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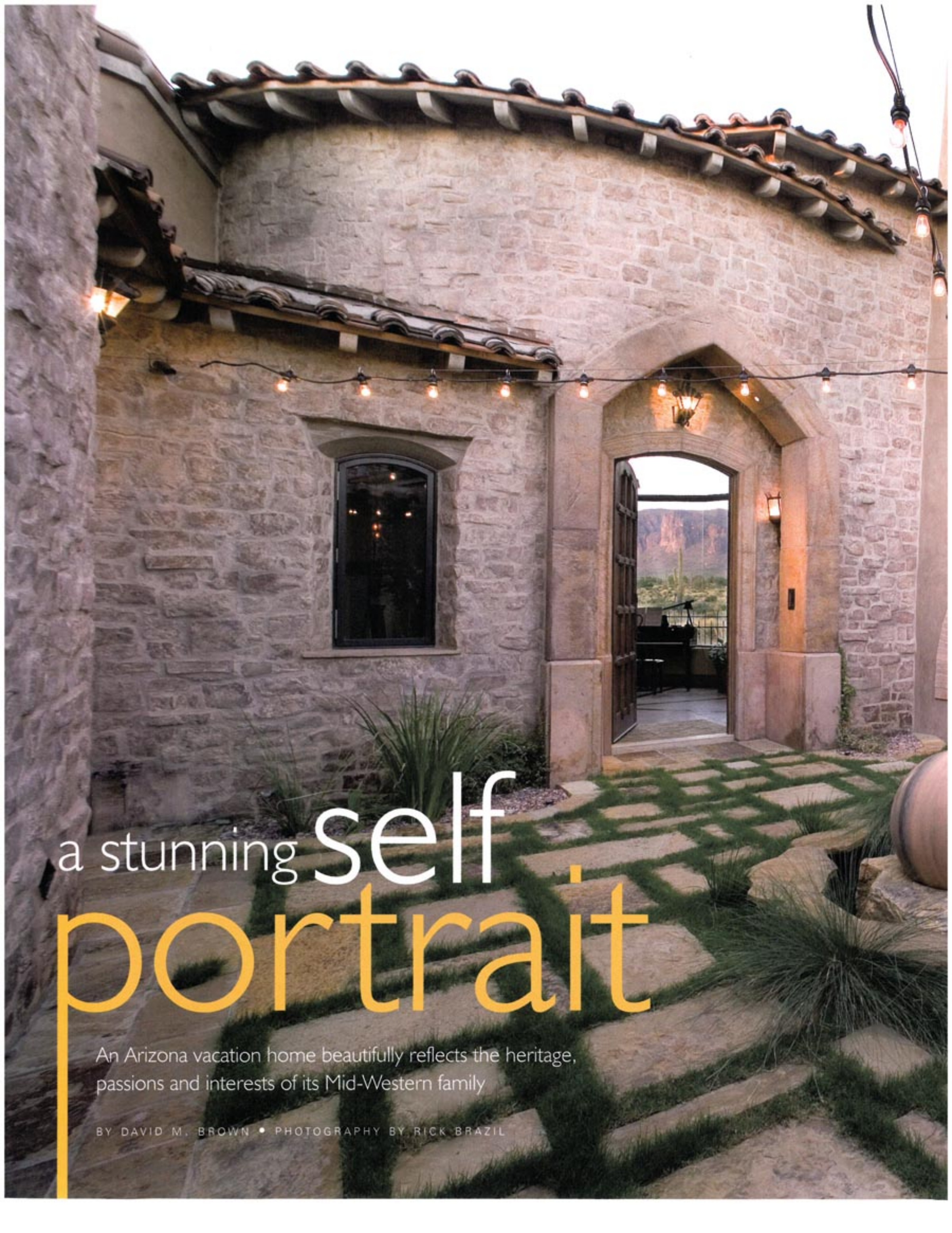
FALL 2006

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a stunning self portrait

An Arizona vacation home beautifully reflects the heritage,
passions and interests of its Mid-Western family

BY DAVID M. BROWN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK BRAZIL



Outside, this warm and welcoming, old-world-style home celebrates the land on which it sits. Inside, its inviting ambience reflects those things the owners hold dear: old-fashioned family values, genuine hospitality and heritage.

"The best thing about this home is the quality of the homeowners," says Ken Bielenberg, owner of Montara Custom Homes, who built the home and refers to the owners, Phil and Vicki Corcoran, as good friends. "They are the most wonderful two people you would ever want to meet. They have an outstanding home—and they definitely deserve it."

The Corcorans long ago fell in love with the colors, smells, tastes and sights of the Arizona desert. Their passion led them to build a spectacular vacation home at Superstition Mountain Golf and Country Club, the Lyle Anderson Company-developed gated community about 45 minutes from Phoenix. The home abuts state trust land and looks up into the legendary Superstition Mountains where, so tells the legend, Jacob Walz disappeared searching for gold in the 1870s.

"The location and the views are incredible, and once people have a chance to experience it, they come away speechless," says Bielenberg.

"The only challenge was incorporating all the views and site opportunities, just because there are so many," says Christy Wareing, AIA, principal of

Christy & Company Architecture. "This particular site allows the house to experience its location differently throughout the day and as the weather changes. The house was designed with an extremely strong connection to the outside, whether experiencing it with a grand view or just from the formal experience of a courtyard."

