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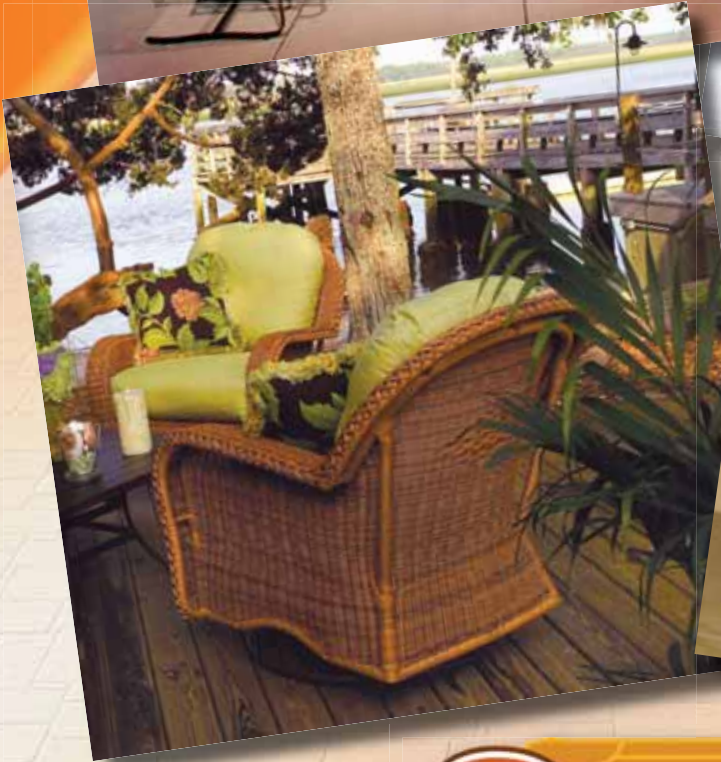


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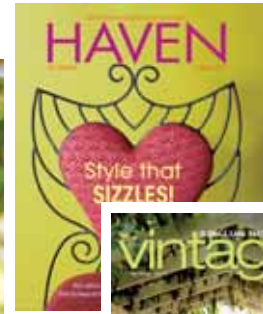
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Kristi Marinelly, a Tribune designer, is responsible for the look of Haven from the front cover to the last page. A 21-year employee of The Tribune, Kristi began her career at the newspaper as an assistant compositor. These days, her responsibilities include Haven, Vintages magazine and numerous other Tribune publications. She lives in the shadow of Hollister Peak with her husband and daughter.



Rebecca Juretic, Haven's most prolific contributor, is also a contributing editor for The Tribune's weekly Home section. A native of Paso Robles, Rebecca graduated with a degree in English and creative writing from UC Santa Barbara. For this issue, Rebecca writes about three local homes: the Sabine Jones residence in Paso Robles, the Ritter home in Avila Valley and the Mendoza family's outdoor entertaining area in Nipomo.



Lance Kinney's photographs began appearing regularly in The Tribune's weekly Home section several months ago. For this issue of Haven, he photographed the Ritter and Mendoza stories, as well as recording both the Crazy House and Santa Rosa Street medical building designed by Warren Leopold. The Baron Canyon home of Lance and his wife, Naomi, appeared in The Tribune in 2004.



Lisa Miller was raised in Los Osos but, as this issue went to press, was in the process of moving to London, where she attended a graduate program last year and has now accepted an editing position. Formerly a Tribune features reporter, Lisa researched and wrote our feature on the late designer Warren Leopold during one of her periodic trips home to visit family. Lisa's article, "Why We Love Tuscan Style," appeared in the Autumn 2006 issue of Haven.



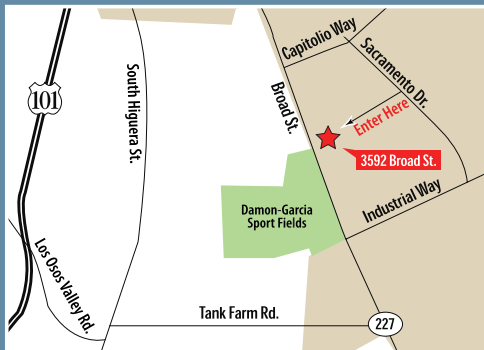


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Joe Johnston, a Cal Poly English grad, is a Tribune staff photographer whose expertise ranges from hard news to surfing to artful coverage of homes and gardens. For this issue, Joe photographed the Sabine Jones residence in Paso Robles, capturing the sunny feeling of the property on a day when clouds threatened rain.

Dawn Rapp, a Cal Poly journalism grad who splits her time between The Tribune's features and business departments, writes regularly for the Dining Out review in the weekly Ticket section. For this issue, she writes our food feature, Gatherings. As this issue goes to press, Dawn is honeymooning in Hawaii. Her new husband, Seth, is a caterer.



David Middlecamp photographed chef Michael Wood and his trio of ceviches for our Gatherings feature. A Cal Poly journalism grad, Dave is a longtime Tribune staffer, having joined the paper more than 20 years ago, photographing everything from hard news to home interiors.

Stephanie Laird, who photographed the home of Kelly and Tamara Gearhart for this issue, lives in Creston. Her images, often of the horses she raises, have won numerous awards.





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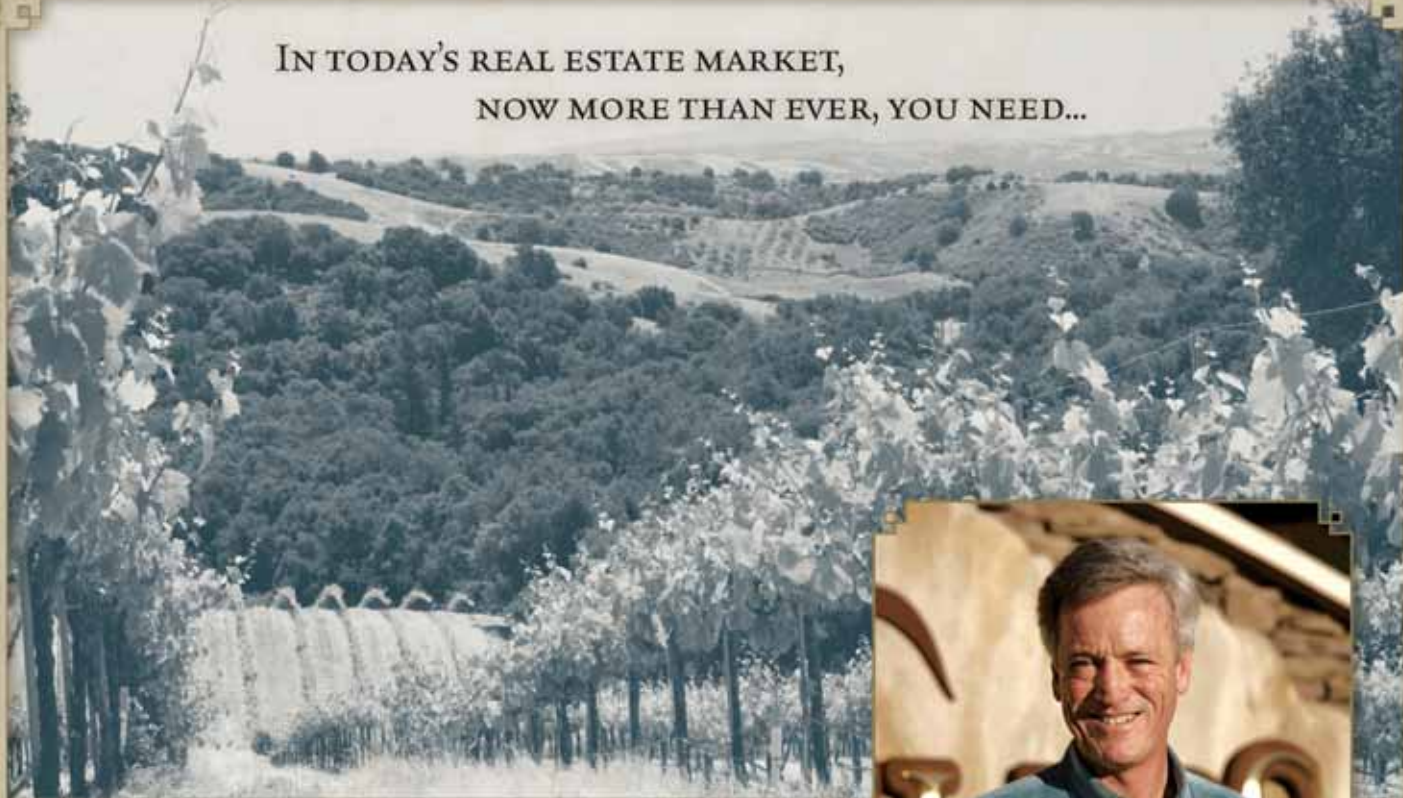
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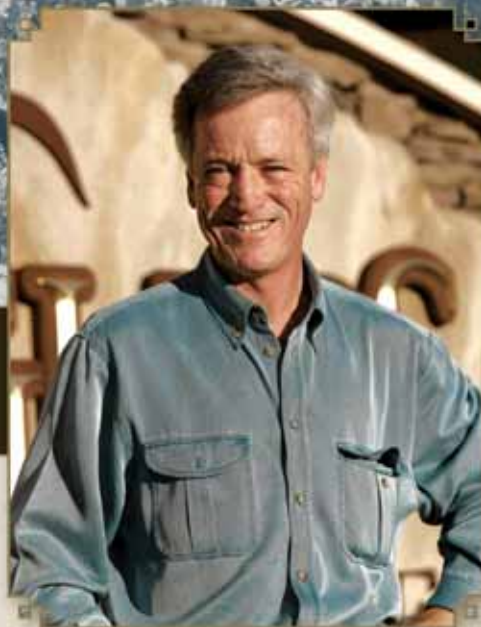
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SABINE JONES' FORMAL GARDEN features her collection of European statuary. At right, a nondescript staircase acquires grandeur with wrought ironwork by Ken Robinson of Paso Robles, who also created the chandelier.

