

# Hidden estates 'cosy, caring'

## Diamond-A homes high on ridge above Sonoma Valley

Note: Next Door is a regular feature about our neighborhoods and what makes them unique.

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SONOMA — Among the tufts of pampas grass and hobby-sized vineyards, nearly a score of commercial pilots have built perches where they can wind down from the rigors of

their work.

These pilots of the secluded Diamond-A Ranch Estates can see a long way from their homes, maybe not the panorama visible from the cockpit of a 747, but far enough to catch in one glance the full sweep of the Sonoma Valley.

"I don't think pilots flock," says pilot Rich Cooper, who bought his property without knowing the neighborhood was a flier's haven. "I could choose to live any place I wanted," he says. "This is a cozy, caring neighborhood. It's the best place I've ever lived."

Neighbors seem to appreciate the company of pilots.

"They know the air is clean up here," says one resident who asked to remain anonymous. "It's like a paradise, equal to Big Sur."

The neighborhood sits high on a ridge west of Sonoma and has about 150 homes. Many of the residents who don't fly, ride horses instead.

"There aren't too many drawbacks," says Bill Needham, a food products broker whose acreage is lined with fences enclosing handsome purebred Morgan horses.

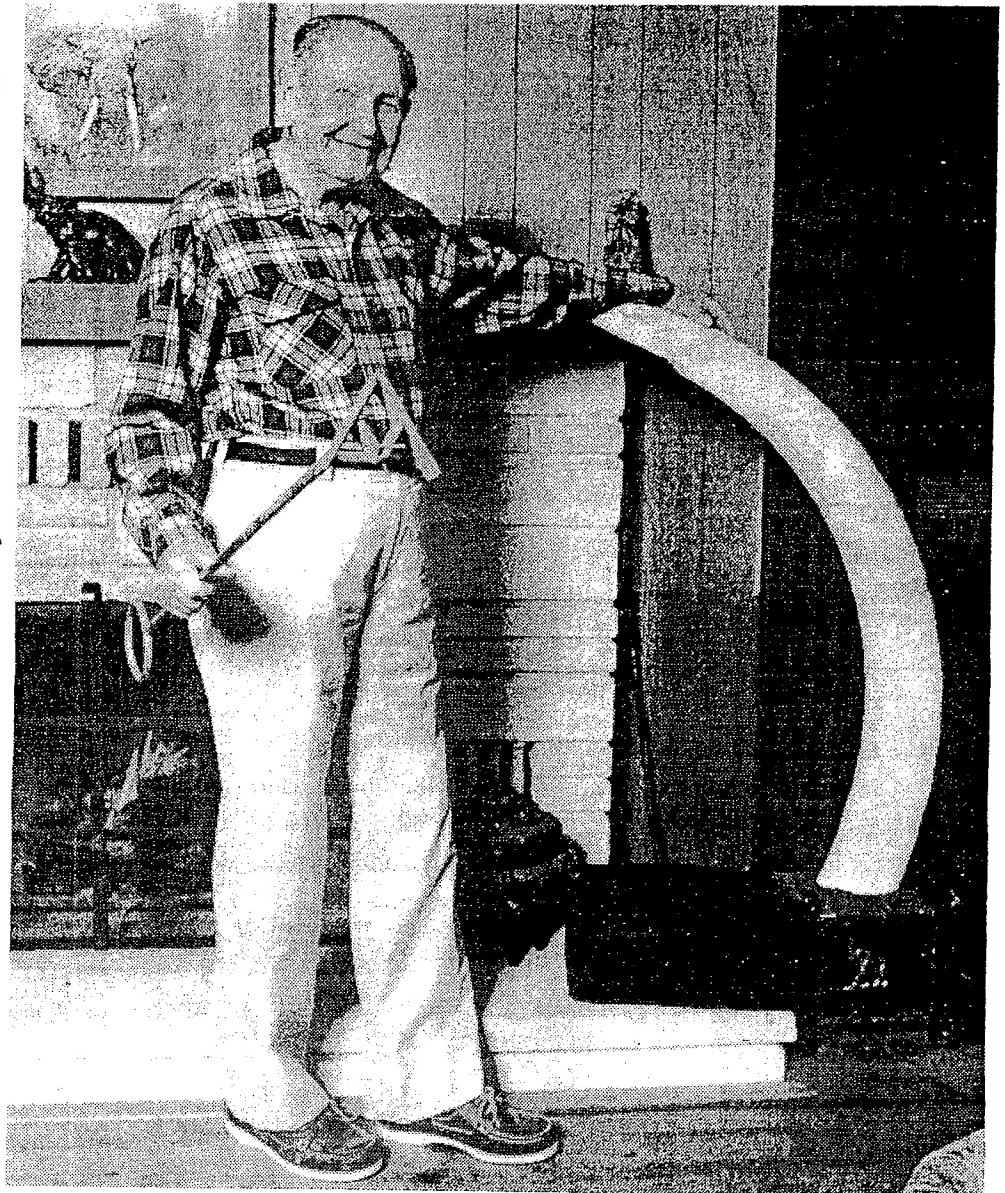
"We love it."

His wife, Ann, rides frequently along the network of horse trails that pass between many of the parcels. She also delights in watching birds.

"A pileated woodpecker comes here," she said. "He's a grand, noisy critter."

"We have bluebirds that fly just like Walt Disney's bluebirds."

She skips her hand across the table,



Diamond-A developer Jack Fisher, with an elephant tusk and Diamond-A brand

JEFF KAN LEE

fluttering her fingers to illustrate the jays' flight pattern.

In 1963, Marion McCauley and her husband bought the third parcel sold in Diamond-A Ranch Estates. She owns two

horses and likes to roam the trails, appreciating the abundant wildlife. McCauley has spotted gray foxes, coyotes, wild boars, raccoons and dozens of deer.

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