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KRISANA



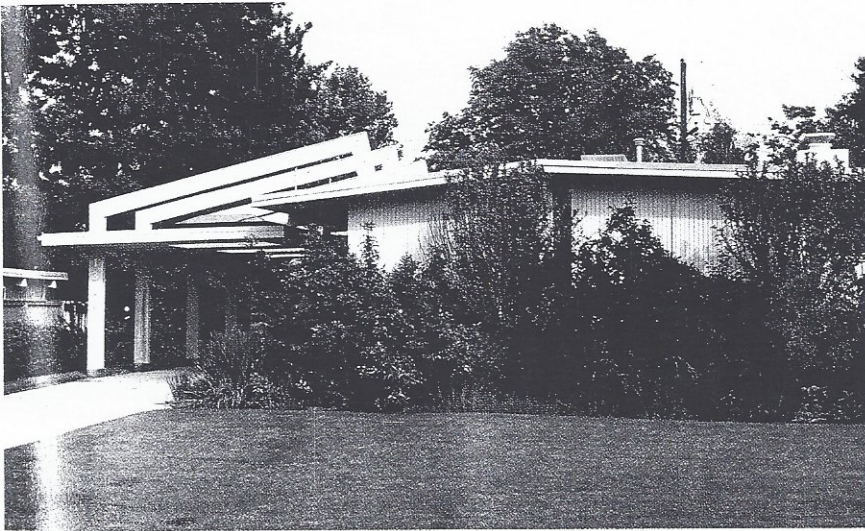
text and photography Randy Sorter et al

vintage images courtesy
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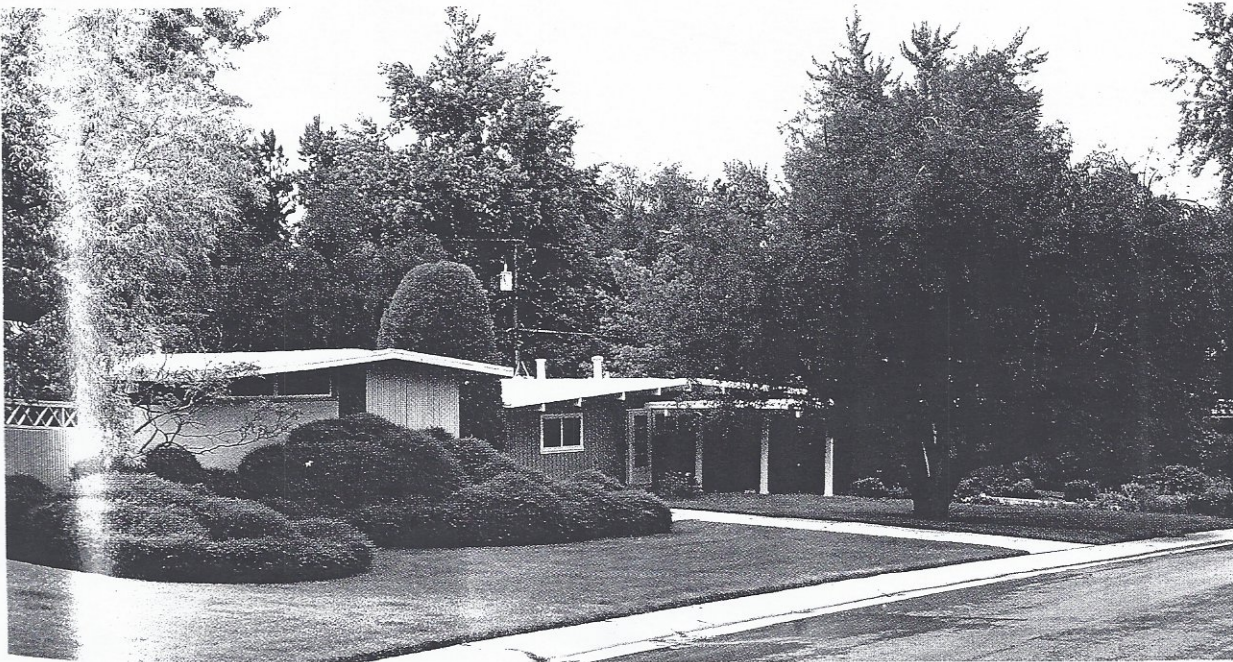
Like many of her postwar siblings across the nation, Denver's Krisana Park recently celebrated 50 years of Modernist living. In honor of this milestone, the residents threw a neighborhood-wide party, complete with a historical exhibit, live 1950s-era entertainment, vintage cars, "celebrity" greeters and a tour of nine midcentury homes.