a love of beauty

Written by Rebecca Juretic • Photographed by Joe Johnston

When Sabine Jones had the opportunity to reinvent her Paso Robles home in the style of her choosing, she initially yearned for something utterly different. But she soon discovered it drifting toward the opulent European style she has favored throughout her life.

Jones traces the genesis of her personal style back to her childhood in Germany. Her grandparents collected antiques, exposing her developing tastes to traditional European design. "I grew up learning what it means to have handcrafted quality items in your life," she said. "It stimulated in my own life a love of beautiful things."

When she purchased her Paso Robles home, it was modern, austere and vastly remote from the rich European aesthetic she favors. She fell in love with the hill and vineyard views, however, and immediately dubbed the 33 pastoral acres Four Season Farms. The name alludes to her love of nature as well as her affection for the legendary elegance of Four Seasons Hotels. She would design her home to be a cross-section of both.

Jones moved into her house in July 2006 and wasted no time in beginning renovations. Its rich, timeless look was achieved in a mere

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six months. She headed up the redesign of the house by relying on her instincts and a very specific vision. "I saw the interior as a whole in my mind," she said. "I could see it in the minutest details before it even existed."

She envisioned the outside as a sun-drenched Mediterranean villa. To the stark exterior, she added shutters and marquees. She installed patios and terraces to take advantage of expansive views. Formal Mediterranean gardens offered the ideal setting to display statuary from England, France and Italy, sculptures that she has collected over many years.

Inside, with no time for major structural changes, she swapped out materials where she felt the greatest impact could be made. Dated oak-paneled walls were cloaked in cottage white marine paint that, over time, takes on a warm patina. She kept some of the existing parquet wood floors but stepped up their elegance with areas of marble inset with mosaic tiles or onyx rosettes. A nondescript staircase became a dramatic focal point with the addition of an ornate wrought-iron railing.

One of Jones' biggest challenges was filling the 5,000 square foot home with the furniture and accessories required to create the opulent, layered look she is so fond of. Few of her existing pieces would work; she previously lived for more than 30 years in a home on a cattle ranch sporting Western and Southwestern décor.

Jones held on to a few favorite antiques. Others received creative makeovers, such as a 25-year-old southwestern-style couch that won a reprieve when she decided to reupholster it in opulent raw silk.

For the rest, Jones relied on the assistance of friends. Friends who owned art galleries helped her find paintings and sculptures with a scale to befit the generous dimensions of the house. She also collaborated with an interior decorator friend, Caroline Morten of Vivant Interiors in Palm Desert, where Jones has a second home. The two began marathon design and ordering sessions. "I could go even at night and pick fabric and trims and she would put a rush on it," she said.

Again Jones' detailed vision came into play, helping her to make quick decisions. "I'm

(continued on next page)



ONE OF THE MANY TERRACES, above, added by Sabine Jones to give guests access to views of the gardens, hills and vineyards.





JONES' AFFECTION FOR FLOWERS, above, is evident in every room. A modern painting by a German artist pairs effortlessly with traditional furnishings.

THE LIVING ROOM, left, looks into the library. Casual sectional sofas, once covered in a Southwestern fabric, were given an elegant facelift when reupholstered with raw silk.



DECORATIVE PAINTER LISA DESHON created this paint treatment, above, to complement Jones' modern Chinese art.

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pretty sure-footed when it comes to decorating... not that I never made a mistake, but it was rare," she said.

The interior came together rapidly. Boxes arrived by the truckload and Jones orchestrated the monumental task of fitting all the elements together like an enormous, complex puzzle.

Although the overall feel of the home is formal and European, Jones isn't afraid to mix styles. She combined ornately carved furniture with modern art, contemporary pieces with antiques, and European furniture with Asian accessories. This fusion of styles works because of a consistent color palette — light neutrals accented with gold and ruddy sienna, a hue that reminds Jones of Italy.

All of this opulence could make a home feel stuffy, so Jones gives the interior a breath of fresh air with flowers and botanical pieces. She attrib-



SABINE JONES with her dog, Archibald.



THE MASTER BATHROOM, above and right, deviates from the color palette used for the rest of the home. The bathroom's pink and ochre shades were pulled from the Spanish marble used on the floors and countertops. The marble is inset with onyx. The tile is from Artisan Tile Marble & Granite in San Luis Obispo.

utes her love of gardens to her German heritage and demonstrates her affection with vivid paintings of flowers and landscapes, grapevine motifs in the iron work, and an abundance of fresh floral arrangements. "I'm not home unless I have flowers in every room in the house," she said.

She also lightens things up with touches of whimsy. "It takes edge off the elegance," explained Jones, "You can feel at home and not impressed by the size and grandeur of the house, which can be intimidating."

Fanciful butterfly sculptures flit up one 30-foot wall. A collection of ornamental birdcages form an unexpected vignette in the entrance hall. And in the master bathroom, plump cherub sculptures seem to be suspended in mid-flight.

The result of Jones' labors is an eclectic space, what Jones calls "cosmopolitan, kind of like the United Nations." After all, she has traveled the world and lived in California for much of her life. But she also admits, "The European influence is always going to be more prominent with me. You cannot hide your roots."



