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DESERT SONG

A couple's lyrical arroyo home in Scottsdale

BY DAVID M. BROWN > PHOTOS BY DINO TONN





Richard Sinagoga of design firm RS Homes built a rambling residence for retirees Bill and Jan Murphy in Scottsdale's 7,800-acre Desert Mountain community. Anchored into a deep arroyo, the home is surrounded by nature and wildlife. The area's views and temperate weather allow for the house to be open to the outdoors, where the couple likes to entertain. Striking Sedona brown stone was used for the columns and accent walls; the floors are travertine.

FOR YEARS, BILL MURPHY constructed pipelines worldwide: in the mountains of Bolivia, on the island of Trinidad, in the forests of Brazil and Malaysia. Now retired with his wife, Jan, in Scottsdale, Murphy took on the construction of their 11,200-square-foot home in Desert Mountain with the same tenacity, attention to detail and hands-on participation he had for three decades as a business owner in Illinois.

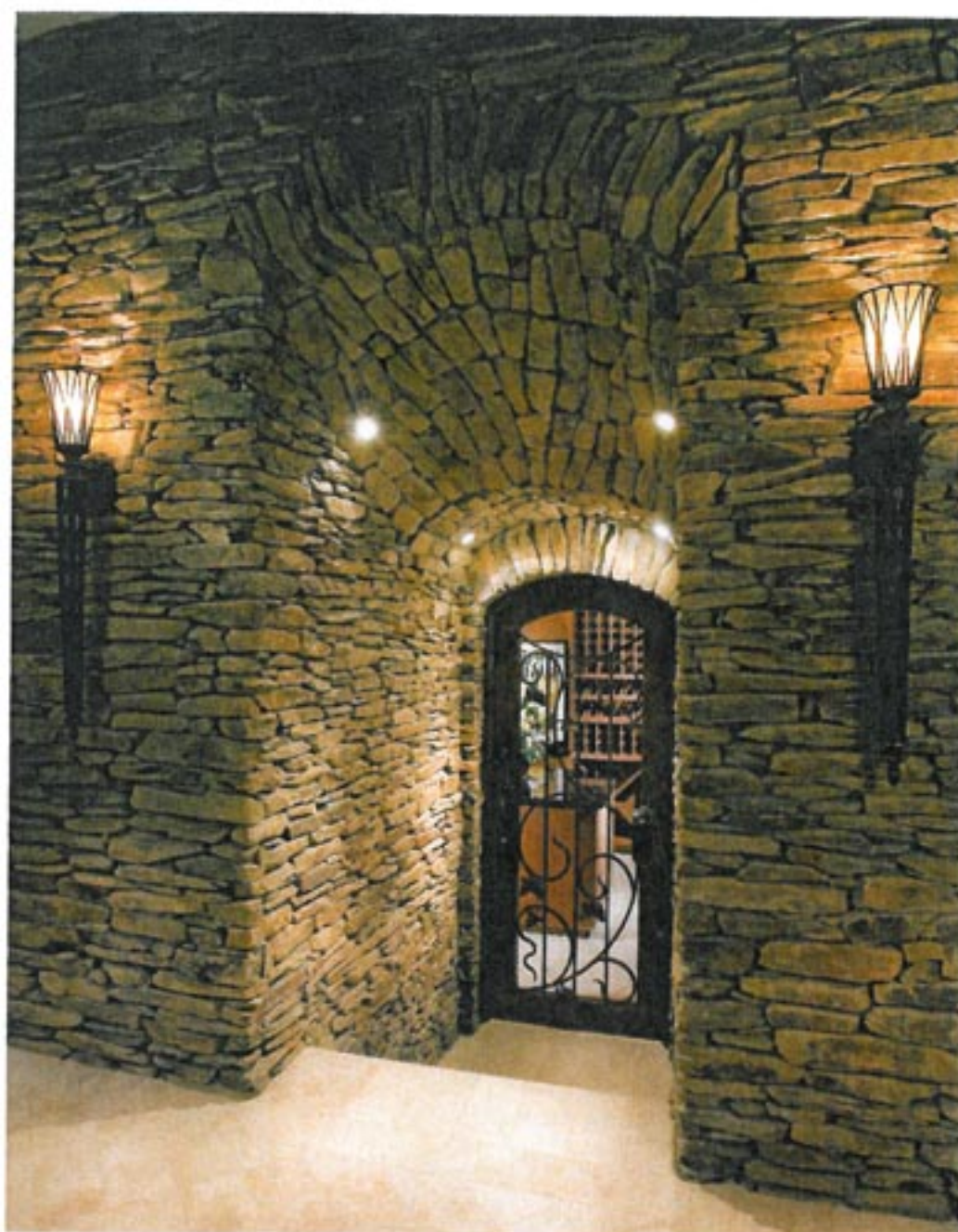
"Bill was at the jobsite on a daily basis," says Richard Sinagoga, managing member of Scottsdale design firm RS Homes, which has been building residences in the Phoenix area for 12 years. "When you spend this kind of money on a home, I don't find it surprising that he would spend that kind of time also." Enduring significant changes along the way, RS delivered the Southwest contemporary home to the Murphys in 2005, after 34 months of construction, subject to frequent conformance reviews by the strict design committee at the 7,800-acre community.





