

Energy-efficient house combines beauty and function

By KATHY VANDERVOET
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Tuckers' built custom home in Meadow Hills to suit their own fancy

A new Nogales home combines beauty and function while using energy-saving devices to ensure the comfort of the family living there.

The two-story home of Blain and Wanda Tucker in Meadow Hills was designed and decorated by the pair, who said they used "lots of research" before they decided on the final details.

The Tuckers moved in February,

following four months of construction by general contractor Scott Pottinger. The four-bedroom, three-bath house sits on a half-acre lot that was chosen after the Tuckers considered homes and property all over the area. "First, we looked at about 30 existing homes to buy," Blain said, "but we never found anything we liked."

The pair then looked at vacant land

in Vista Del Cielo, Rio Rico and Meadow Hills. But many areas were too steep or hilly. Blain said if he wanted to play football with his son, Drew, and the youngster missed the ball, "we'd have to buy a new football," because it might roll a mile downhill.

They bought their flat corner lot in August 1988. Next, they had to decide what kind of home they

wanted. Blain, an agent for the Ranger Transportation Inc. trucking firm, said they hunted model homes in Tucson subdivisions.

"I spent an entire day, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., videotaping model homes," Blain said. He zeroed in on all the attractive features they liked. They viewed the tape many times and it

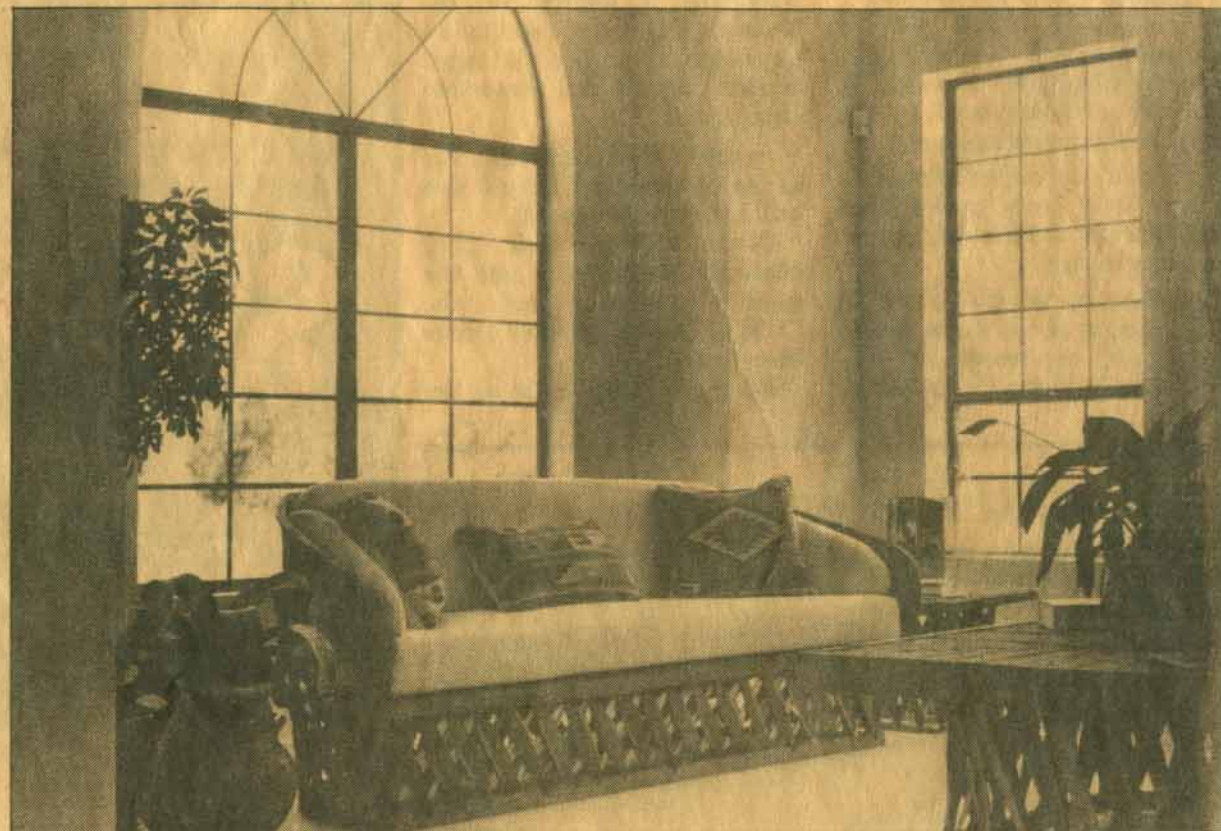
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— Wanda Tucker

