

Sunnylands Golf Course

The nine-hole golf course on the Sunnylands historic estate was designed by Dick Wilson, a nationally renowned golf course designer, and finished in 1965. The golf course can be played in either a 9-hole, 18-hole, or 27-hole format. Boasting an 11- or 15-handicap, the Annenbergs would typically play two 18-hole rounds of golf a day while in residence.

The course was designed by Dick Wilson to be challenging but still enjoyable. Wilson's design included elevated greens, each surrounded by either three bunkers or a water feature. A stunning part of the landscape, 13 man-made lakes doubled as hazards for the golf course (today only 11 of the original 13 lakes remain).

Eight U.S. Presidents, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush, and President Barack Obama, have played the historic golf course. Celebrities and professional golfers who have also played the course include Bob Hope, Prince Charles, Arnold Palmer, and Tom Watson, among others.

Leonore regularly hosted her friends for "Ladies' Golf Tuesdays," often including Dinah Shore and Marcia French. The ladies usually played nine holes of golf, had lunch at the Chinese Pavilion, then played another round of golf.

The Annenbergs commissioned Harry Saunders, an architect from A. Quincy Jones' office who had worked on the main house, to design and construct the Chinese Pavilion, which was completed in 1976. The pavilion serves as a folly on the estate grounds, a conversation piece built for visual effect to enhance the landscape. In the early 1970s, Walter and Leonore saw many beautiful follies, adorning English gardens in the United Kingdom, while Walter served as U.S. ambassador. According to Annenberg staff, the pavilion was often used by Walter and

Leonore for lunch with guests when the weather permitted. Even President Ronald Reagan used the Chinese Pavilion to meet with staff while visiting Sunnylands.

On the west side of the estate, at the bend in the fifth fairway, stands the Kwakiutl totem pole. Walter and Leonore commissioned First Nations Kwakiutl artist Henry Hunt from Fort Rupert, British Columbia to create a totem pole for Sunnylands. The totem pole is 30-feet high and constructed from a red cedar log. The figures on the pole reflect crests that are unique to the Hunt family.

Today, the golf course is available as an amenity to retreat participants and is sometimes used for education-based activities with local non-profit organizations, such as the First Tee of Coachella Valley and Desert Arc.