Left: The entrance has a custom glass door flanked by glass-and-copper accent panels by Lyle London of Art in Metal USA. This page: Contemporary furnishings complement the architectural lines. "There are so many sweeping curves in the architecture, we wanted to play off of that in the interiors," says Anjelica Henry of Janet Brooks Design, who worked with the owners on shaping the interior spaces.





"We were thrilled to be involved with the material selections—from the fabrics to the flooring—and many of the unique designs," notes Bill Murphy. Far left: The dining room is adjacent to the entrance and enjoys views through its floor-to-ceiling glass pocket doors.

Left: Dana Brown Design, out of Atlanta, helped design the wine cellar, which has a grottolike stepped entrance clad in Sedona brown stone and a fanciful iron door.

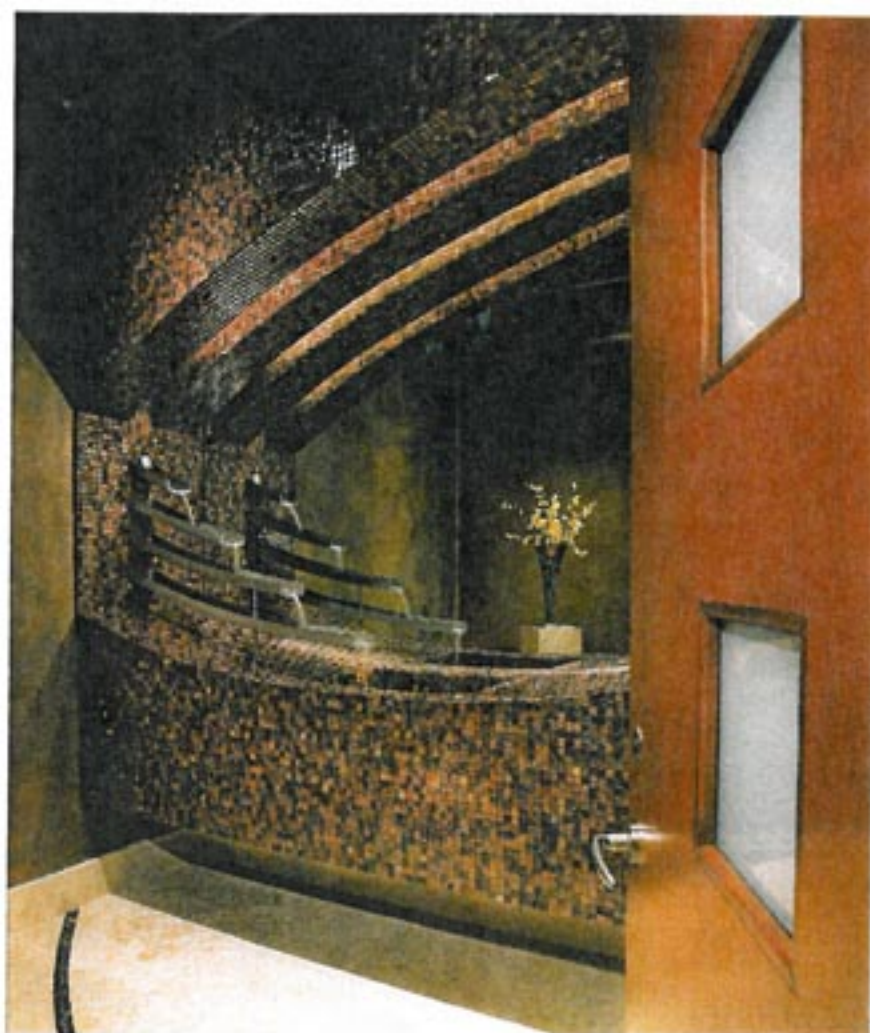
Below: The open-plan kitchen incorporates more casual seating, mahogany and brown-granite accents and a ceiling recess, which adds height to the room. The refrigerator is Sub-Zero.



Right: Behind the master bathroom fireplace is the double-entry shower. The floor is marble and the tub is from Jacuzzi. "The couple wanted a very warm, open space they could enjoy together," says Henry.

Below: Ambient sound emanates from the powder room's cascading troughs, which are activated when the door opens. Earth-toned mosaic Bisazza tile surrounds the vanity area.