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WELCOME HOME — Appealing entry to the new Nogales home of the Blain Tucker family is formed by the complementary



geometric shapes of roof, window, pillar and wall. At right, the sunny, two-story living room is brightened by windows on the

north and east. The Tuckers are proud of the interesting wall pop-outs they designed.

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helped answer questions during construction, too.

The plan for their custom home was chosen from "House Beautiful's Houses and Plans" magazine after seeing a similar model already built. They took the floor plans they ordered to a Tucson architectural design firm and told them to flip the floor plan, place the garage on the opposite side, and use a stucco exterior and tile roof.

"They did an incredible job" on the final plans, Blain said. In addition, the designers suggested extra storage closets for which there was empty

**Custom design cost
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of up to \$15,000 in
architects' fees**

space but had not been specified in the plans.

Having their home custom designed this way, rather than using the services of an architect, "saved us lots of money," Blain said. The design cost was about \$2,500, instead of the \$10,000 to \$15,000 an architect might have charged.

Wanda said, "We copied from other people and we took the best of what we saw. But everything you see here is us." Wanda is the Nogales coordinator for the University of Arizona's Elderhostel program.

The large entry foyer is in the center of the home. The living room is to the left with the kitchen, shielded by a wooden louvered door, directly ahead. To the right is the guest bedroom and bath, a door leading to the laundry room and garage, and the open stairway to the second floor.

Ceilings in the foyer, living room and dining room soar to 18 feet since second-floor rooms are only on the west side.

The open kitchen has become a gathering spot for guests. An attractive, bent-arrow shaped island in the center holds the cooktop but is spacious enough for people to sit on one of the three stools.

Flooring in the foyer, kitchen and dining room is shiny Saltillo tile, a favorite of many who choose Southwestern design, because of its dark warmth and natural look.

Also on the lower level is a cozy family room, highlighted by one of two fireplaces in the home. The Tuckers created an attractive design to frame it using pieces of tile in the same color as the floor tiles. A breakfast nook with windows on three sides sits between the kitchen and family room and divides the space unobtrusively.

There are three bedrooms on the second floor, and the hall with its waist-high wall at the top of the staircase overlooks the foyer and living room. Drew, 6, uses one of the small bedrooms with the neighboring one his domain as well — it's his playroom.

Between the rooms and the master suite is a convenient laundry chute built into the wall. Toss in the dirty clothes, and they land atop the washing machine on the ground floor directly below.

The 15-by-15-foot master suite is entered through double doors. Highlighting the room is the coffered ceiling "retreat," which extends an additional 9 feet out from the room. It's just big enough for some easy chairs and a television set.

The master bath is bigger than some bedrooms, and includes a walk-in closet, a garden tub set under a window, a small room with a shower and toilet, and a sprawling counter area that includes double sinks under a wall of mirrors.

Wise use of energy in heating and cooling was important to the Tuckers, and every bedroom as well as the family room has a ceiling fan to circulate air. Two air conditioning units, one for downstairs and one for upstairs, allow them to run just one unit if they choose. Double-pane windows are used throughout.

A 12-foot-deep covered patio on the south side of the home works well to keep the sun from heating the kitchen and dining room.

