



*Let the drumroll begin as we introduce our 2012 Masters of the Southwest! Pictured from left are Patricia Dobson, Dan Levinson, Morgan Holt, Paula Den Boer, Larry Kornegay and Dale Gardon. We share their stories, show examples of their amazing achievements, and reacquaint you with 1994 Master Eddie Jones on the pages ahead.*





ARCHITECT  
**DALE GARDON**  
BRINGS THE WEST BACK  
TO ARIZONA HOMES







# BORN TO DESIGN

BY ROBERTA LANDMAN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAAN BLOK

**WHEN HE WAS A CHILD** in snow-pummeled Buffalo, N.Y., Dale Gardon spent a lot of time in the basement of his parents' home, where his dad, a mechanical engineer, kept a drafting table and other tools of his trade. The boy, amazed by houses he had seen during winter vacations in Florida, would sit at the table and put the stirrings of his imagination on paper.

"I would draw my dream house"—at times massive settings with indoor pools—recalls the award-winning Arizona architect. Gardon later would learn that houses that had impressed him in Palm Beach were created in the early 20th century by famed architect Addison Mizner. Classic elements of those historic Spanish Colonial Revival and formal Mediterranean gems—including decorative ironwork—flavor many of Gardon's homes to this day.

Whichever style or size of home a client chooses, a house has to have "a comfortable, warm environment," the Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest believes. He also kept this concept at the forefront when planning the overall design of north Scottsdale's DC Ranch and Silverleaf residential communities.

Dotted with paths and trails, these neighborhoods of custom and semi-custom homes were not only designed to be compatible with their Sonoran Desert surroundings, but to promote human interaction, he indicates. "We are social-engineering in a way," says Gardon. At Silverleaf, for example, several homes front on parklike areas, encouraging people to socialize. The garages of these residences were purposely put in the backs of the homes, "like in old Phoenix," he adds.

The look of old-time Phoenix and nearby towns such as Cave Creek and New River appealed to the transplanted Easterner, and, in the 1990s, he translated that quality into homes he designed in DC Ranch—including the residence he shares with his wife. What had become the norm for building in the Phoenix/Scottsdale area was architecture with a "sameness" about it—houses colored in muted tones of beige, notes Gardon. "The Western heritage got lost."

At DC Ranch, he promoted the concept of front porches, used native rock found

on the grounds for walls, and introduced a "palette of the desert," featuring warm hues of golds and sage green.

Architect Clint Miller, himself a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest, speaks of his association with Gardon. "I was fortunate enough to work with Dale on DC Ranch, where he directed the efforts of many architects to complete this very large project. He refined the vision for DC Ranch and Silverleaf, and inspired the entire team by implementing the highest-quality detailing based on an accurate historical past." Of Gardon's

work throughout the Phoenix area, he adds: "The projects embrace the individual spirit of each location and, importantly, combine live, work and play."

Gardon has completed projects big and small, commercial and residential, in Arizona and other states. There never was any doubt that he would become an architect, he states. He even looks at the automobile pin-stripping business he started at age 16 as preparation for his future. When hand-painting stripes and such on cars, he recalls thinking, "I am affecting people's pride and joy. I was practicing design." Today,

as an architect, he reflects, "What I do for others is an honor."

After graduating from the State University of New York in Buffalo, Gardon headed West, "looking for the sunshine." Awarded "full-ride" scholarships, he entered Arizona State University's two-year architecture program. Working for an architectural firm while he attended school, he earned a master's degree in architecture in 1986, graduating at the top of his class.

That same year he joined Vernon Swaback Associates (now Swaback Partners)

Designed by architect Dale Gardon, AIA, and built by John Schultz, the Spanish Mission-style home on these pages steps up a mountainside in Scottsdale's Silverleaf community. Comments Schultz: "Dale includes a lot more detail in his drawings than a lot of architects do; so we had a pretty good vision of where we were headed from the beginning. The house is very detailed but very casual."



and worked with well-known architect and land-planner Swaback, also a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest. Gardon notes that in 1994 he became the firm's principal in charge of the DC Ranch residential project. Says Swaback of Gardon: "He's an exceptional performer and was a significant member of our firm."