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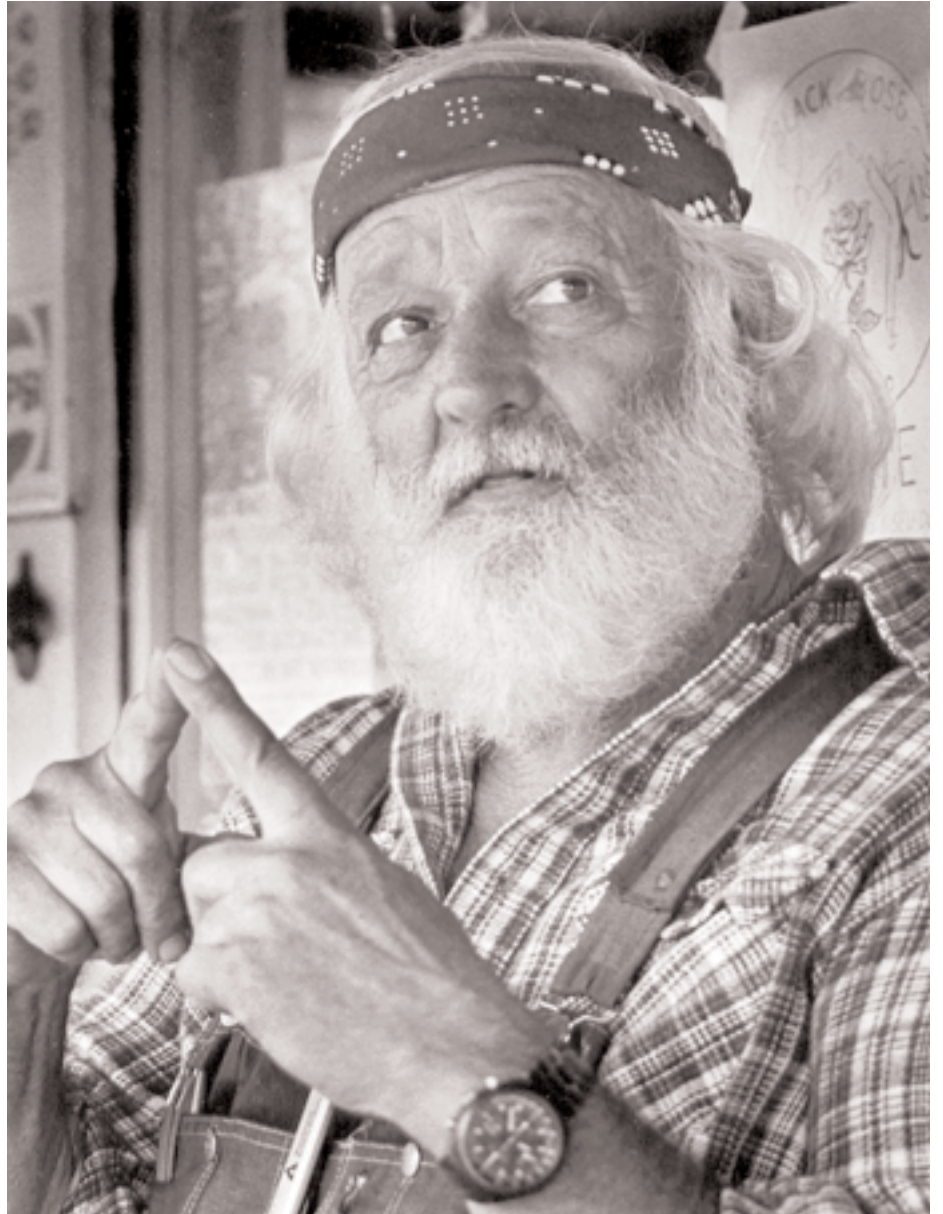
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a style of his own



WARREN LEOPOLD designed some of this area's most innovative buildings. A friend of writer Henry Miller, the multitalented Leopold had both a Zen sensibility and a sense of humor, signing his drawings with "N.A.L.A.," meaning Not a Licensed Architect.

Written by Lisa Miller • Photographed by Lance Kinney



THIS UNUSUAL MEDICAL BUILDING AT 84 SANTA ROSA ST. in San Luis Obispo, designed by Warren Leopold in the mid-1960s, shows an angular face to the street, top, but at the rear it juts over the nearby creek, below. As iconoclastic as its designer, the building was studied by Cal Poly architecture students in the years after it was built. These days, few know its heritage.

Warren Leopold designed some of this area's most unusual structures

When I was growing up, there was an office building on Santa Rosa Street in San Luis Obispo that I loved to look at when my parents and I drove past.

With its pale cream-and-gold rock wall, long, lean horizontal lines and central hexagonal pillar of aggregate cement, it was notably different from other structures in town. It also jutted out over the creek by Santa Rosa Park, and its intimacy with that leafy riparian space added to the aura of mystery that surrounded it.

Had I known then that its interior was equally unusual, I would have begged my parents to pull into the parking lot so I could run inside and look through the lobby's glass coffee table into the creek below.

Despite three decades gone by, and the greater variety of architectural styles now found in SLO County, this Santa Rosa Street building retains much of its unique flavor today. This is not surprising, given the man who designed it.

The late Warren Leopold was a largely self-taught artist, designer and builder who never followed any muse but his own. The longtime Cambria resident had such an innate understanding of spatial relationships that he could craft beautiful work in almost any form — a painting, a building or, in one instance, wooden hand grips for a revolver.

"He was talented in every way possible," said ex-wife Helen Leopold of Cambria. "He was always cogitating about houses, about how they ought to be."

The first home Leopold ever designed and built was on the Garcia River in

(continued on next page)

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Northern California in the late 1940s. He went on to build or remodel homes in Pacific Grove and Big Sur, as well as SLO County. Locally, his best-known building is the Crazy House in Cambria, named for the startling absence of right angles in its floor plan. Built around 1947, the small wooden house set among oak trees has windows that thrust toward the sky, bringing the outside in.

“That long ago his houses were really unique,” Helen said. “Imagine how extremely unusual those were then. Now you don’t have the same contrast between a little stucco, square, cake-box house and what Warren would do.”

Though none of his other SLO county homes apparently sparked as much surprise when they were built as the Crazy House did, they all exhibit Leopold’s underlying approach. Strong and simple lines, natural materials, careful placement of windows and open interior spaces all serve to enhance the building site, emphasizing views of trees, hills or sea. Decorative fascia boards or stonework might liven up the outside, but nothing is cluttered or overdone. The bones of the structures do most of the work.

“He had an almost Zen Buddhist style to him in the sense that less is more,” said Bruce Beery, a Cambria-based architect who counted Leopold among his friends. “When you use a natural material in a way that doesn’t require dressing up or additional cost to make it look right, that’s sustainability.”

This is not to say Leopold’s houses weren’t expensive. They often were.

“Warren’s projects were never cheap,” Beery said. “He basically said, ‘I’ll tell you when I need more money.’ And if you didn’t like that, you didn’t have him build.”

Many of his most interesting designs were never fulfilled. His daughter, Laurel Leopold of Cambria, has a collection of his architectural drawings. They’re rendered in such close detail that they’re practically works of art. They include plans for a dome-roofed home with a matching detached garage. A section of the home’s roof retracts, opening a view to the sky. There’s also an intriguing plan for a home on a steep hillside site. The structure looks like a series of room-sized blocks spiraled around a central axis, capturing views in all directions

Although brilliant artistically and technically, Leopold was less skilled at the business side of things.

“He was not a good communicator,” Lau-

rel explained. “He didn’t interview (clients) to find out exactly what they wanted. So he often had to redraw. He also didn’t like talking about cost.”

In fact, throughout his life, Leopold exhibited a notable lack of ease with money. He not only didn’t pursue it, he seemed to actively avoid it. This became part of the Leopold mystique, and among his fans, it was interpreted as a sign of wisdom and integrity. Here was a man who practiced what he preached about the joys of a simple life of few possessions and great personal freedom.

