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# Desert Digs

*A Midwest couple's  
Arizona home is  
Southwestern to a 'T'*

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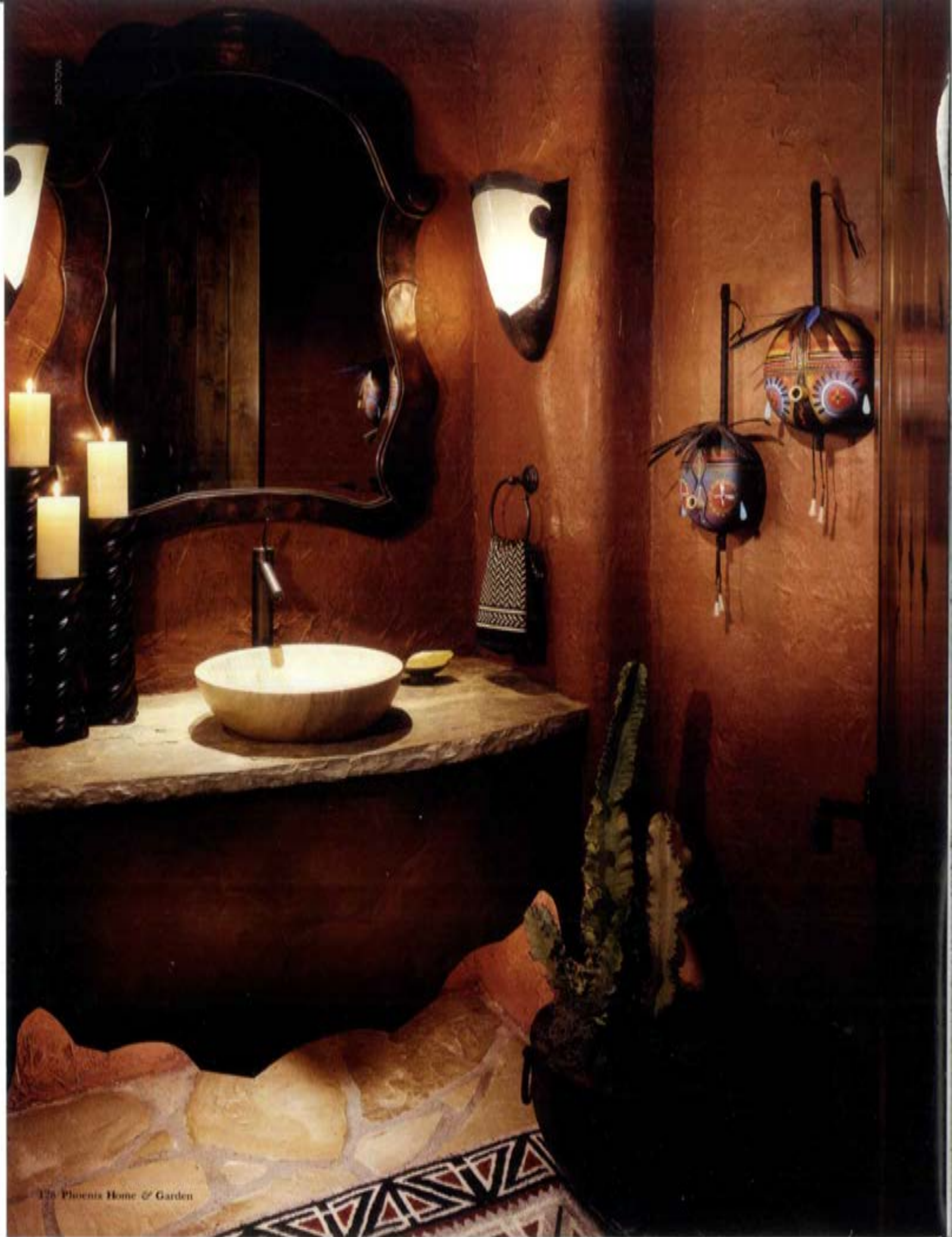


This photo: The great room's aura is pure Southwest, with sculptural-looking walls, *nichos*, exposed stone, protruding *vigas*, and the richly carved doors of an entertainment center.

Right: More Southwestern flair is found in the front entry, in such elements as a wrought-iron chandelier, *latilla* ceiling and *clavos*-studded door.

Bottom, right: The rustic wood door and an overhang punctuated with beams lend earthy charm to the entry patio.







