

Celebrity Screenwriter Warren Skaaren Creates Writers' Retreat in Westlake

Nestled in the hills of Westlake, just minutes from downtown Austin, celebrity screenwriter, Warren Skaaren, built Il Monastero, his private estate at 3 Wren Valley. This beautiful, villa-styled home evokes all the magical wonder of Tuscany and served as Skaaren's personal writers' retreat.

A graduate of Rice University, Skaaren found his footing in the film industry by encouraging Texas Governor Preston Smith to create the Texas Film Commission (TFC) as a way to promote the growth and development of the film-communication industry in Texas. Smith agreed it was in the State's best social, economic, and educational interest and commissioned the TFC in 1971, appointing Skaaren as the first Executive Director. Under Skaaren's guidance, nearly 40 feature films were shot in Texas between 1971 and 1974. He left the TFC in 1974 to start his own film production company, FPS Inc., which worked on a "little known" television series called, *Dallas*, for more than a decade.

As Skaaren learned more about the film business, he turned his attention to writing and composed his first feature, *Of East and West*. While this script was never produced, it caught the eye of executives at Paramount who hired him to co-write the feature film, *Fire With Fire* in 1984. Even as Skaaren climbed the Hollywood ladder of success, he continued to live in Austin, believing Hollywood would "blur his vision of human conflicts and the people he wanted to write about."

It was in 1984, after a visit to Italy, Skaaren built his villa-inspired home at 3 Wren Valley. Within these peaceful walls, Skaaren solidified his reputation as "The Script Doctor" in Hollywood by rewriting the screenplays for major cinematic successes such as: *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop II*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Batman*.

Upon entering the stunning private gate, it is evident why Skaaren chose 3 Wren Valley as the place to pen these great literary works. An exquisite, hand-carved stone staircase sets the interior stage; as the unique lighting, fanciful windows, and bas-relief elements enhance the natural palette. Outside, the scenic courtyards and terraces teem with greenery, tiered fountains, and a serene pool.

His literary achievements aside, Skaaren left a lasting impression on the city of Austin. He and his wife, Helen, co-founded the Travis County Foster Parents Association, he established a private charitable trust, the Laurel Foundation, and served on the board of directors at the Deborah Hay Dance Company. Skaaren's writers' retreat at 3 Wren Valley is just one more of his numerous contributions. From its tile and copper roof, to arched doorways and handmade brick, this home offers a rare authenticity that makes for an enticing, tranquil escape.

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