

THE VOICE OF THE HEARTH, BARBECUE AND PATIO INDUSTRIES

MARCH 2011

HEARTH & Home

A PUBLICATION OF VILLAGE WEST PUBLISHING

PRICE \$6

**Expo
Issue**



FIRESIDE CHATS

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Organic Pueblo

The juxtaposition of these two fireplaces – one of plaster, the other of stone – caught our eye, as did the seamless incorporation of the outside with the interior. “The house – which is 6,600 sq. ft. – was completed around 2008,” says architect Lee Hutchison, “in a style that we call organic pueblo.”

Both fireplaces are fueled by gas, which is required by code in Scottsdale, Arizona. “When we tell most of our clients that we’re going to put gas fireplaces in their house, they say ‘Yuck!’ But once they have seen them, they think about not having to stoke up the fire every half hour, then haul the ashes out. They’re pretty happy to have them.

“Plus, we deal with a couple of local guys and a couple of national people that produce products where you can hardly tell the difference (between gas and wood). Arizona Fireplaces is one of the primary people we go through, and we do a lot of independent work with Steve Eiklor (Eiklor Flames). We specify his burners a lot. I love them; he makes great products.”

There are eight fireplaces in this 6,600 sq. ft. house, which Hutchison says is not unusual. “I would say that a

fireplace for every thousand sq. ft. is about right,” he says, laughing. “And we’re in the desert!”

There’s one in the Great Room, one in the hearth, or morning room, another in the master bedroom, the office, the guest bedroom and the guest casita, plus there are two outside.

It appears that the decline in the incidence of fireplaces in new construction has much more to do with tract homes than custom construction, if we use Hutchison’s experience as a gauge.

Over the past few years, the greater Phoenix area was one of the two or three hardest hit markets in the country. However, “in the last six months we’ve seen some pretty good signs of recovery in the custom home market,” says Hutchison, “but Las Vegas, which is more of a contemporary fireplace market, will take much longer to come back.”

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