**Opposite:** Walls in the powder room are finished with a mixture of plaster and straw. The custom-designed vanity has a backlit metal "skirt" trimmed with nailheads. The sink is a stone bowl. • **Above:** Part of the great room, and recessed into its own niche, a custom built-in wet bar is topped with polished granite. Flooring is flagstone.

*Taking to the Arizona desert* as if it always had been home, a Wisconsin couple put down new roots in north Scottsdale. The operative word here is "new."

"I wanted nothing from the Midwest in our Arizona house," the wife, a retired kindergarten teacher, admits. Having visited often and gained a love and respect for the region, she says, "We were trying to build a house that is representative of the history of the Southwest."

The custom residence they built reflects that vision. Smoothly stuccoed in a deep sand color, sculpturally rounded, and seeming to have sprung from the earth itself, the spacious home is a modern-day interpretation of centuries-old Native American dwellings. When still in the "dream" stage, says the homeowner, "We called it our 'mud house.'"

To realize their dream, the couple engaged the services of the following: Urban Design Associates for architecture; RS



A ceiling with vigas in a radial pattern and a raised kiva fireplace create an ambience of warmth in the master bedroom. Nichos and pot shelves showcase a collection of Native American pots, kachinas and other art.

Homes for construction; Bess Jones Interiors for interior design; and Palo Verde Nursery & Landscape for a natural desert look in landscaping.

Curvaceous and free-flowing, the resulting home and guest casita are in a style architect Lee Hutchison calls "organic Pueblo." Interiors enhanced by the drama of sculpted walls are rich in details that evoke Native American and Spanish-inspired imagery: nichos for artwork, vigo-encrusted ceilings, kiva fireplaces and custom-carved home furnishings—most of interior designer Bess Jones'

conception. A warm desert-inspired palette of bronze, terra-cotta and pewter hues, plus natural light filtered through large expanses of glass, paint rooms with an inviting glow.

The volume of space in the main house, and the high ceilings in particular, would have dwarfed furniture from the Wisconsin house, notes the homeowner: "Out here, we had to start thinking big." Hutchison, named a *Phoenix Home & Garden* Master of the Southwest in 2000, says the matter of space is an important consideration in design, and one that often surprises clients who



**Above:** Flanking a custom upholstered headboard are clever nightstands created from drywall and wood. The beamed ceiling has a scalloped effect.

**Right:** Risers of copper add a decorative touch to a stairway defined by niches and a hammered-iron railing.

relocate from the Midwest or East, where older homes have low ceilings and often smaller rooms.

"When building out here, they're looking for the feeling of an open plan, with lots of glass and lots of views, and more light and more sun," says Hutchison. "They're looking for large rooms with higher ceilings that still feel homey and comfortable, and where the scale is not overpowering."

The challenge with designing houses with large windows and higher ceilings, he says, is "to keep the house human in scale."







One way of doing that is to "put warmth and interest into the ceilings," incorporating such materials as stone, tile, molded plaster and earthy *vigas*, Hutchison offers. In the great room of this house, for example, *vigas* form a radial pattern.

The home's generously proportioned rooms became the canvas for interpreting her clients' wishes, says designer Bess Jones, ASID, who was named a *Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest* in 1997. "They wanted something that was true to Arizona, and something with a natural feel."

Marshaling the creativity of talented artisans and often utilizing indigenous materials, Jones created a highly livable Southwestern/Western look. In the dining room, for instance, a custom-carved built-in buffet, a Jones design, is topped with fossil stone. Flooring in the residence is of flagstone, limestone and reclaimed oak. Risers on stairways leading to downstairs guest suites and an upstairs office are made of copper.