Tucked quietly away in a busy southeast subdivision, Krisana Park was built by H.B. Wolff & Company. Brad Wolff, part of the original builder team, still resides in Colorado and was an honored guest during the celebration, where he provided many details about the little-known tract's early years.

PARK turns the big five-0



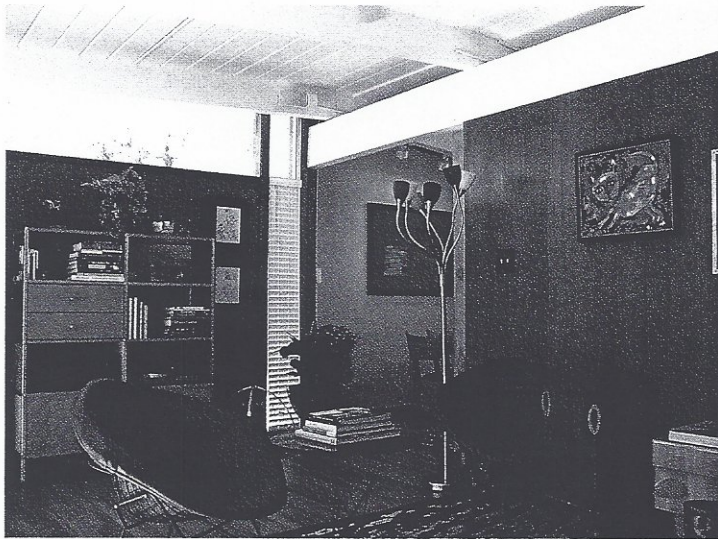
Neighbors
encourage
preservation
through
appreciation



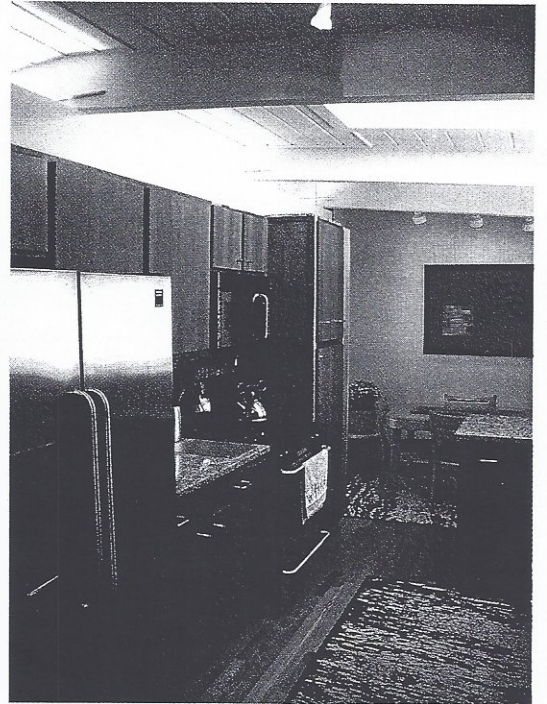
Jim Brown (3)



Original Krisana Park homeowners John and Betty Thompson are happy to see the new-found appreciation for the neighborhood.



