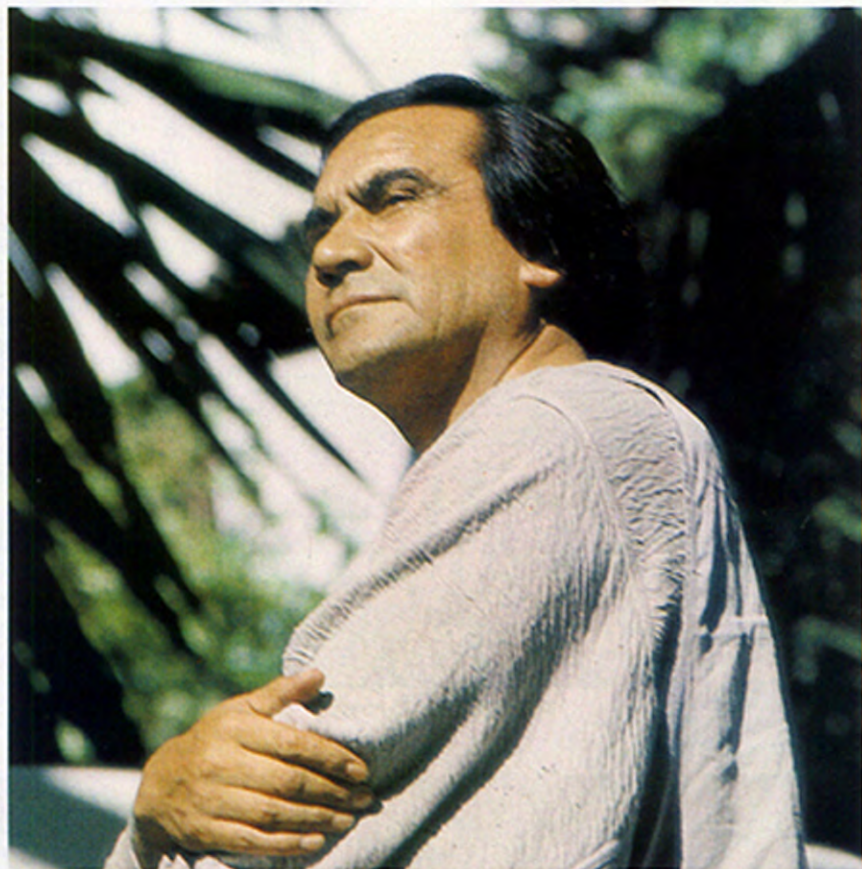


Melvin Villarroel Roldan Harmony between Man and Nature



Those who have ever visited one of Villarroel's development, where architecture, nature and man blend together in perfect harmony, have exclaimed them to be like paradise. What better compliment can an architect receive than that, and he certainly has had to go a long way to become one of the most internationally acclaimed architects.

He was born in the "Empire of the Sun Gods" 4000m above sea level in La Paz, Bolivia. Young Melvin was so impressed by the building talents of the "Sun People" that he decided to embark on a career in architecture.

He went to study architecture in Chile, where he also met and married his multi-lingual wife Antje and became father of two sons and two daughters. From Chile architectural assignments took him to Argentina, Brazil and Peru. Always moving to new areas being developed, he took part in many competitions together with architects and won many.

One of the competitions brought him to the Costa del Sol, where Prince Alfonso Hohenlohe was taken by Melvin's idea of architecture blending in with the environment and man. As a result he asked him to enter the competition of the Puente Romano Hotel-Apartment Urbanisation Phase I. He won with flying colours and brought his family to Marbella. With Puente Romano he created a now often copied style of urbanisation. One has to wonder why those that copy him, however, never quite reach his grace and style. His love of nature reaches so far that in order to save the big old Eucalyptus trees he chose to construct around them rather than mutilate them. Today, these trees together with an old Roman bridge, with the small stream running underneath it, are one of the most beautiful focal points of Puente Romano I.

His other successful projects have been the apartment development La Alcazaba and Rodeo Beach near Puerto Banus and the Marina

del Este harbour urbanization on the Costa Grenadina. Melvin explained his philosophy and his architectural goals as follows: "Being a naturalist architect, my designs are very much influenced by the region, as such you can develop a much more typical setting in keeping with its surroundings. Modern architecture has lost its way, building towers all over the world, the architectural traditions of each county have been destroyed. After the "crisis designs" of the 40's as a result of the war, we now need to find our origins again. After all buildings are not discarded or exchanged every four years like



a car. Buildings should last more than a life time. We need to learn again to preserve the natural things, humanity and its very essence. This is my philosophy for architecture and for life itself."

In his latest creation Alhambra del Mar, the outstanding new beach development with 25 acres, 7 wells and 170 meters of beach front, he has at last found for the first time, so he told me, the ideal conditions in respect to space, situation, position, vegetation and more than sufficient water supply to implement his ideals in respect to the harmony between man and his environ-



Melvin Villarroel with his wife Antje and daughters



ment. He fully intends to treat the venerable pine forest of Alhambra del Mar with delicate care, resulting in the necessity of uprooting and replanting some pine trees as well as the large old palm trees. While this system is very costly, the environment is preserved and the results will be magnificent. He is also very pleased that only 20 % of the 25 acres will be constructed. No other development on Marbella's Golden Mile is so lavishly endowed with lakes, pools, springs, fountains and variety of flowers, plants and trees as Alhambra del Mar.

All cars and traffic are banned from the inter-

nal part of the development to virtually recreate the lost paradise. He told me: "Alhambra del Mar will set a radically high standard of living for developments. The latest modern technological advancements in construction will be incorporated. Through radical measure such as only one entrance on each floor sound proof double walls and floating concrete, the "house in house" principle will ensure each resident, in an undisturbed atmosphere, his private space, which after all is not a luxury but a necessity for one's peace of mind and quality of life.