The writer Henry Miller immortalized this side of Leopold in his 1957 book, “Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch,” when he named Leopold as someone who had “demonstrated that it is possible to live happily on next to nothing.” Miller met Leopold when the builder moved his family to Big Sur, drawn by rumors of the many artists and writers living there. Leopold even built a studio for Miller, and then lived in it for a time.

In his book, Miller wrote that Leopold could “earn good money as a first-class carpenter. He doesn’t want to. He wants a little piece of land, just enough to raise some fruit and vegetables, rabbits and chickens...” Miller also told how, after getting an unexpectedly large retaining fee from a client, Leopold tried to give some of it to Miller to give to charity, instead of saving the money himself for a rainy day. “It never occurred to him to improve his standard of living,” Miller wrote. “He wasn’t even tempted to do so.”

But there was another side to the story. If Leopold was the creative and philosophical visionary — the catalyst for a vagabond lifestyle that led to a lot of interesting family adventures — Helen was the bedrock. She was a teacher, and her work brought in much-needed cash wherever they went. In the published celebrations of Leopold and his unconventional approach to life, Helen’s essential contribution generally goes unmentioned.

“Someone had to be making money. He just wanted to do the projects and get a car,” Laurel said.

Cars were one of Leopold’s great weaknesses.

“He would go get cars, one after another,” Laurel said. She recalls that he would even ask people to pay him with a car instead of cash. “He’d say, ‘Get me a car, and then I’ll do it for you,’” she said. “That was his

upfront fee. And if they didn’t get him one, he’d be really disappointed.”

In fact, he is probably most remembered in Cambria not for building houses but for chopping the tops off sedans to make a sort of luxury mini-truck. He wanted the smooth ride of a big car but the easy-access hauling space of a truck bed for all his tools. His hack-sawed rigs, coupled with his trademark blue coveralls and bushy white hair and beard, made him something of a tourist attraction. Even people who knew nothing about him would look at him and “wonder what he was about,” Laurel said.

Leopold and Helen were married 28 years and had four children before they divorced in the late 1960s. They met at a dance at UC Berkeley when Helen was a student there and he was taking classes at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. They married in 1941, a year after he’d entered the Army.

Leopold served from 1940 to 1943 as a military artist, an important time for him, particularly during his posting to Alaska. The rugged scenery there caught his imagination, and he met the writer Dashiell Hammett. The experience helped shape his artistic vision and philosophical outlook.

“He saw that environment and talked with writers,” Helen said. “He began to be even more interested in the natural world.”

After the war, he returned to California and Helen. The pair spent the next three decades pursuing Leopold’s vision of a simple life. While living in Big Sur, Leopold got to know Rowan Maiden, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright’s. That meeting may have further influenced Leopold’s design sensibilities.

Leopold and Helen’s first visit to Cambria was when he built the Crazy House. There were very few people in town then, and Helen remembers living in a 16-foot-by-16-foot tent for the duration of the project.

Several years later, in the mid-1960s, they decided to leave Big Sur and move to Cambria to be closer to the hospital in SLO. One of their four children, their teenage son Eric, was ill and needed medical attention. Sadly, he died not much later.

“Warren took it well,” Helen said. “He had a good attitude about things.”

Laurel blames her parents’ eventual separation on what she calls Leopold’s “mid-life crisis.”

“He had a lot of projects down in San Luis Obispo,” she said. “He wasn’t so good a family man.”

(continued on page 26)



THE CRAZY HOUSE in Cambria is now owned by Leslie Clarke Gray, who plans to maintain and preserve the structure. Clarke bought it from the family of famed watercolorist Phil Dike, who used it as a weekend retreat.



INSIDE THE CRAZY HOUSE, a fireplace warms the sunken living room. A middle level functions as the kitchen/dining area and a glassed-in aerie serves as a sleeping loft.

(from page24)

Her brother Mark Leopold, a dentist in SLO, is also philosophical about his father's priorities. "He was more into himself (than family)," he said. "A lot of creative people are that way."

After the divorce, Leopold carried on much as before — building, remodeling, living on very little, chopping up cars. He had begun to develop a following among Cal Poly architecture students, who would go on field trips to see his work. This continued through the 1970s.

"So many people thought he was this god figure," said Mark, who remembers Poly students eagerly following his dad around. "They revered his work."

Although some placed him on a pedestal, Leopold was always quick to show his appreciation for other people's talents, Laurel said. Beery agrees.

"He treated me as just another person interested in good design and ethics," Beery recalled. The two would hang out at the now-defunct Camozzi's bar, one of Leopold's favorite haunts, and talk.

"As artists often are, he was moody," Beery said. "He had days when he was happy and joyous. And days when he was filled with despair at the world and how it was going."

Leopold grew increasingly unhappy with the regulations coming out of the county's planning department. He felt more and more constrained and frustrated. Eventually, he stopped doing new construction altogether.

"He really kind of shut down in the last 10 or 15 years of his life," Beery said. Instead of building houses, he would do remodeling and finishing work.

"He got out of architecture because he thought things were too expensive, with too many rules and regulations," Laurel explained. "But he was also older. I don't think he missed it much. He needed to do simpler, smaller projects."

When Leopold died in May 1998 at the age of 78, more than 200 people from all walks of life came to his memorial service. Even after his death, his houses often inspire "fierce loyalty," said Kathe Tanner, longtime Cambria resident and a reporter for *The Cambrian*.

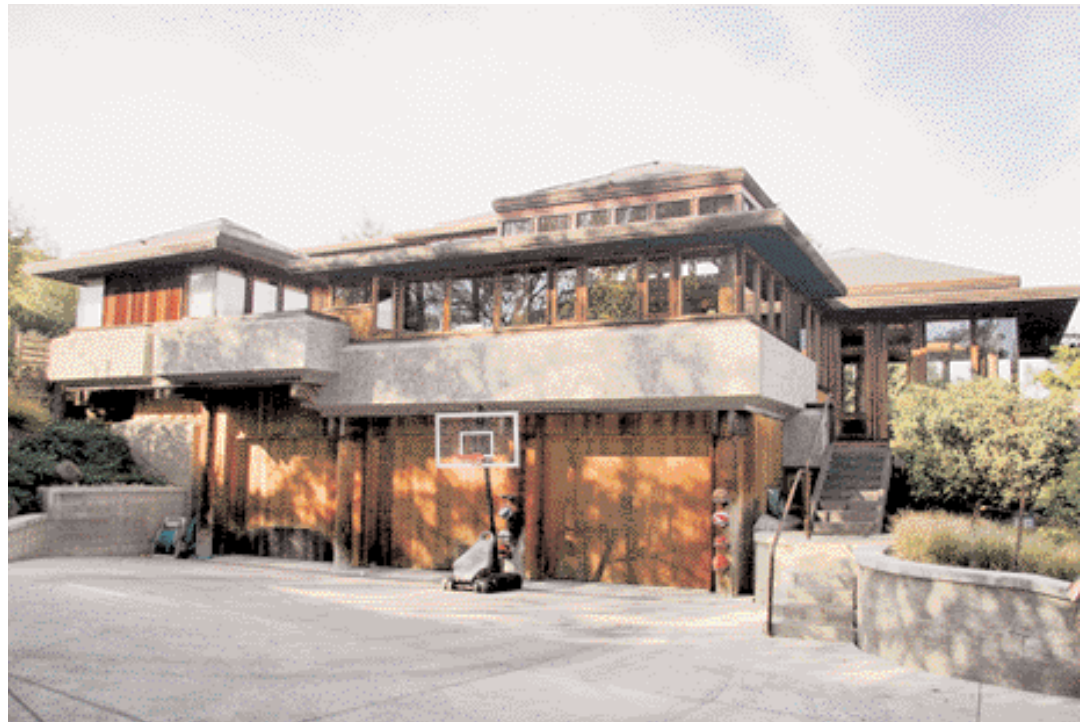


PHOTO BY BETSY CHARRON

BUILT IN 1974, this Leopold-designed residence was recently renovated by Blake Irving and Carol Hillyus-Irving, who were drawn to the structure's modern, geometric architecture. Blake playfully describes Leopold's design as "eclectic Neo-Wrightean Post and Beam."