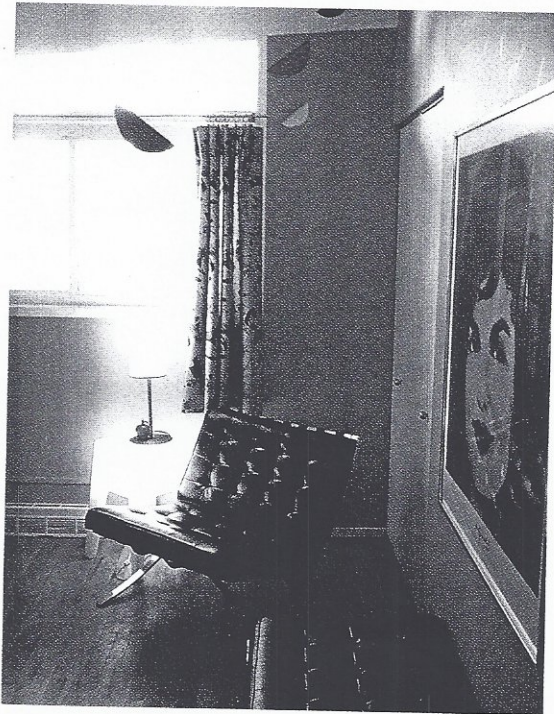
Laura Landwirth loves her home, above, because its design provides privacy while promoting views of the patio and yard. "The mahogany paneling and wood floors give it an organic, warm feeling," she says.



buyers. The plate glass windows were also new and quickly appealed to buyers."

Original homeowners John and Betty Thompson purchased their Krisana Park home in 1954. "For an extra \$150, you could have an optional automatic dishwasher or water heater installed," John remembers. "At the time, the price was quite reasonable. Betty and I immediately fell in love with the modern design and still feel the same way today. We love our home and neighborhood just as much today as we did 50 years ago.

"When they first started building Krisana Park, they [began] on our street," he explains. "We were among the first to move in." The newly built homes came with a free tree (usually a flowering Hopa crabapple), but little else in the way of land-



Left, two views of the author's home, featuring Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona collection. Above, the home of Geoffrey Fowler, who comments, "I enjoy my retro-style home because it lends itself well to creative interior design."

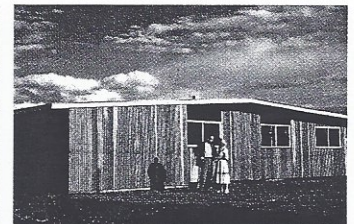
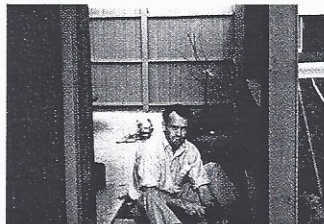
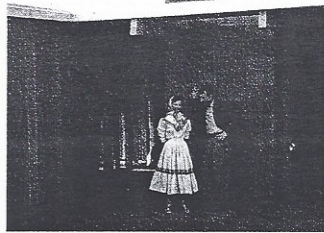
scaping. Thompson chuckles as he recalls having to purchase a truckload of manure from a local dairy farm down the road. "There weren't any lawns at all when we moved in—just dirt yards. I ended up using a whole truckload of fresh manure on our yard. Our lawn sure did grow, but the aroma was quite strong."

Today, the lawns of Krisana Park are flourishing and the crabapple trees bloom brightly among towering blue spruce and majestic oaks. The landscape has changed a bit over the last 50 years, but the homes and the type of people who love them have remained the same.

"The people who live in midcentury homes seem to be cut from a different mold," says Dana Miller, who was instrumental in putting together the 50th anniver-



March 15, 1955
Weather too bad to get to our house, visited "Model House"



Making Hay

In approximately 1950, developer H.B. Wolff (Brad's father) spotted a thriving alfalfa field owned by Christian and Ann Noe. The elder Wolff, along with 30-year-old Brad, developed a vision of a completely preplanned, Modernist neighborhood. To honor the Noes, they decide to name their new development Krisana Park—a combination of the Noes' first names.

The following year, H.B. Wolff & Company paired up with the architectural firm of Gratts & Warner, which specialized in contemporary homes. During his career, "Frenchie" Gratts designed more than 500 residential homes in the Denver area, as well as several commercial buildings at Lowry Air Field, and his partner, Edwin H. Warner, was a local home consultant and designer.

Before constructing any homes on the newly purchased land, Brad Wolff and his father discussed the details of their futuristic development. "At that time, there were new homes being constructed in California known as 'California Contemporaries,' and this sparked our interest," recalls Wolff. "I remember my father and I decided that I would travel to California to get a better look at these modern homes."

