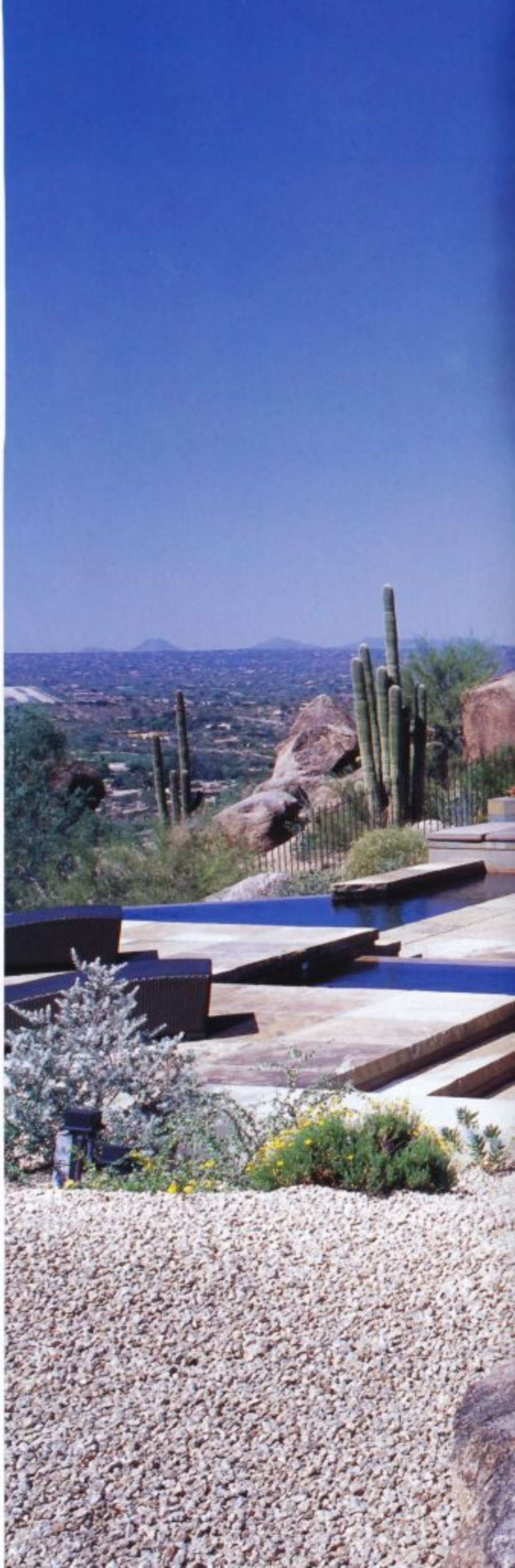


In Good SHAPE

To some, a 23-acre site is over the top; to others, panoramic city views spell decadence. But in this Carefree residence, the luxury is in the details.

BY ELIZABETH EXLINE PHOTOGRAPHY TONY HERNANDEZ

FROM THE BACKYARD of the 5,655-sq.-ft. residence, vistas of Carefree, Phoenix and the property's monumental boulder formations unroll lazily onto the horizon. A certain sort of quiet, the kind that only accompanies lofty perches, presides over what looks like a melting together of foliage, mountains, houses and skyscrapers below. Yet it is not the surrounding panorama that has arrested the gaze of Mark A. Sever, principal of Sever Design Group Architects. With his back turned to the view, Sever is entranced by the house that commands it. He excitedly explains that when the homeowners sit in the prow-shape spa (which is integrated into an equally angular pool), they sit on the same axis



**PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT AND
GENERAL CONTRACTOR:**

Mark A. Sever,
Sever Design Group Architects.

PROJECT ARCHITECT:

Andy Gramling,
Sever Design Group Architects.

PROJECT SUPERINTENDENT:

Michael Brady,
Sever Design Group Architects.

INTERIOR DESIGNER:

Bess Jones, Bess Jones Interiors.

CABINETRY:

Brian Hunter and Allan
Rosenthal, European Design.

HOME AUTOMATION SYSTEM:

Cyber Sound and Security.

LIGHTING:

Creative Designs in Lighting.

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE:

5,655.





HARMONIC PROGRESSION: *Geometric lines and an attention to detail maximize the views, both inside and out.*



MORNING RECESS: *The vertically stacked rustic ranch stone mimics the contours of the Onomi glass-topped table*



as the great room. And when they recline in their watery outpost, they can look through the great room's glass walls to the roof windows on the opposite side to catch a perfect snapshot of Black Mountain.

This is the level of detail that Sever and project architect Andy Gramling achieved throughout the residence. "We built this like it was our own home," Sever says. "There's no detail compromised from our side of things."

Of course, this home belongs not to Sever but to a couple who came to Arizona seeking a warm refuge from chilly Sonoma, Calif. Impressed by one of Sever Design

their old one. It would be a warm, contemporary home for starters, and it would have flagstone floors inside and out (similar to their California dwelling). But beyond that and a general idea about the overall size, the homeowners had few concrete demands. That's where Sever and Gramling stepped—or, rather, swooped—in.

