

Perhaps there is no more intimate exercise of professional calling for architects than the opportunity to design a residence for their children. In such circumstance, the architect possesses an innate awareness of the entire scope of life history and needs of the client, from broad interests to fine detail in life experience, comprehends with special fullness their present circumstances, and can delve with greater understanding their wishes and aspirations for the future. Frank Lloyd Wright did more than once have occasion to create homes for his family, and one of the most eloquent expressions of these buildings is the house for son David Wright and his wife Gladys in Phoenix, Arizona.

The gradually sloping, counter-clockwise spiral design of this unique dwelling addresses the placing of a private life in what has been called "the Valley of the Sun". The poetic nature of the composition generates the interior space at a reserved, higher level, providing a nestle of privacy while capturing the pleasant passage of desert breezes.

The house is set apart from neighboring structures within a generous lot. Flanked by a continuous raised planter, a pleasant ramp entices visitors to rise upward into a living environment that overlooks the surrounding citrus groves and distant views. Built of curved concrete block from the company that employed David, the thermal mass and solar orientation of the composition helps temper the harsh Phoenix climate. The shaded areas at ground level, below the elevated living quarters, provide an ideal outdoor living environment. The third floor circular terrace above the kitchen opens to a dramatic vista across adjacent properties.

The light finish of concrete block walls and floors is artfully balanced by the use of honey colored Philippine mahogany ceilings, window frames, cabinets, and furniture, all designed by Mr. Wright. A beautiful, brightly colored, circular patterned rug, also designed by Mr. Wright, placed in the center of the living area completes a focus for interior repose.

This home has great appeal to those of us who have lived in this environment. Like all Frank Lloyd Wright homes, this residence was designed for a particular client and a particular site. Here, though, through the genius of the architect and the love of a father, we may read most clearly the character of the client. While the design may not appeal to everybody, it did to David and Gladys Wright, who cherished living there for almost 50 years.

Arthur Dyson
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