Spending more than a week in Southern California, he became enthralled with the designs of popular postwar residential real estate developer Joseph Eichler. After returning home to Denver, Wolff quickly began developing his own version of the California Contemporary, altering it only slightly for Colorado's climate. "In order to avoid broken water pipes, we had to move the washer and dryer units from the carport to the kitchen," he remembers. "This is basically the only alteration made to the original design."

Denver Contempo

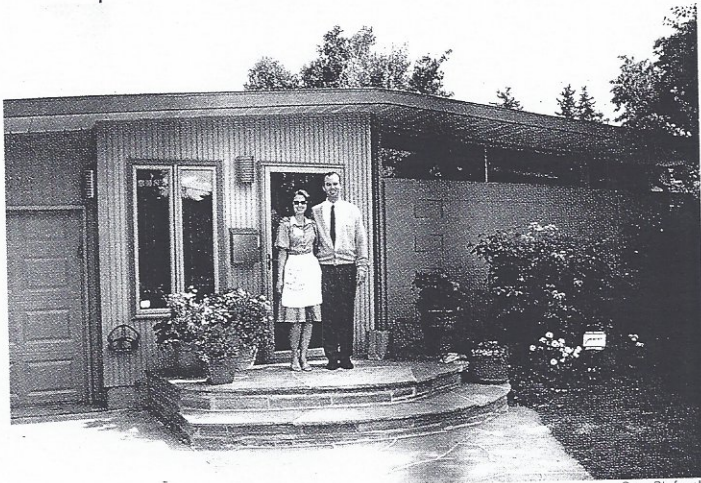
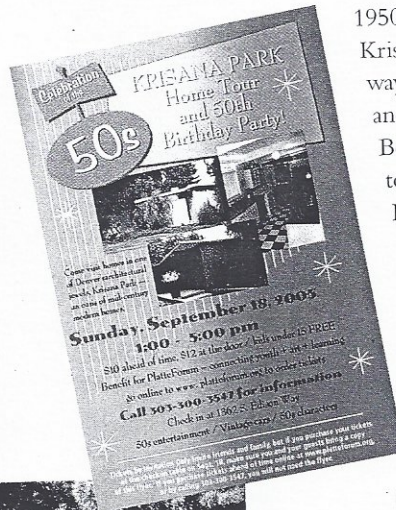
The 177 homes in Krisana Park had modern floor plans, waxed Philippine mahogany paneling, wide roof overhangs and easy-upkeep redwood siding. The large, floor-to-ceiling windows offered views of the spacious lanais and the best of indoor/outdoor living. Marketed as "The 3-D Contemporary House Designed for Colorado's Climate," they sold quickly for \$15,950.

"We originally built a model home and first showed it to the public during a home show held at Denver University sometime around 1953 or 1954," recalls Wolff. "The carport, although a distinctive California addition, was a new idea to Denver home-



March 5, 1955

How To Plan a Modern Event



Gary Stefanski

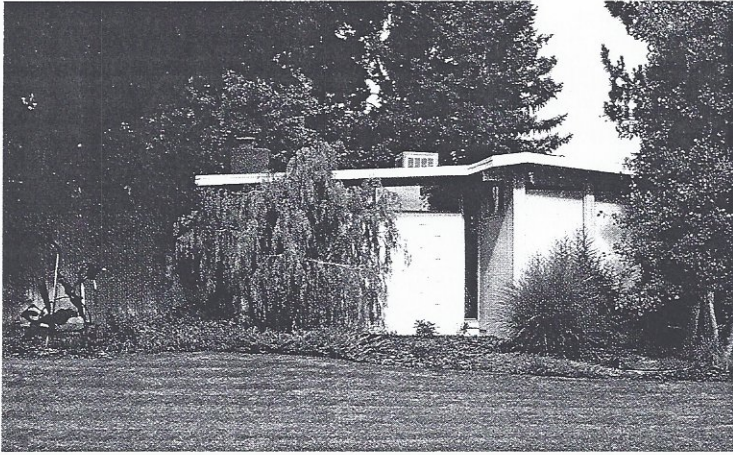


Have a vision—ours was a home tour with a 1950s twist to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Krisana Park. Vintage cars were parked in driveways, Jell-O sculptures displayed in the homes, and TVs and DVDs tuned to “Leave It to Beaver” and “Rawhide.” Each residence on the tour had volunteer 1950s character greeters—Dale Evans and Roy Rogers, Aunt Bee and Opie, the “Three Mouseketeers” and Ozzie and Harriet. Neighborhood kids used sidewalk chalk to write 1950s “graffiti” on the streets—things like “I Like Ike,” “Cool Daddy-o,” and “Buy S&H Green Stamps.” Our event raised funds for PlatteForum, an innovative Denver youth arts center.

