of Chrysler hired Welk's orchestra for a coast-to-coast TV show. Hence he was, in a sense, Welk's boss.

Later, when Bert retired from Chrysler, Lawrence persuaded him to come with the Welk organization as public relations director. Then, when Lawrence bought the park, he persuaded Bert to take over its management. Bert, assisted by his gracious wife Nancy, is what you would expect Lawrence Welk's public relations man to be: affable, personable, and outstandingly efficient.

One thing that brings Lawrence here so often is the golf course. How he loves his golf! And no wonder, since it provides him the relaxation so sorely needed from the stresses and strains of his fantastically successful life as a public entertainer.

Concerning that almost unbelievable success, here's a strange coincidence: even as I am writing this piece I get word over TV that Lawrence has been called



*Lawrence Welk and resident golfers on estate's own nine-hole course. Many mobile home sites overlook the beautiful rolling green, soon to be developed into 18 holes.*

back to his home state to receive an honorary Doctor of Music degree from North Dakota State University—this to a man whose formal education was limited to the little red school house. Another indication: as of now he is headliner at Hollywood's enormous Palladium Ball Room. Previously he served at Ocean Park's Aragon Ball Room in a similar capacity for ten consecutive years.

Such success extracts a heavy toll in nervous energy. Lawrence uses, golf to replenish his exhausted supply. His mobile home is on a lot immediately adjoining the course, with his own private steps leading directly down to the course. He doesn't have to waste any time going to and from the green.

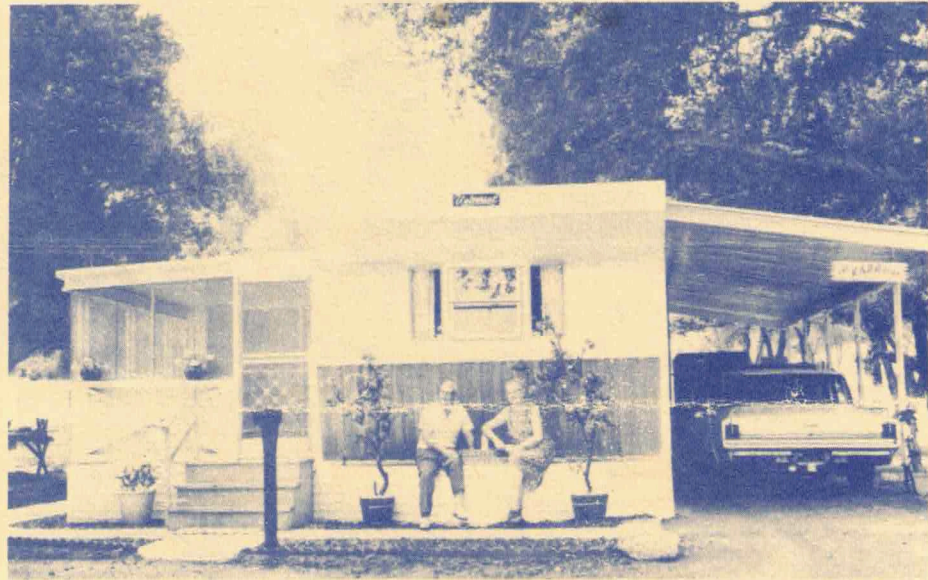
Lawrence keeps up the course like a millionaire's private lawn. He not only enjoys it himself, but he sees to it that members of his organization get a whack at it too. He has inaugurated an annual golf tournament between what he calls his Family Number II, which is his musi-

cal organization (Family Number I being his own personal family consisting of his wife, Fern, two daughters—both married to doctors—a bachelor son, and five grandchildren), and Family Number III, the residents of the mobile home park. At the first meeting of Families II and III last summer, we park residents won the trophy. Immediately we flaunted a banner announcing to the world that "We beat the Band."

The course is at present a nine-hole. But it is in the process of becoming an eighteen-hole. The big bulldozers are at work now. And likewise the park is being expanded from its present 104 spaces to approximately 200 spaces. There is abundant room for expansion—some 400 acres of it.

Let's see now, what else do we have to justify that king-sized name LAWRENCE WELK'S COUNTRY CLUB MOBILE HOME ESTATES? As mentioned above, we have motel units, four of them, large and luxurious. More units

*Golf course, pool,  
shady oaks, lakes, and  
recreation building—all  
comprise "wunnerful" way  
of mobile home living*



*Author and wife pictured outside their mobile home, situated on 69-by-100-foot lot*

are being planned. We have our own restaurant *Welkome Inn*. Both the motel units and the restaurant are noteworthy conveniences for the park citizens when there's company to entertain.