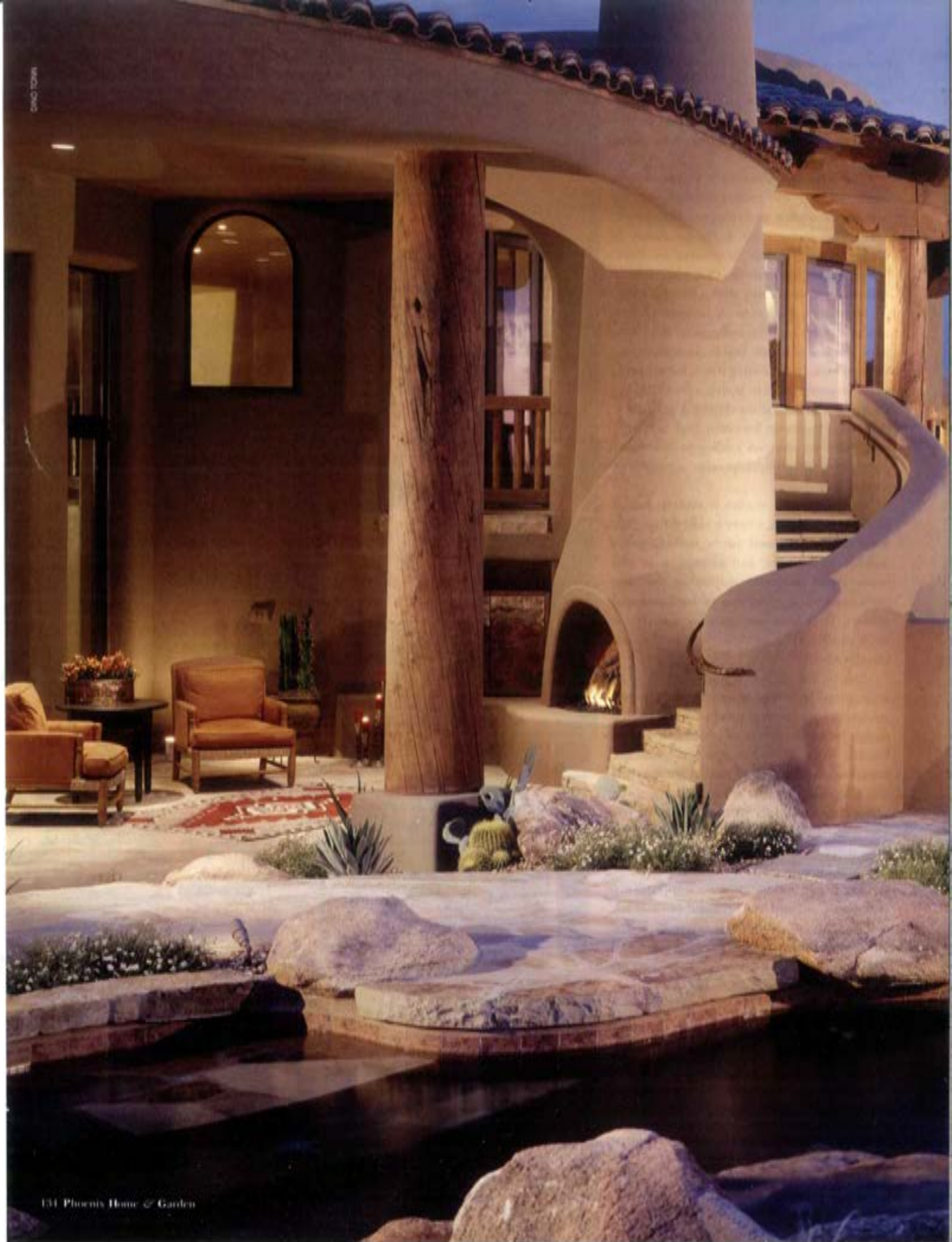
A salute to the region is evident in the casual family room, where a raised fireplace is set into an exposed adobe wall. Copious built-in *nichos* here and elsewhere in the home stand ready for displaying the couple's expanding collection of kachinas and pottery. They have been acquiring such artwork during visits to Arizona over the last two decades.