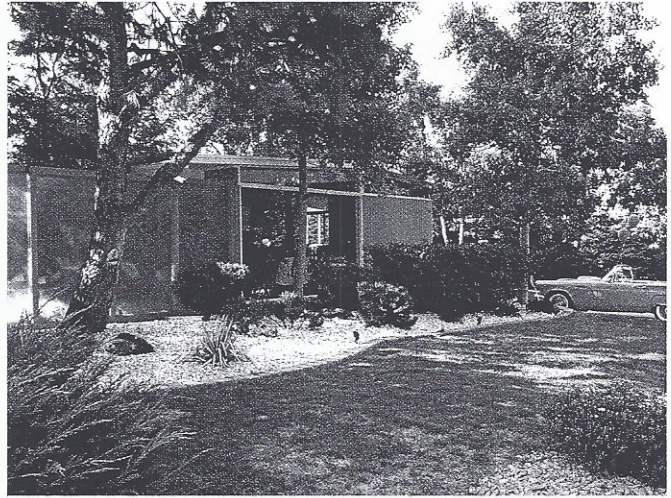
Here's how we did it:

- Start at least three months out; a longer lead time is better.
- Create and distribute a neighborhood survey. Describe your proposed event and ask residents to give feedback. This is your chance to find others who would like to be involved, generate additional ideas and see who would be willing to have their home on the tour.
- Make sure the core organizers love modern homes and are fun and enthusiastic; you will be spending a lot of time together.
- Schedule frequent meetings; it's an opportunity to put on your sassy apron and pearls and serve Kool-Aid, Twinkies, fish sticks and meatloaf—and don't forget the Tang.
- Create committees to select the houses for the home tour, produce the program and invitations, find entertainment, get the word out, enlist volunteers, sell tickets, etc.
- Have your tour home selection committee contact owners to schedule visits at least two months before. We had nine homes, and they ranged from those that were in original condition to ones that were totally done in a 1950s theme, and others that were just gorgeous renovations.
- Design the program to include local sponsors, information about the houses, history of the neighborhood and a map so folks can easily find the homes. Designate a check-in area on the map.
- Collect photos from original owners or the local historical society. We were lucky enough to also find marketing materials for Krisana Park that were used to create an informative exhibit.
- Have a debriefing meeting where you congratulate yourselves on how swell the home tour and celebration was. Maybe this is the time for something a bit stronger than Tang

—Dana Miller



Susan and Art Ammann say, "After many moves over the years, we and our modern furniture have come to rest in our second midcentury home. It brings us full circle."



"I love living in Krisana Park," Tracy Larivee says. "When you drive onto our street, you truly feel as if you were stepping back into the '50s. There aren't many neighborhoods that give you that feeling these days."

sary celebration for Krisana Park. "I think it takes a certain type of person to really appreciate the architecture and history of these postwar homes."

The September 2005 Krisana Park celebration brought an entire community of midcentury homeowners together to reminisce about a bygone era. The event was so well received that plans are in the works to make this an annual occurrence. But you don't have to wait for the official tour to get a glimpse of this unique, Eichler-inspired neighborhood. Drive by anytime and take a trip back to the '50s on the streets of Krisana Park. 🏠

Randy Sorter is a licensed professional counselor and an artist who has lived with his partner, Randy Morris, in Krisana Park for three years. His work is sold online at abstractionsart.com.

Tour Krisana Park when you're next in Denver: Street perimeters of the tract are Louisiana (N), Florida (S), Filbert (E) and Dahlia. For a virtual visit to another H.B. Wolff home, see "A Long, Low Wolff Whistle" in issue no. 9, available at atomic-ranch.com.