Opposite: "Our master bedroom is right over the arroyo, and has beautiful views of the city lights, the golf course and the mountains," says Bill.



The Murphys' six-bedroom estate in the development's Saguaro Forest village measures 15,570 square feet, with additional extensive outside entertaining spaces—including a gourmet kitchen/barbecue area—and six full baths, two powder rooms, a wine room, two spas and a four-car garage with workshop and storage areas. Completing the compound is a 2,022-square-foot, two-bedroom guesthouse, where Kevin Douds' Props created etched-glass panels with applied copper for the doors.

Members since 1991 at Desert Mountain, with its six Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Courses and distinctively styled clubhouses, the Murphys are thrilled with the extraordinary views that the luxury golf community offers, including the landmark Pinnacle Peak, the Continental Mountains, the 17th and 18th holes of the Chiricahua course and pristine desert foothills.

"We both fell in love with this site because of its views and privacy," says Jan, a native of the area who met her husband in late 1998, while he was living at Gainey Ranch in central Scottsdale. "Not only are the city lights and golf course views beautiful, but the mountain and arroyo views are fantastic as well," adds Bill. "It's quiet and very beautiful up here."

Adding to the home's sense of isolated beauty is its siting—within a deep arroyo that runs on one side of the property. For

almost 20 months, the Murphys worked with the architect to integrate their three-level home into this arroyo. As a result, the home enjoys a variety of perspectives: city-lights, golf-course and long-distance views from the patio and swim area as well as sheltered wash views, where the flora and fauna of the high Sonoran desert are showcased.

"When we first looked at this site, we thought it was perfect because of the arroyo and the fact that we wanted a lower level to have a view that was private and peaceful," Bill recalls. "We simply knew we had to build the house right into the arroyo," adds Jan. "But little did we know of all the wildlife that would pass through here. The master bedroom and bathroom are built

right over the arroyo and give you those feelings of intimacy with the desert."

The views seemed to play a part at every turn. The Murphys started smaller, at about 7,800 square feet, and working with the architect and later with RS Homes, ended up at the present square footage, eventually using the entire building envelope on the two-acre lot. "We had to make sure the corners of all the living areas had some kind of view," says Bill.

For RS, the difficulties of building into the arroyo, with its steep furrowed walls, prickly cactus and granite, were significant. "It was a challenge just getting onto the site and setting up the scaffolding," says Sinagoga. Then the firm also had to build



Two views from beneath the covered terrace reveal the desert landscape beyond. At left is the fireplace seating area, spa, infinity-edge pool and garage; at right is an indoor seating area with glass pocket walls that can retract entirely, or extend to meet at a 90-degree angle. Says Bill: "Each space is awesome."



various retaining walls footed deeper than normal because of the high water that flows through the arroyo during the Sonoran's legendary monsoon rains.

For the retaining walls, columns and chimneys, the Murphys called for Sedona brown stone—about 12,000 square feet in all. The stones are used inside as well, most notably in the great room and on the kitchen island. The couple also requested 24-inch cream travertine flooring throughout the main and guest houses for continuity.

The great room opens to an outdoor entertainment area through retractable pocket doors that end at a 90-degree angle—

a challenging installation, but one that provides openness and light. On the other side of the room, Lyle London of Tempe's Art in Metal USA created another light-suffusing portal: a front entry uniting desert colors with ultra-contemporary design. The 10-by-16-foot door—essentially another window wall—incorporates bronze-tone textured glass and patina copper appliques.

Jan contacted Atlanta-based Dana Brown Design to create the outdoor barbecue area, wine cellar, butler pantry and kitchen, and coordinated most of the interior design with Angelica Henry of Janet Brooks Design in Scottsdale. "We incorporated sweeping curves throughout the home for a soft contempo-



rary design vocabulary and to complement the curves used in the architecture," notes Henry. This is evident in the spectacular powder room, with its arching mosaic-tiled vanity area and triple stainless troughs. The water is doubly functional, Henry explains, as it delivers "white noise" to the adjacent dining area. "We used varying heights of the troughs as our faucet to create a soothing cascade of sound," she explains. "We also put the faucet on a motion sensor, which activates upon entering the room and stays on for a period of time." Henry also directed that the walls be faux-finished to blend with the vanity mosaic and create warmth and sparkle.

The curves continue in the media room's wall unit designed by Allan Rosenthal of locally based European Design. For the piece, he combined heavy bubinga with lighter anigre. To coordinate with the adjacent cove fireplace, he extended the woods and added random scratched metal over the fireplace with accents of black granite, which also appear on the unit. However beautiful, the Murphys often just shut its doors, turn down the volume and just listen to the music.

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