The ratio of indoor to outdoor space in a typical home is 80:20. This one takes advantage of the weather and its remarkable views with a 40:60 ratio.

Multiple rooflines and rotundas provide the look of a Tuscan village from afar. Closer in, the sense is that of

a quaint hacienda, with large-view windows and patios and courtyards—all desert focused. The earth tones of the exterior coordinate with those of the mountains and the desert. Walls are stone and stucco; a Roman clay tile covers the roof.

"The exterior walls provide the feeling the home has been around for many years, which is what you are trying to accomplish when creating this style home," Bielenberg explains. Blending home to desert was the work of Phoenix landscape designer Russ Greey of Phoenix' Greey Pickett.

The home's total 11,000 square feet under roof includes a five-car garage with a grass and flagstone-inset

"THEY WANTED ENTERTAINMENT, COMFORT AND PERSONAL TOUCHES RATHER THAN A DROP-DEAD DESIGN STATEMENT"

driveway and a viewing deck, accessed by a spiral staircase, that looks north 270 degrees over lush Sonoran Desert and up into the mountains. To the west, the home delivers a city light scene, and to the south, past an infinity-edge swimming pool and spa, is a view of the Jack Nicklaus-designed Prospector golf course.

The interiors were coordinated by Scottsdale's Janet Brooks, ASID, whose work on this home won a first place prize in the local ASID contest for a residential space over 6,000 square feet. Overall, Brooks provided a warm, earthy palette of beiges, terra cottas, soft greens and gentle golds, working with materials such as stone, hand-troweled plaster and gorgeous woods, including hand-planed beams.

Most importantly, Brooks says she listened to the Corcorans rather than push her design protocols. "They wanted entertainment, comfort and personal



The foyer's exposed rotunda ceiling mirrors the wood-inlay wagon-wheel floor. Behind the piano, windows capture the mountain and desert views.

The pool sits on the south end of the home; state trust land and the legendary Superstition Mountains are to the north.



touches rather than a drop-dead design statement," she explains.

A local artist painted custom Celtic knots reflecting the family's Irish heritage in several of the home's rooms, including the kitchen and office. Also in the office hangs a commissioned painting that celebrates the family's love of Harley Davidsons. The pool changing room features a Jimmy Buffet theme because the Corcorans are members of Parrot Heads in Paradise, a non-profit group that does community and environmental service work in the spirit of the singer's tropical lifestyle. On the changing room's walls and ceiling, a trompe l'oeil mural puts guests in a hut on the beach, with Buffet peeking in the door.

There are many additional, elegant surprises in this home: a rich office featuring a coffered ceiling and Brazilian cherry wood flooring framed by tumbled





Exposed beams in both the dining room and family room add architectural interest and help make both areas warm and inviting.



The master bathroom features a refreshing green and white marble floor, an old-fashioned skirted tub, a glass shower and groin-vaulted ceilings

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travertine tile, an intimate master bedroom with a 42-inch plasma television that rises from the footboard of the bed, a bathroom with a green and white marble floor underneath an old-fashioned skirted tub, and a patio complete with misted breakfast nook, fireplace (one of eight throughout the home), fire pit, pizza oven and special “Keg-erator” for beer kegs.

“I love all the rooms for so many different reasons,” Wareing notes.

The love affair starts from the very beginning at the home’s entry. Here, a pastoral colonnade walkway leads grandly up stone steps to a grassy area, past a granite ball water feature and up to the hand-carved and aged front door with historical features such as a hidden peep door. Inside, the rotunda foyer offers exposed roof tile mirroring the wood-inlaid wagon wheel floor. This area opens to

the desert with floor-to-ceiling panorama windows that frame the mountains as if they were priceless paintings. Subtly stamping the home, the family crest is projected on an entryway wall; elsewhere, the crest appears carved into select wall grates in the home's public areas as well as above the family room fireplace.

Two distinct spaces exemplify the owners' love of entertaining and family. The grand kitchen, with a 12-foot granite-topped central island and alder cabinetry, is connected to the outdoor patio and easily accommodates large gatherings and group cooking.

"It really is the hub of the home where you feel the most connected to everything going on inside and out—all while enjoying quite a few different views," Wareing says. "At the same time, it is an amazingly successful kitchen, because it is beautiful, balanced and functional, and opens up to the spaces around it."

The second hotspot for entertaining is the multi-functional wine cellar/wine bar/media room, which is perhaps, the home's most spectacular space. Led to by a grand entry, the grotto-style theater/media room offers

tiered seating, a rear-screen projection TV with a system allowing for DVDs to be programmed and pre-recorded, a full bar and kitchen for snack preparation, and a wine room with a 1,500-bottle capacity.

"This was one of the most enjoyable experiences I have had in building a home," Bielenberg says. "The homeowners were the best clients to work with. We worked closely together on a daily basis—and had fun doing it." ■

SOURCES: Christy & Company Architecture, (480) 483-0713, christyandco.com; Janet Brooks Design, (480) 776-2700; Montara Custom Homes, (480) 671-5888; Superstition Mountain (877) 983-3300, superstitionmountain.com

Clockwise from top: The media room has tiered seating, a rear-screen projection TV and a full bar and kitchen. The grotto-style wine room, finished in mortar-washed stone, can store up to 1,500 bottles. The kitchen, says architect Christy Wareing, "is beautiful, balanced and functional—all while opening up to the spaces around it."