But Cal Poly students no longer visit his buildings — the instructor who led those tours passed away and no one carried on the tradition. Laurel worries her father's buildings could be extensively remodeled, destroying their design integrity and Leopold's legacy. The structures aren't old enough to be covered by historic building codes.

"It would be nice if there was a way to protect them," she said. She also hopes to someday publish a book of his design drawings. Leopold used to sign those drawings, "Warren Leopold N.A.L.A." The initials stood for Not a Licensed Architect.

While it is true he wasn't formally licensed as an architect, Leopold wasn't using the initials simply to inform clients of this fact. The phrase indicated his philosophical stance. Leopold was an outsider by choice, and this made him a free man.

"The more you become part of the system, the less you get to speak from the heart," Beery explained. "You just become part of the system. It affects you."

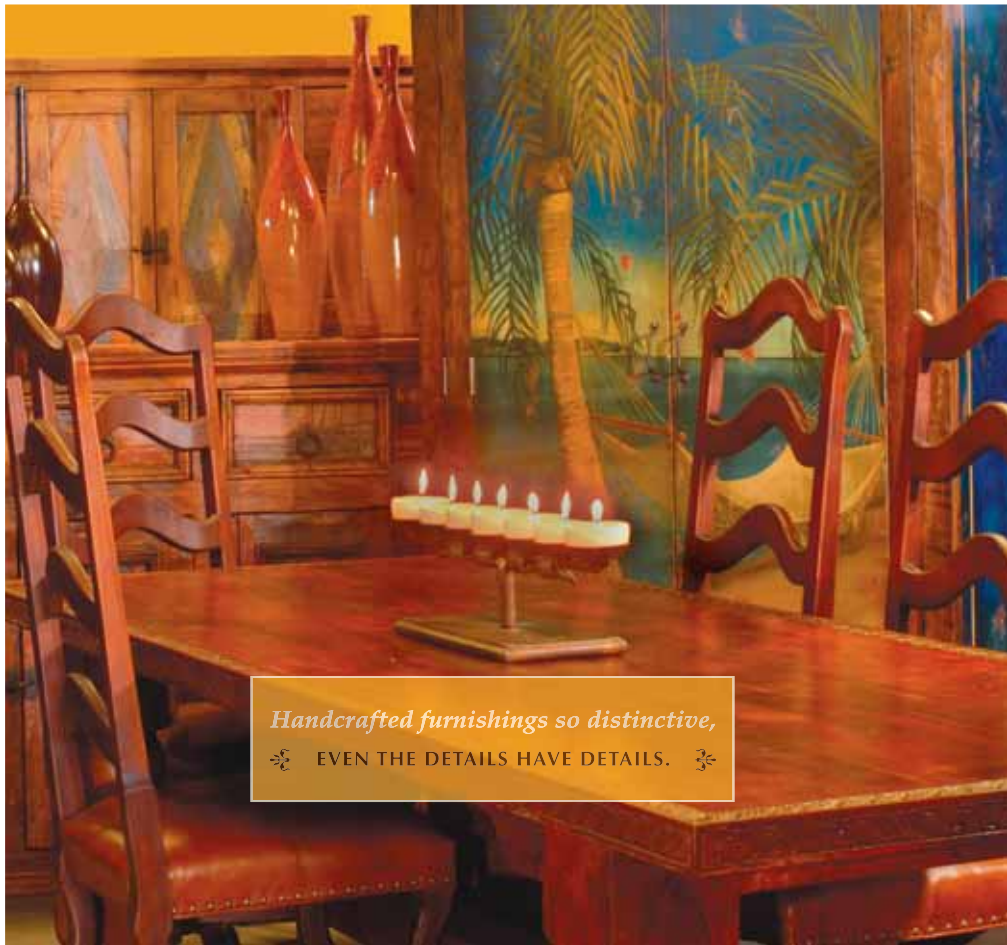
Leopold left architecture prematurely, in part to avoid that fate. In doing so, he left his fans with fewer built examples of his work to

turn to for inspiration and delight.

Still, something of the man himself lives on in the friends and family he left behind. His three living children all seem to have inherited some of his gifts — Mark used to work as a carpenter, and his brother, David, still does. David also sculpts, and Laurel's artistic pursuits include drawing and painting. Helen looks back fondly on her former husband, as amazed as ever at his prolific artistic and engineering talent. And his friends in architecture continue to do their best to build homes that are something more than just a collection of rooms with doors and windows.

"It's almost daunting to look at what Warren did in his career and think you can replicate it," Beery said. "Everyone has to follow his own path. He certainly inspired me to follow my own path."

"There aren't a lot of Renaissance types around anymore," Beery added. "The community is a little poorer for his absence."



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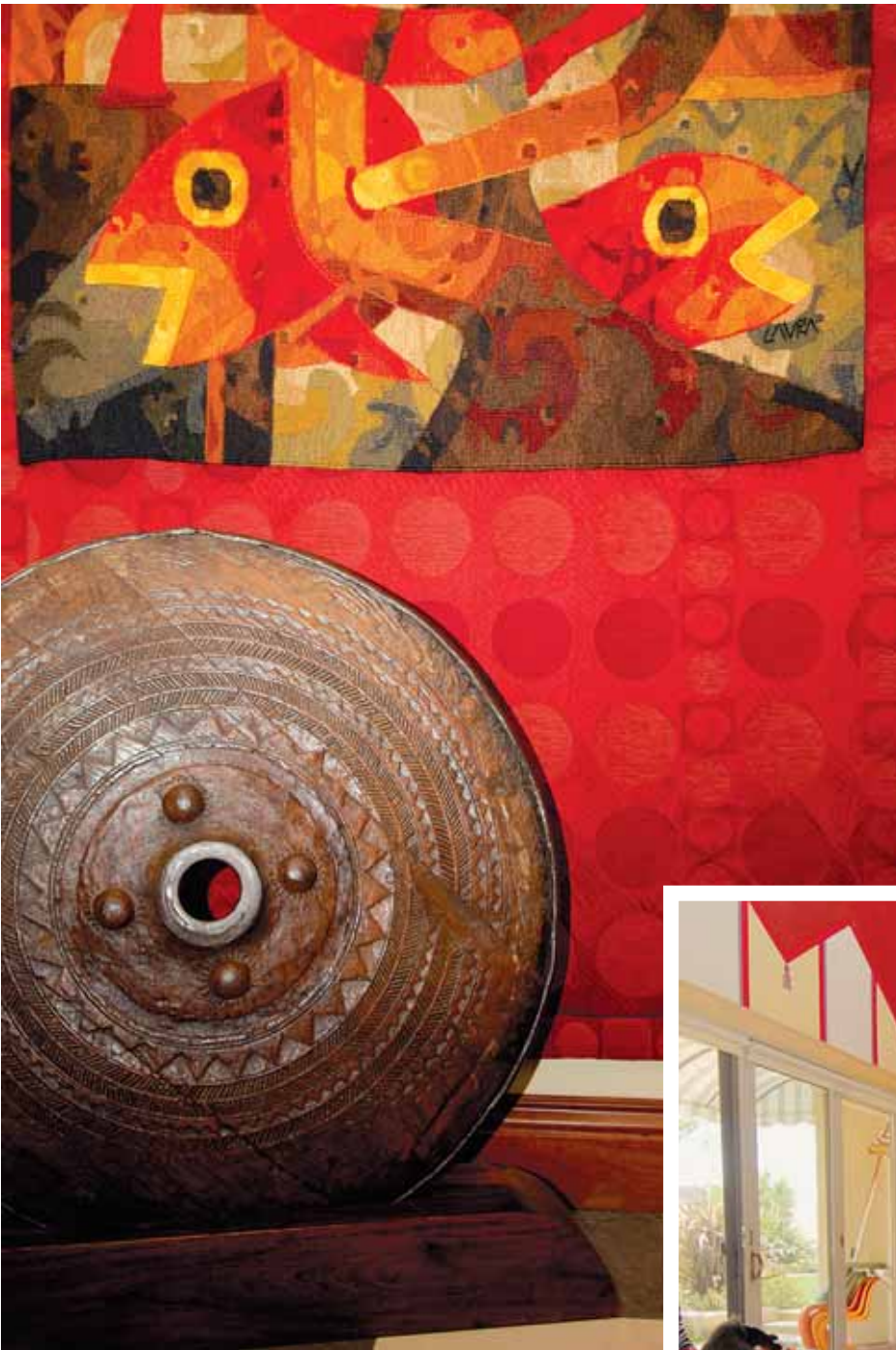


