



STEVE MCQUEEN

A BRENTWOOD RETREAT SUITED TO THE DYNAMIC STAR

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A grand stone house in the hills of Brentwood offered Steve McQueen, the star of such films as *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *The Great Escape* (1963) and *Bullitt* (1968), both the stability he sought and a feeling of refuge. "He always wanted to live up and away," says his first wife, dancer-actress Neile Adams. LEFT: The couple in the courtyard.

BELOW: McQueen and Adams with his Mustang, Porsche, Ferrari, Jaguar XKSS and Excaliber. All but one were British racing green—his favorite color. "These were only some of his cars," Adams says. The garage became part auto shop, part gym.

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At the beginning of 1963 Steve McQueen was the hottest new male actor in Hollywood. Five years earlier he had starred in a hugely successful low-budget genre film called *The Blob* (although he always hated to be reminded of it). That same year he began a three-season run as the bounty hunter Josh Randall on *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, and it was the hit television series that gave him his liftoff to enduring fame. The action film *The Magnificent Seven* in 1960 had confirmed that he was a big-screen star. Now he was about to work with Natalie Wood

in *Love with the Proper Stranger* and to do *Baby the Rain Must Fall* with Lee Remick. He was thirty-two.

McQueen and his wife, dancer-actress Neile Adams, had been living with their daughter, Terry, in a small house off Laurel Canyon. When their son, Chad, was born, they moved to Nichols Canyon. But they needed more room, and McQueen's business manager led them to an eighteen-room mansion on a spectacular hill-top site, high above Brentwood.

"It was," Adams remembers, "love at first sight."



Protected by huge oak gates, the two-story house is built of a warm-colored stone, with a huge stone courtyard on the east side and a flagstone terrace on the ocean side, leading to a large swimming pool. The style is Mediterranean but with undertones of a grand but user-friendly French chateau.

"We called it the Castle the moment we saw it," says Neile Adams, who is now married to financial consultant Alvin Toffel. "And that's what we called it as long as we lived there."

What first caught McQueen's eye

was the courtyard. Collecting cars and motorcycles and driving them very fast was his principal passion, and the courtyard was an ideal place to park them. But the king-of-the-hill location and its walled privacy were also instantly, if more subtly, appealing; McQueen was on the one hand proud and conscious of his star status but on the other hand something of a rebel and a loner, defiantly proud as well of being, as he thought, a blue-collar man at heart. He was impatient and uncomfortable in many formal social situations.

"Steve loved the isolation," Neile Adams says. McQueen had triumphed over a troubled early life—desertion of the family by his father, brushes with the law and some teen years spent at a California reform school called Boys' Republic, a hitch in the marines that included punishment for going AWOL. Out of the marines, he did odd jobs in New York—dock-worker, bartender—then at twenty-one he joined the Neighborhood Playhouse and discovered the acting career that had been waiting for him. His debut was a walk-on in a Yiddish



Of his first view of the house, which was built by Cliff May, McQueen said: "We drove through this big electric gate and started around a mountain with a rock wall on one side and all these trees. Finally we came to the top and drove under a stone archway into this medieval Spanish courtyard—and my eyes were popping."