

The Story of the Leisure World Globe

1962 – Ross Cortese, the visionary developer of Leisure World, announced the Seal Beach Leisure World Globe after the publication of a newspaper article including an architect's rendering of the then-proposed 120-foot diameter stainless steel *Unisphere*, the official symbol of the 1964-65 New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows in Queens, New York. The *Unisphere* is a space-age update of the 180-foot diameter *Perisphere* theme center of the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair on the same location. Cortese's Rossmoor Corp. adapted and registered a *Unisphere* concept as their corporate logotype. Rossmoor Corp. contracted with Q.R.S. Corp. in Los Angeles to build seven, 32-foot diameter galvanized steel-and-fiberglass versions to promote each of its Leisure World developments including the one in Laguna Hills. Commonly called *The Globe*, Leisure World - Laguna Hills' version was first situated on a parcel of land facing El Toro Road in the commercial area now adjacent to the east of the City of Laguna Hills Civic Center.



Complete with colored lights and a fountain, it revolved slowly on El Toro Road near El Camino Real (later San Diego Freeway or Interstate 5) and was lit at night. For seven years, *The Globe* was usually the first site early residents saw when they entered the community.



1973 – Some years later, it was decided to move *The Globe*. The original location was then surrounded by model homes and the area was considered too cramped to adequately display the majestic symbol. The construction of a new regional shopping center (later known as Laguna Hills Mall) also affected the location of *The Globe*. Further, the underpass that circled *The Globe* needed to be removed and a wider El Toro Road is constructed to facilitate the expected traffic growth. *The Globe* was removed from its axis by crane and stored, awaiting plans and funds to refurbish, relocate and landscape around it nearby on Avenida de la Carlota behind St. George's Episcopal Church.



WHAT A WORLD— The majestic Rossmoor theme globe which has faced El Toro Road since 1964, was lifted off its axis recently. It now lies in the parking lot behind St. George's Episcopal Church

awaiting a complete refurbishing of its metal latitude and longitude bars and a repainting of Africa, Australia, North and South America, Europe and Asia.

After being refurbished, installed, and landscaped at its new site, *The Globe* was an impressive sight as seen from Interstate 5 and the El Toro Road exit. Unfortunately, the gears that caused the globe to rotate stopped working after only one day.



The 1980s – When Leisure World was nearly built out in the early 80s, Rossmoor offered *The Globe* to the Leisure World Historical Society of Laguna Hills (now Laguna Woods History Center). The Board of Directors at the time thought it should be a state monument. The state, however, did not consider it old enough to qualify for historical-site status, so *The Globe* was donated to the County of Orange and designated a “Point of Interest.”

1996 – Ownership and maintenance of *The Globe* and underlying land were transferred from Orange County to the City of Laguna Hills.

1999 – Leisure World - Laguna Hills and adjacent commercial properties were incorporated as the City of Laguna Woods and the gated community became known as “Leisure World – Laguna Woods.” The incorporation of this previously unincorporated county jurisdiction created Orange County’s 32nd municipality.

2001 – Since *The Globe* and references to Leisure World were no longer pertinent to the City of Laguna Hills, the city offered to give it away to get it relocated; otherwise, the city would scrap it.

2002 – The Historical Society of Laguna Woods (now Laguna Woods History Center) assumed ownership and put up \$50,000 and raised another \$21,000 from individual and corporate donations. *The Globe* was fully refurbished and installed adjacent to Clubhouse 7 off Moulton Parkway.



2005 – After Ross Cortese died at the age of 74 in 1991, Rossmoor Corp. went through dissolution and its registered assets were reassigned to Cortese’s heirs. The three homeowners’ associations and the common-areas association of Leisure World – Laguna Woods paid royalties to Cortese’s heirs to use their registered assets including the names, Cortese, Rossmoor, and Leisure World as well as symbols such as *The Globe*, the family’s coat of arms, etc. Litigation over these royalties between the family and community governance was settled with a court-ordered choice of either continuing paying royalties or removing all the references to the family’s registered assets. Community governance chose the latter and removed all references to the family’s registered assets for the ed renaming of the Laguna Woods Village community.

2007 – As part of the court settlement, *The Globe* was finally dismantled and dumped as scrap in May 2007. Residents of Laguna Woods Village were both sad and angry to see this beloved symbol destroyed.

Note: A small section of the original *Globe* was saved by a resident, who recently donated it to the Laguna Woods History Center.

Leisure World