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AN ANTIQUE INDIAN CHARIOT wheel, above, sits beneath a Peruvian tapestry purchased in the Galapagos Islands.

THE BACKYARD POOL, top center, was designed by Blue Heron Pools.

AN OUTDOOR MOSAIC BENCH, top right, as created by Passiflora Mosaic Designs of Grover Beach.

A COLORFUL PLAYROOM, at right, was inspired by the circus.





sail away home

Written by Rebecca Juretic
Photographed by Lance Kinney

Like many retired couples, Michael and Shirley Ritter divide their time between their Avila Valley home and a second, somewhat smaller residence.

In this case, that residence is a sailboat.

The couple has sailed across the Great Lakes, around the Mediterranean and to the Galapagos Islands. Together, they spend more than three months of each year either sailing or traveling abroad.

To ease the transition from vacation time to day-to-day life, the Ritters decorated their home to be a virtual scrapbook of their travels.

When they undertook a significant remodel of their 6,000-square-foot home two years ago, it offered the opportunity to showcase the artworks, textiles and artifacts picked up on travels over more than three decades. "There were things that had been sitting in my closet for 25 years that finally found a home," said Shirley.

Bringing together ethnic elements from numerous different continents and islands was a feat that Shirley, who has an art background, was ready to tackle. She did, however, enlist the help of a few local decorators — Michael Sagousse, Steve Kalar and

(continued on next page)



(from previous page)

Stephen Patrick — to get everything to mesh.

They created settings to properly showcase several favorite pieces. A painting purchased in Puerto Vallarta that reminds the Ritters of a sailing trip taken with a grandson has a place of honor over their living room fireplace. Turkish rugs that never worked in their previous home are a perfect fit with the generously sized rooms and ethnic feel of their new one.

The Ritters even held on to a life-size, bejeweled “sacred cow” sculpture from India for two years before it found a home in their current breezeway. “We never had a place for it and now it’s absolutely stunning, it’s so perfect there,” said Michael. “It’s the epitome of trusting that what you find will find a home eventually.”

In other instances, they had to be more inventive. A slew of Indian saris never found a use until Shirley sewed them into curtains in a guest room bedecked with other colorful Indian and Persian textiles. The adjoining bathroom picks up on the fabrics with decorative painting done in a Turkish motif.

In the library, a contemporary setting is given a jolt of color with upholstery made of fabrics from the South Pacific and Caribbean. A limited range of hues help the intricate patterns coexist in harmony.

Another guest room is dubbed the couple’s “travel room.” “In that room we took all the things that were left over and found a way to use them,” admitted Shirley.

Large stirring sticks, which reminded the Ritters of oars, were repurposed as a primitive headboard. Ethnic fabrics and favorite travel photos also found a home here.

Even where ethnic pieces were not used, the couple’s travels inspired the decor of the home. Observing the mosaic-embellished structures of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi, on a trip to Barcelona persuaded them to add a Gaudi-esque touch to their own home. They commissioned Passiflora Mosaic Designs to create an outdoor bench with the bold colors of Spain. In Shirley’s study, a mosaic fireplace surround was patterned after the design on a swatch of Indian fabric.

(continued on next page)





IN THE LIVING ROOM, far left, a painting purchased in Puerto Vallarta reminds the Ritters of a sailing trip they took with their young grandson. The fireplace is by Ron's Masonry of Santa Margarita, and the curvaceous sofa was custom-made by Anthony's Furniture in Morro Bay.

THE UNIQUE CEILING FIXTURE in the kitchen, left, was made by sculptor Jonathan Newell of JN Designs in San Luis Obispo; lamps were fashioned by Rubi Glass in Arroyo Grande. Shell Beach artist Michael Laboon crafted the tile backsplash.

A SUNROOM, at bottom, was added to allow views of the garden and nearby hillsides.

A GUEST BATH, below, has a Turkish motif, and Turkish tassels hang over the towels. Interior designer Michael Sagouspe designed the room.







A GUEST BEDROOM, top left, is decorated with an Indian bedspread, dolls from India and Thailand, and a carving from Thailand. Shirley Ritter created the headboard.

A BENCH IN THE LIBRARY, at left, is covered in ethnic fabrics from various islands in the South Pacific and Caribbean.

A ROOM THE COUPLE CALLS the "Travel Room," above, displays a window by Glass Designs by Melissa that was inspired by the wind and waves. Stirrers that remind Shirley of boat oars are placed like a headboard.

(from previous page)

Sometimes the overall reference to travel and sailing is more subtle. For instance, the allusion to wind and water is everywhere, in the undulating curves of the patio bench, in sinuous designs etched into glass, and even the arcing silhouette of their living room sofa.

Not every room has an ethnic slant, but the entire house seems to have picked up on the exuberance of a multitude of cultures. Even in a playroom designated for the couple's four grandchildren, a kaleidoscope of colors pulsates from the walls, floors and furniture. "I love color," said Shirley. "It gives me energy."

Today, the Ritters' house offers them an escape and a way to celebrate a lifetime of travel. Each day, some item or memento triggers a memory of a place, a person or an event for them. "I'm a very visual person, so writing about something just doesn't do it for me," said Shirley. "This is my way of having a travel journal."

A TILED MOSAIC FIREPLACE SURROUND by Passiflora Mosaic Designs, below, was inspired by the pattern in an Indian fabric. A Gustav Klimt-patterned rug hangs above it.



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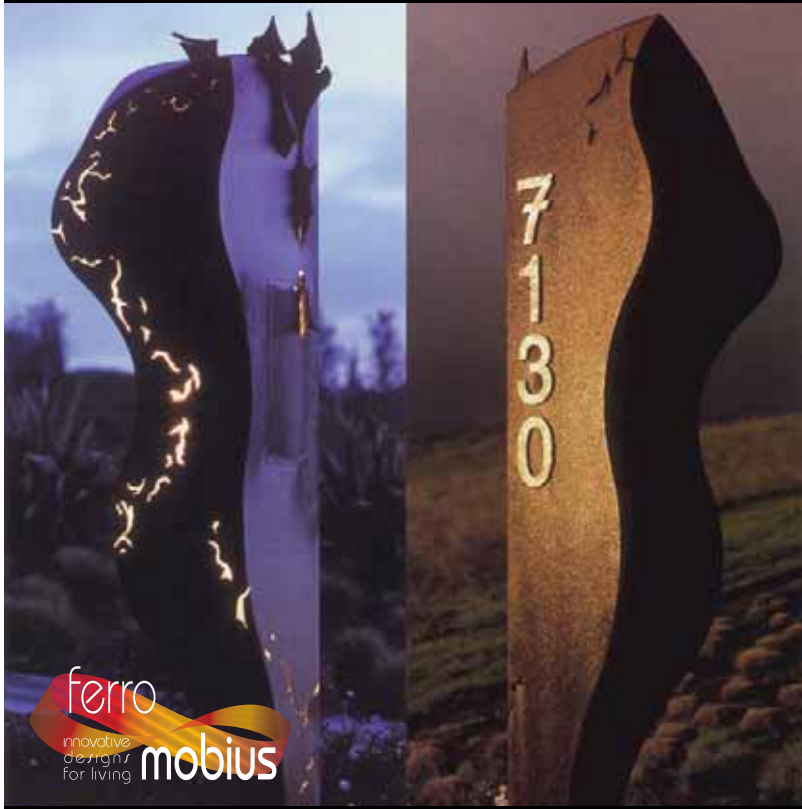
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outdoor elegance

Written by Rebecca Juretic

Photographed by Lance Kinney

When Francisco and Rosy Mendoza moved their family to Nipomo in 2004, the warm summer days and mild nights made it tempting to start entertaining more outdoors, cook family meals outdoors... basically spend as much of the season as possible in their backyard.