We have two modest-sized lakes, one of which is stocked with bass; and two more lakes being created in the expanded golf course.

The Club House is a large two-story building of chalet design, erected against a hill side overlooking the golf course. The club room and entertainment area is located on the street floor. The lower floor contains four indoor shuffleboard courts and a regulation pool table. An additional outdoor shuffleboard court is

located outside, next to an oak shaded picnic area. The Club House also contains an enormous stone fireplace which, in season, always has a rousing log fire burning—a great stimulus to cheerful conversation.

Golf privileges are free to residents. So is the TV service and cable to each lot. You may be sure that Lawrence makes every effort to keep the service high quality, *especially* the local ABC station Channel 7. Storage for travel trailers owned by residents is free. And to top off all these goodies, utilities—including telephone—are surprisingly reasonable.

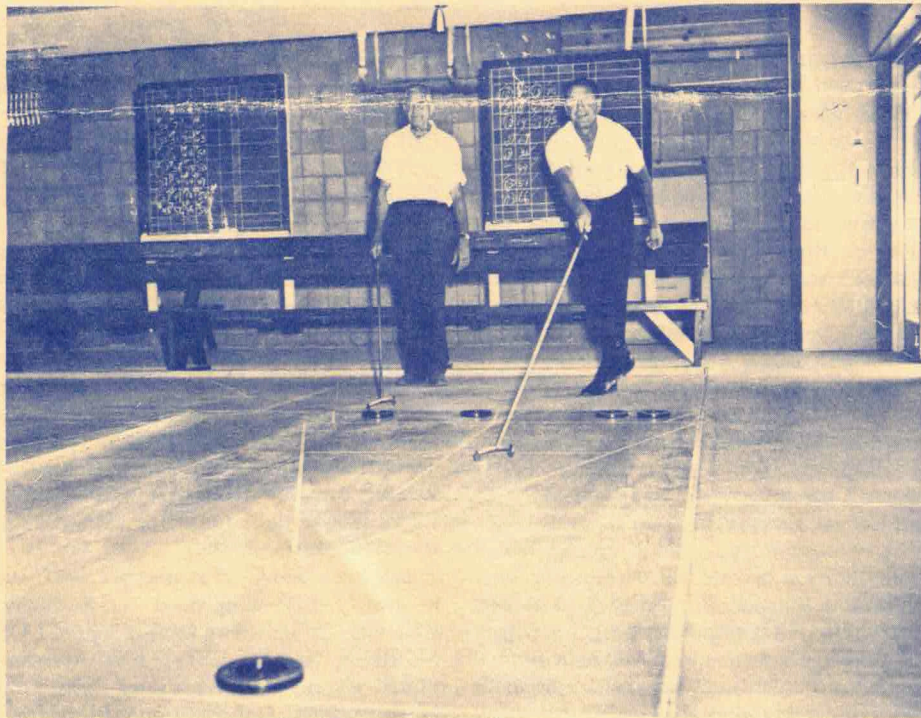
One other asset that we get free is not

provided by Lawrence or the management. Nature, particularly nature in the form of spreading oaks, provides us with a beautiful atmosphere and many lovely birds. One of our golfers unfortunately hit and killed one of these birds with a golf ball while the bird was in flight—a brand new way of getting a birdie.

But in all seriousness, we do feel that to play a leisurely game of golf on green grass—especially in the cool of the evening with the long shadows creeping over the ground, with restful hills to look up at and bird songs to listen to—is about as soul-satisfying an experience as one could wish for.

We have come to appreciate Lawrence as a man and a gentleman. It is heartening to find him kind and considerate to others, in spite of his affluence and worldwide fame. A basic tenet in his life philosophy is to be fair to those he deals with. Those who know him best pay unsolicited testimony to his unvarying honesty.

Living here has impressed on me how fortunate we are to live in his modern mobile home park. To be sure, some people prefer living in conventional houses, in conventional neighborhoods, with other conventional people for neighbors. For them, all well and good. But as for me, after 17 years of more or less close association with mobile home parks, I want nothing different. I like the simple life, free from conventional restraints. I like neighbors I call by their first names. I like the inspiration that comes from living so close to nature. I like—but why go on? I like everything about it. And *especially* I like "Mr. Wunnerful" for a landlord. □



*Lawrence Welk proves he enjoys recreational facilities as much as the residents*