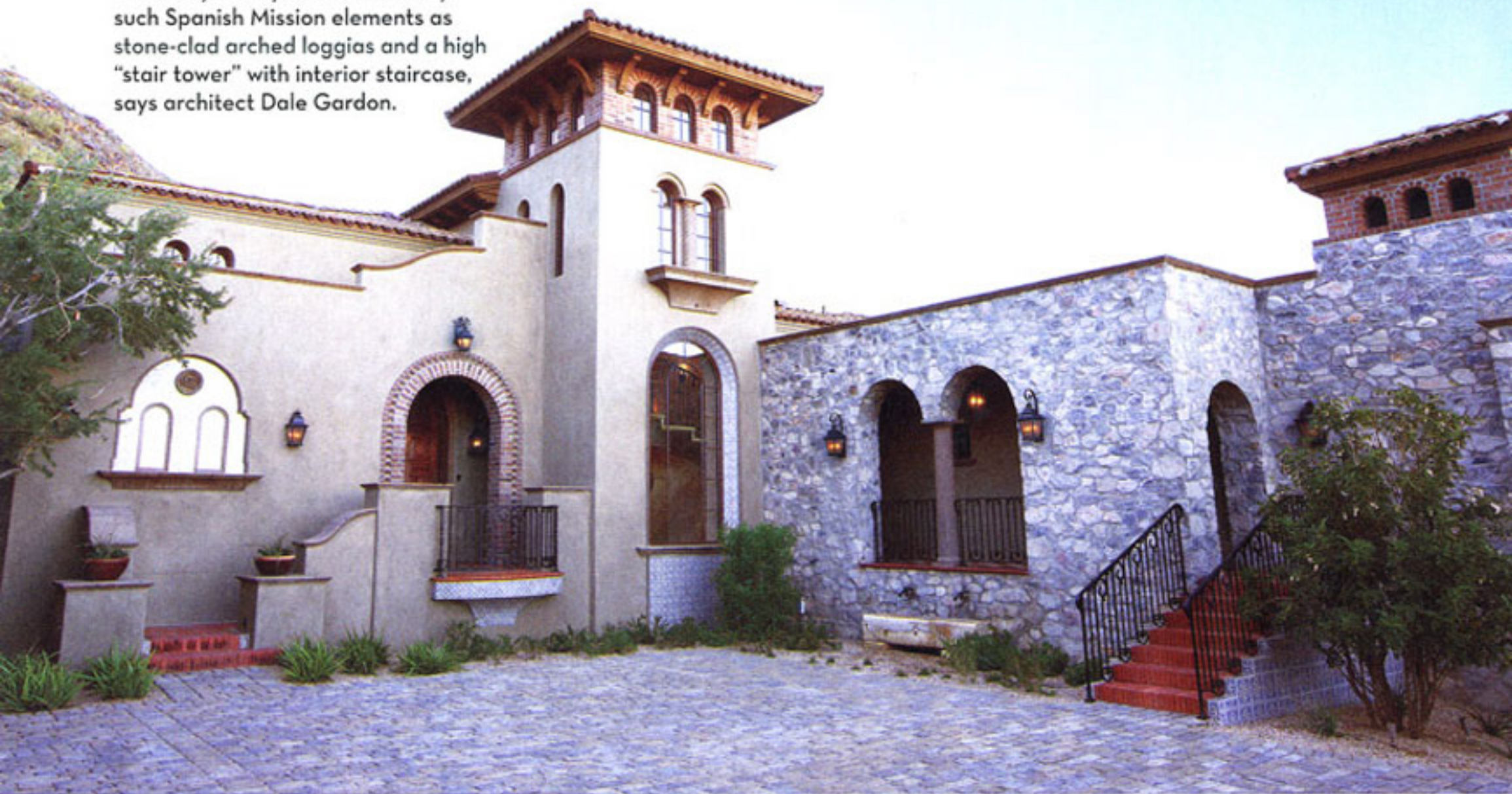
Gardon continued his involvement with DC Ranch when he formed his own north Scottsdale studio, Dale Gardon Design, in 1999, and says he began developing design guidelines for Silverleaf three years later.