That they started out with the typical new tract home yard – a patch of dirt – was more a blessing than a challenge. The family had the freedom to invent an outdoor living space that suited their tastes and their lifestyle.

Francisco, who is a physician in Santa Maria, designed most of the patio with Rosy's help. Both wanted a space that reflected their Mexican heritage. "We wanted it to look kind of like a hacienda courtyard in back," said Rosy.

The couple visited local missions for inspiration. From these excursions, they picked up Spanish features that they translated to their own design: walls reminiscent of plastered adobe, arched openings and rustic wood shutters. When the concrete patio floor was poured, grout lines were cut into it and the entire floor was stained a terra cotta color to mimic Spanish tile.

Francisco's main goal for the patio was to have a state-of-the-art barbecue area complete with grill, double-sided burner, sink, refrigerator and electricity to run a blender and other essential party equipment.

The initial plan was to have both a gas grill and wood-burning barbecue in an L-shaped configuration, but space became an issue. They settled on a large, 42-inch gas model.

According to Randy Harris of Paradise Outdoors, who designed and installed the kitchen, a gas grill is a good all-purpose option. "You can do your Monday through Friday cooking, something very fast. Then for special occasions, you can use indirect, slow cooking," he said, adding that newer models incorporate features

(continued on next page)

MEXICAN FOUNTAIN TILES are from Tile Collection in Santa Maria. The wall and arbor were built by JC Construction, and landscaping was by Ambience Garden Design of Arroyo Grande.



THE FIREPLACE, Francisco Montoya's design was built by Paradise Outdoors of Paso Robles.



THE ARBOR OFFERS shade and the walls lend a sense of enclosure as well as provide some protection from the wind. Patio furniture was purchased at Costco.

(from previous page)

like rotisseries and smoker boxes for authentic barbecue flavor.

Instead of an L-shape, Harris and the Mendozas decided on a half-moon shape that allowed them to incorporate a sizable bar area. "There's good flow around it and curves go better with the rest of the patio," said Harris.

The family chose to upgrade from the standard ceramic tile countertop to travertine accented with granite tiles. In addition to offering a more upscale look, travertine made cleanup easier because of fewer grout lines.

Rosy's primary concerns were comfort and

ambiance. As with a well-designed great room, she wanted to break up the space with two separate seating areas to facilitate intimate conversations. One would be arranged around a fireplace that would make the patio comfortable even on chilly nights. Francisco designed it with integrated wood boxes and arches that echo the back wall.

She also insisted on another essential Spanish courtyard element — a fountain. However, past experience taught her that the traditional Spanish tiered fountain wouldn't allow them to use algae-eliminating chemicals, as splashing water could spell death for nearby plants. Instead, they found an urn they liked and

designed the fountain to allow water to cascade gently down its sides. Mexican tile adds color and Spanish flavor to the encircling raised bed.

Other features were both decorative and practical. The partially encircling wall offers a sense of enclosure and privacy and also acts as a shield from the wind. On milder days, wood shutters can be opened to let in views of their one-acre lot. A redwood arbor gives the patio structure and, when covered with shade cloth, offers protection from the sun.

With the bones of the patio complete, the couple began to install plant material. They

(continued on next page)



THE KITCHEN AREA and fireplace were built by Paradise Outdoors in Paso Roble; the gas grill is by Lynx.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE FOUNTAIN. The Mendozas chose to use an urn rather than a traditional tiered Spanish fountain which can splash chemicals on nearby plants.

(from previous page)

opted for varieties that are colorful, vary in texture and shape, and yet are fairly low-maintenance. Among their choices were geranium, kangaroo paw, angel's trumpet, roses and ornamental grasses.

The patio, completed last year, is still a work in progress. The couple hopes to add additional plants and vines to soften the hard lines of the arbor. They also have a few regrets, like not incorporating lighting into the arbor that would make nighttime entertaining more pleasurable. They also caution others to install as much counter space as possible. According to Rosy, you will always wish you had more.

The Mendozas' outdoor living space has enticed them to entertain more and spend more time outdoors. Their 11-year-old son and teenage daughters are bringing their friends to the house more often than they did before the patio was installed. And for most parents, that's the best indicator of a successful outdoor living space.

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caretaking a classic

Written by Rochelle Reed • Photographed by Stephanie Laird

Developer Kelly Gearhart and his wife, Tamara, are fond of Atascadero's historic buildings, so much so that for the past decade, they've lived in one of the city's original Colony homes. Built in 1917, the large, two-story residence—probably considered a mansion in its day—sits at the top of a hill within a stone's throw of Highway 101, close enough to hear the loud whoosh of traffic in the yard. It's a constant reminder of how time and population have encroached on, and yet not touched, this nearly 100-year-old home.

Inside the elegant residence, however, all is quiet. Even better, nothing is too fussy or staged, as is often the case with historic structures. Original leaded glass windows surround the front door. Once inside, you look right and into the home's formal living room, now a permanent Christmas Room with a year-round decorated tree and even crèches on the coffee table. "I've got

(continued on next page)



KELLY AND TAMARA GEARHART, above, have owned their vintage Atascadero Colony home for a decade, raising their two sons on the property.

REIGNING OVER A HILLSIDE near Highway 101, the home, far left, will soon get a new coat of paint. Hedges spell out the family name.

LEADED GLASS WINDOWS, original to the home, surround the front door, left.





(from previous page)

the space, so I leave it up,” says Tamara with amusement, aware that others might think that a bit ... well, odd.

To the left of the foyer, in what was once a parlor, is a second surprise. No upholstered wing chairs or prissy touches here. It's become Kelly's poolroom with a pool table and little else.

In the formal dining room, decorated in mauve shades, a large and ornately carved dining set takes center stage, but the idea that you're looking at a priceless antique lasts for only a half-minute or so. "I bought it for \$800 in a Paso consignment store," marvels Tamara. "The owners just didn't want it."

Walking through the rest of the house proves that while the house is restored and contains some of its original fixtures, it's not a museum. Like its owners, the house is attractive, casual and down-to-earth. The large family room was originally a porch. It was turned into a master bedroom by a previous owner but restored by Kelly as a comfortable place to watch TV or work out.

(continued on next page)



A STAIRCASE LEADS to the second-story bedrooms, far left. Floral carpeting is contemporary but works well in the 1917 residence.

THE ENTIRE FORMAL DINING ROOM set, above left, was purchased from a Paso Robles consignment store for a mere \$800.

TAMARA HAULED THE SUNROOM'S oversize sofa, an ideal reading spot, back from Daylight Home & Garden in San Luis Obispo herself.

A PERMANENT CHRISTMAS DISPLAY remains throughout the year in the Gearhart living room at the front of the house "because I've got the space to do it," Tamara says with amusement.