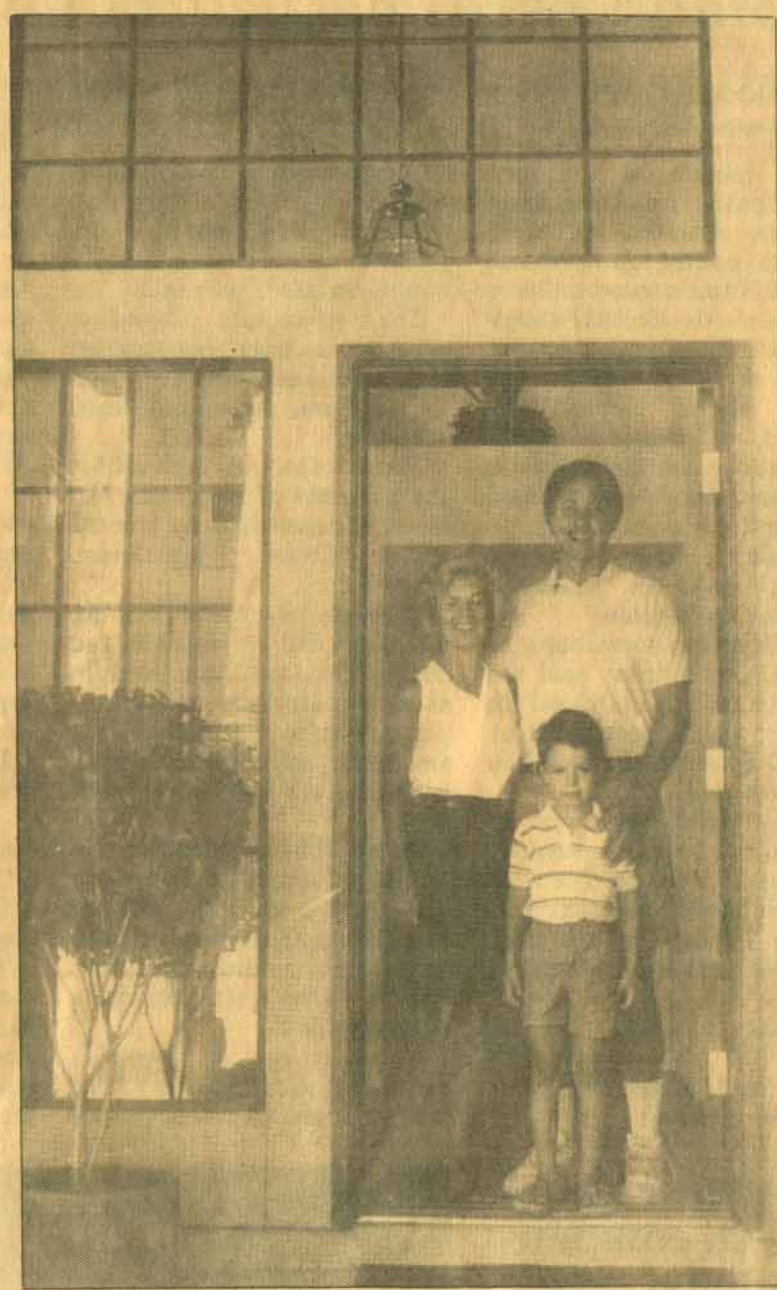
Because of good insulation, "our electric bill here is the same as in our two-bedroom townhome," their former house in Rio Rico, Wanda said, and the new 2,424-square-foot home is twice as big.

The couple is just now ready to turn their attention outside to landscaping. A driveway was put down last week. But true to their own successful method, they're planning in advance to be sure the yard looks just the way they want it to.

It will be a while before the exterior work is completed. But they're in no rush. "We plan to be here a long time.



LOVELY VIEW — The arched window, surrounded by a peaked wall, is one of the focal points in the Tucker's living room. Traditional equipale furniture is used for comfort and style.



PROUD HOMEOWNERS — Wanda and Blain Tucker, with their son, Drew, stand at the front door of their new Meadow Hills home.



CHEERFUL KITCHEN — An attractive beveled edge and the cabinets are honey-brown oak. The counter top is finished with an oak-trimmed

Our next move will be to a condominium when our son is grown up," Blain said.

Building a custom home can be a cause for many arguments, but it was a wonderful experience for the couple, they say. "We were thrilled with the way it turned out," Blain said. They give much of the credit to

Pottinger, who is a personal friend. Pottinger, who has built 20 homes in Santa Cruz County in the past decade, lives in Tucson but comes from a Nogales family.

"The relationship and trust you have in your builder is extremely important," Wanda said. Best of all, she added, "Scott's still our friend."

Photographs By
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