Set in a business complex of his own

design, Gardon's office is his "cocoon." Here, the architect points out the pencil sharpener on his desk. It, along with the pencils it keeps sharp, "is my high-powered computer," he chuckles. As when he was a boy, he prefers doing his architectural drawings freehand. Surrounded by these renderings and detailed scale models of large luxury homes—which even include tiny figures of people and pots of flowers—he takes time to remember the house he grew up in: a modest two-bedroom, one-bath home, where his parents are still living happily after 50 years. ■



The entry courtyard is defined by such Spanish Mission elements as stone-clad arched loggias and a high "stair tower" with interior staircase, says architect Dale Gardon.



A dining patio looks out to the pool area and a mountain vista. Flooring is composed of Spanish Cotto tiles set in a basket-weave pattern interspersed with Mexican tiles.








Off the kitchen, this patio and others at the home provide "indoor/outdoor connectivity," Gardon notes.





Lending an exotic air of welcome in the foyer are the front door—set within a Moorish arch—a series of arched portals, and a lofty domed ceiling with a raked finish. Looking out from the dome, a home-office window is ensconced in an iron balcony grate. Another window—in a deep arched surround—brings in natural daylight. The portal in the foreground is framed in carved limestone. The painting is by Byron Burford.





A sense of the romantic pervades the stair tower, with its curvy ornamental-iron railing and soaring space. Dale Gardon describes the tower's architecture as "a custom barrel vault that terminates as a domelike form with intersecting arched clerestories." Those small, deep-set clerestory windows, along with others of different sizes, bathe the area in light. "We always like daylight to graze the interiors," explains Gardon.





The homeowners wanted a house with the look of a castle—but “something more rustic than fancy”—and definitely comfortable. A room’s scale affects comfort, says the architect. To keep the high-ceilinged family gathering room from feeling cavernous and to provide warmth, he added trusses and timbers and clad the walls in stone. The fireplace’s wood overmantel conceals a TV.



The library/dining room, like the family gathering room, has a high ceiling. Cherry millwork, in combination with a fabric wall panel just below the ceiling, "helps visually reduce the scale of the room," the architect points out. Interior designer Nancy Hepburn, who put her stamp on these areas and spaces throughout the property, says of Dale Gardon: "He really gave me a beautiful sculpture to work with."

*See Sources.*







# Spark of Inspiration

**WHO SAYS THINGS FOR THE HOME** have to be matchy-matchy? Certainly not architect Dale Gardon, AIA. Nor his associate, architect Milos Minic, evidently.

Gardon, who had taken snapshots of elements he had seen on Italy's Isle of Capri, turned the photos over to Minic and gave him "free rein" to come up with a plan for a two-sided outdoor fireplace, despite the fact that there was not one fireplace image in the bunch. What Gardon had mostly photographed were Capri's intriguing walls, which were made of stone and bits of leftover roof tiles.

Using similar materials, Minic came up with the idea for this unique two-way fireplace. Incorporated into a thick stone wall that divides a covered patio and its uncovered counterpart, it has

two unmatched sides. The side facing the outdoor living room (left) has a welcoming, traditional form, while the side facing the pool (right) is anything but traditional. It is sculptural-looking, notes an admiring Gardon.

Above its sharply curving brick fireplace base, layers of terracotta tile step up beyond the mantel edge and enter a stone overmantel niche. "The fireplace is cantilevering out and scooping in," says Gardon. "That's tricky. You have to be careful of the flue and mechanics of the fireplace."

See more of the house for which this double-pleasure fireplace was built, beginning on Page 96.

—ROBERTA LANDMAN

*See Sources.*