A SON'S BEDROOM has now become Tamara Gearhart's dressing room/closet, far left, painted a warm tangerine.

THE VINTAGE-STYLE STOVE by Cook's Delight, above, was purchased from Idler's. The Gearharts also have a matching refrigerator and microwave.

THE HOME'S ORIGINAL owner, left, was Mrs. E. B. Ewalt. This photo was taken Jan. 26, 1947.

(from previous page)

The roomy kitchen, painted a forest green, was added on in the 1960s, and then remodeled by Kelly and Tamara. The range, refrigerator and microwave look like vintage fixtures, but they're contemporary. Tamara considered buying restored original appliances but figured the potential for breakdowns made them impractical for someone who really uses her kitchen. Instead, she chose reproductions made by Cook's Delight and purchased from Idler's.

The Gearharts upstairs bedrooms, like the rest of the house, are comfortable and lived-in. Son Jake still lives at home, but Tamara has converted grown son Jeremy's bedroom into her dressing room/closet, painting it an appealing tangerine shade and hanging an ornate chandelier over a dressing table. Next to the master bedroom, painted in a soft shade of sea green, a light-filled sunroom holds an oversized sofa and several shelves of Tamara's favorite books.

Outdoors on the Gearhart property, massive stands of pink Cecile

Brunner heirloom roses cover a gazebo at the front of the property as well as fencing on the side. In the back, there's a large grass area plus a pool and spa. A carriage house serves as guest quarters.

Kelly bought the home because he loved the old historical Colony homes, he says: "the look of it, how well they built it, especially the cabinetry in the dining room, the stairs, the door trim."

The Gearharts intend to keep their Colony home forever, hoping that perhaps a family member will take it over. Yet at the moment, they're talking about building a very different house, one completely made of concrete, as of-the-times as their Colony home was in its time.

It's true — times change.

(Story on page 54)

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Tuna, Pineapple and Avocado Ceviche

- 10 to 12 ounces sashimi grade tuna, diced small
- 1 avocado, diced small
- ½ cup pineapple, diced small
- 1 teaspoon fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- juice of 2 fresh limes
- 1 tablespoon of lemon-infused oil
- kosher salt and pepper to taste

Gently mix ingredients together and serve on chilled glass with fresh tortilla chips.

Bay Scallop Ceviche

- 1 pound bay scallops, patted dry
- ¼ cup red onion, minced
- Zest of lemon, lime and orange, 1 each
- 5 - 8 serrano chiles, seeded and minced
- ½ cup jicama, diced small
- 1 cup tomato, diced small
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- juice of 2 limes
- juice of 1 lemon
- juice of 3 oranges
- 1 cup tomato juice
- 1 cup clam juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

Combine all ingredients and marinate for at least 4 hours. The acid from the citrus and tomato cooks the scallops. The longer you marinate the scallops, the firmer they become.



AS BEAUTIFUL as they are refreshing, Chef Michael Wood's ceviches call for fresh ingredients and minimal preparation. Above, a platter of raw ingredients including pineapple and bay scallops. At left, Wood puts the final touches on a serving of Lobster Ceviche.

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cool cuisine

Nothing quite beats a summer afternoon of warm weather like refreshing cuisine and a light, crisp wine.

Chef Michael Wood of Marisol restaurant at The Cliffs had that in mind when he created his trio of ceviches. These refreshing dishes are infused with Latin flavors, from the serrano peppers in the scallop ceviche to the pineapple and avocado salsa in the ahi version.

Wood created three to add variety and entertain the senses, he says.

“Ceviche isn’t too filling and is meant for sharing,” he says. “It can easily be made in large quantities for a summer party.”

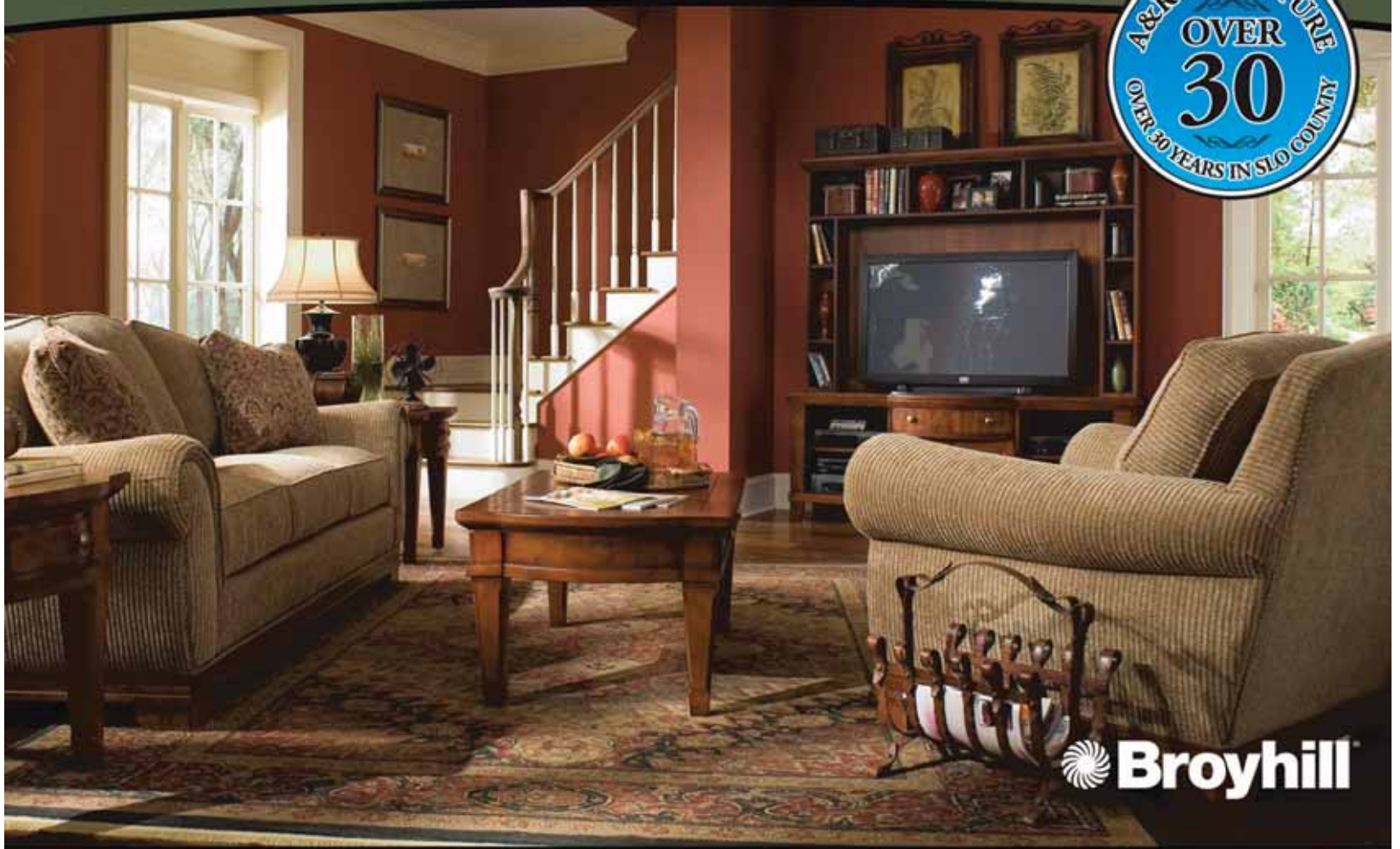
Wood recommends the ceviches to be served with tortilla strips and accompanied by a crisp glass of rosé wine.

(For the recipes, please see page 51.)



CHEF MICHAEL WOOD of Marisol at The Cliffs created three inventive ceviches for the warm days of summer. All are sophisticated and tasty, and none require turning on a stove. With recipes calling for serrano peppers, however, expect a bit of heat.

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