"We did an aerial survey initially," Sever says, "because these guys would have to be mountain goats to come up here and actually survey this by hand and foot. So we flew the site, and there's really only one place to put the house on this 23-acre site."

"Our goal from the very beginning [was] that this be something that integrated with the earth and the boulders and the look of the land around it and yet maintain its contemporary look," Bess Jones says.

Group's projects, the couple contacted the firm and uncovered an uncanny reason to explain why the architecture resonated so strongly with them. "We were chatting with [Gramling], and he asked where we were from," the homeowner recalls, explaining that Gramling revealed he too had worked in Sonoma at one time. "One thing led to another, [and] it turned out he designed one of the homes we [had] owned in Sonoma."

Confident in their choice of architects, the homeowners began to compile a wish list for their new house that was largely inspired by

Yet there were many ways to design it, and they started with a steel frame. "[The frame] allowed us to create these really nice, crisp geometries throughout the house," Sever explains, "and that's something you just can't do with wood."

From there, Sever and Gramling looked at orientating the house so that the master bedroom wouldn't greet the morning sun, and so that the offices where the homeowners spend much of each day would capitalize on those jaw-dropping views. The guest rooms, meanwhile, commanded their own wing.

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Like most people, these homeowners balked at the thought of their contemporary dwelling taking on a cold-shouldered attitude. To ensure a welcoming atmosphere, they hired Bess Jones of Bess Jones Interiors. "Our goal from the very beginning [was] that this be something that integrated with the earth and the boulders and the look of the land around it and yet maintain its contemporary look," Jones says. To that end she employed a palette of

flanked by a series of individually lit, slate-clad columns that reach up to sequential roof windows, exaggerate perspective and pull the eye down its length. "Initially these were just skylights," Sever says. "Then we wanted to do a true roof window where you could get back and look at the mountain, and so the prow-shape geometry is predominant in this plan, and [each prow-shape column] was a great way to define the window wall."

If the house can be described as a beauty contestant then it must also be called a brainiac—its home-automation system controls the lighting, music, security, window shades, thermostat and gate from a single panel.

metals and stone, and where there isn't stone, textured walls echo the feel of the house's abundant slate. A hammered copper front door embraces you as you walk past it, and a copper-and-stainless-steel ventilation hood cozies up the kitchen. The rift-cut white oak cabinetry, which Sever admires for its domestic origin and exotic appearance, belies with its honey-hued face the cold precision of its installment.

But where this home really heats up is in the architectural details. At the threshold of the front door (which raises and recedes, depending on the door's position), two corridors shoot down opposite ends of the house. Their nonparallel walls,

Similar columns appear in the kitchen as well. The island, which separates the room into preparation space and a galley-style cooking area, has its own version of the column to help break up the countertops' varying heights. Then, along the edge of the countertops, a 45-degree angle has been carved out to form an inverted prow shape.

The house's stone, meanwhile, keeps pace with the architectural geometry. The flagstone floors were individually cut on the driveway to fit each room's dimensions perfectly. (Below them, a gas-powered hydronic system provides warmth underfoot in the winter.) In the dining nook, a circular table

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with an Onomi glass top and carved wooden base that Jones found demanded nothing less than a circular wall. Sever obliged by creating one of the house's showstoppers—he used a rustic ranch stone in a vertical dry-stack ashlar pattern to form a curvilinear wall that gracefully hugs the table.

If the house can be described as a beauty contestant then it must also be

In the dining nook, a circular table with an Onomi glass top and carved wooden base that Bess Jones found demanded nothing less than a circular wall.

called a brainiac—its home-automation system controls the lighting, music, security, window shades, thermostat and gate from a single panel. The convenience such a feature affords this gadabout couple doesn't go unappreciated either. The homeowners have a second residence in Lake Tahoe, and they've been known to jaunt off to Sedona occasionally, so the automation system lets them leave with ease, a sense of security and the ability to check in from anywhere on the planet.

"We are able to get away for weekends or long weekends and travel," the homeowner's wife notes. "So this [house] really suits our lifestyle. It doesn't really require a lot." Thanks, ironically, to the complexity of the house's details, it certainly doesn't.

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David Manning Interior Design

MATERIALS MATTER

This Carefree residence no doubt has good bones, but those bones are dressed to impress with earthy surface materials that link interior spaces to the landscape beyond. "The clients wanted to take a contemporary home and marry it with the desert," says interior designer Bess Jones. "So we used natural stones in different colors and [textures]—the smooth granite, the rough slate—and the exterior stone was brought into the dining room."



Three particular materials merge this home's indoor and outdoor worlds while making stylish statements: rift-cut white oak cabinetry, rustic ranch stone and flagstone flooring (shown from top to bottom). The eye-catching flagstone flooring matches the coloring found in the boulders outside, and the vertically placed rustic ranch stone in the dining room diverges from its horizontal application elsewhere around the house to make the dramatic curvilinear wall possible. Finally, Jones notes that the rift-cut white oak cabinetry delivers a welcome change from often-used alder. The oak's herringbone-style installation also enforces an intended contemporary air, while its warm stain and keen detailing give a nod toward warmer, timeless setups. —Amanda Fier

INTERIOR DESIGN

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