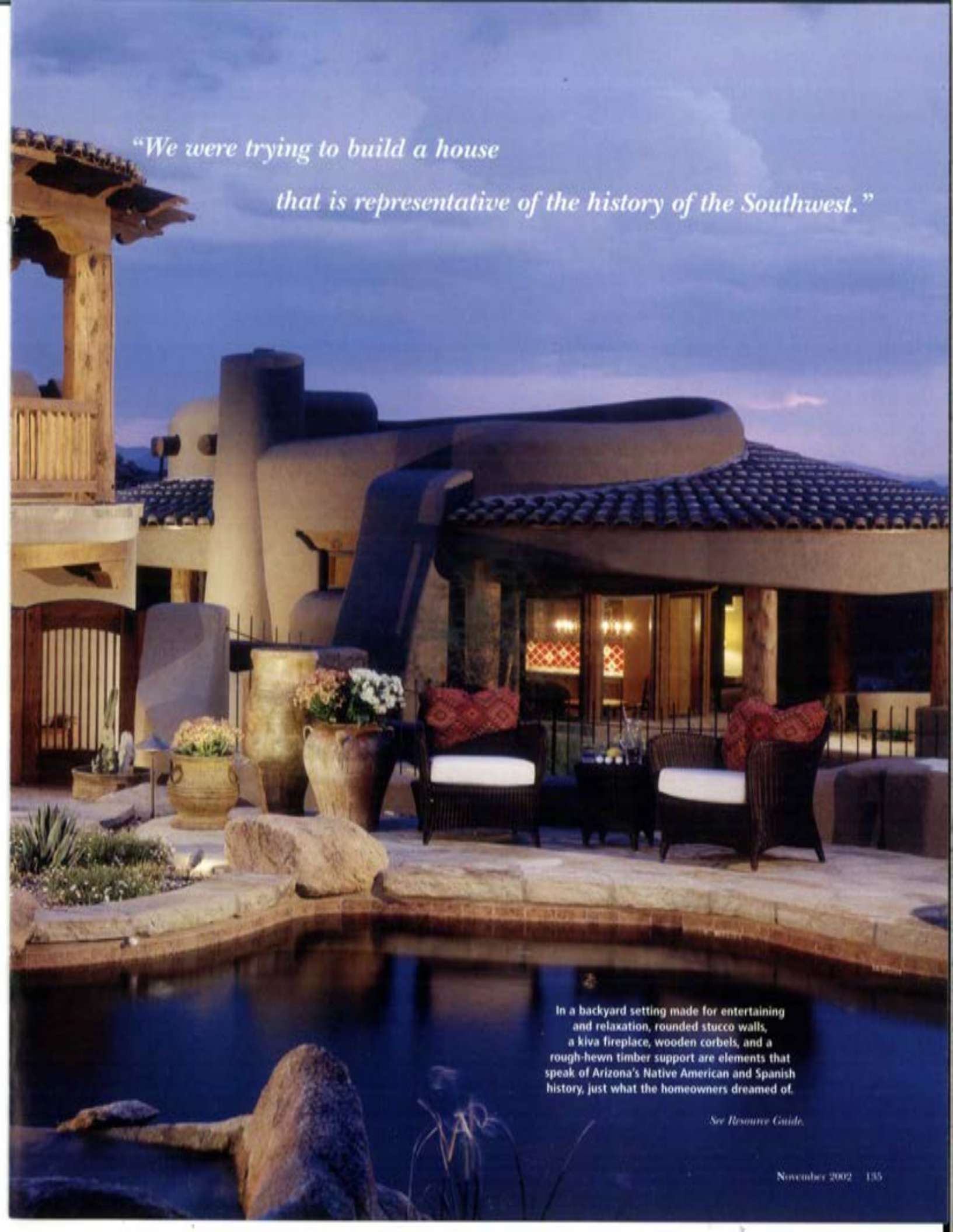
Nearby, the kitchen is a seamless blend of artistry and high-tech convenience. Wooden refrigerator and freezer panels are carved in a design Jones adapted from a Native American blanket. Above the stovetop, a backsplash she conceived depicts Indian pots. A small raised kiva fireplace promises a welcome for those who gather around it. "We have a lot of friends who will be coming out to visit, and family, too," states the homeowner. "We like to entertain, and I love to cook."

The house and its attractive trappings are everything she and her husband envisioned, she says. "Native American arts and crafts, old wooden pieces, heavy carving, good soft leathers, earth-tone colors—these elements really say 'Southwest' to us." ❧

**Opposite:** Warm and welcoming, the kitchen features hand-carved panels on refrigerator and freezer doors, and a ceiling emblazoned with crisscrossed *vigas*. Flooring is of reclaimed oak. **This page, top:** Just off the kitchen, the rustic-looking family room boasts an exposed adobe fireplace wall. Seating is upholstered in pigskin; carved doors conceal an entertainment center. • **Right:** The Indian pot backsplash is of hammered metal with a pewter finish. A raised fireplace with a sun-motif screen lends cheer on brisk days.







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In a backyard setting made for entertaining and relaxation, rounded stucco walls, a kiva fireplace, wooden corbels, and a rough-hewn timber support are elements that speak of Arizona's Native American and Spanish history, just what the homeowners dreamed of.

*See Resource Guide.*