



MOST PEOPLE BUILD THE HOME OF THEIR DREAMS TO HAVE MORE SPACE FOR THEIR FAMILY. MARK AND LEANNE RAGEL, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONSTRUCTED THEIR 5-ACRE ESTATE FOR THEIR HORSES—THE FOUR-LEGGED AS WELL AS THE AUTOMOTIVE VARIETY.

COMFORT, BEAUTY, AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Leanne's three horses now live in a well-equipped six-stall barn behind the Ragel's home, and Mark's Classic Bronco collection has taken up residence in an eight-car, 2,000-square-foot garage.

"I'd been boarding my horses for years, and I really wanted to move them home with me. Having them on the property is a dream come true," says Leanne, an accomplished horsewoman and student of the Parelli Natural Horsemanship method. Mark, part owner of a Tucson pool and spa construction company started by his father, became an aficionado of Ford Broncos in the early '70s when his dad bartered a reduced pool installation cost for a client's 1969 Bronco. "Since that day, I became one of a band of Bronco collectors," Mark admits, and his collection of vintage Broncos are now permanent residents of his spacious garage.

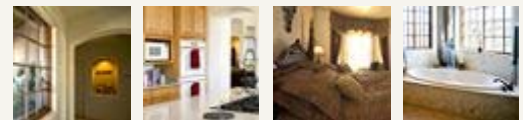


Set against the picturesque Tanque Verde Valley, the exterior of the Ragel home is infused with contemporary Southwestern spirit. To add character to your home's entrance, shop our

The horses and Broncos weren't all the Ragels took into account when they began their search for enough acreage to accommodate a comfortable home and pool, oversized garage, barn, plus a dressage-size arena and trails for riding. They count themselves fortunate to have acquired one of the last sizeable parcels of acreage in northeastern Tucson's Tanque Verde Valley, which is zoned for horses and features views of the Saguaro National Park to the east. Temperatures are usually 10 degrees cooler here, and thanks to a large population of mesquite trees, the native landscape is greener than much of arid Tucson.

"Most of all, we wanted to build a practical, beautiful home for ourselves; one our two kids and friends would enjoy. But knowing that we'd be empty nesters in a few years, we didn't want something too grand, something we couldn't downsize into easily," explains Leanne. And because

IMAGE GALLERY



HOME HIGHLIGHTS

OWNERS: Mark and Leanne Ragel

HOME SITE: Tucson, Arizona in the Tanque Verde Valley

CONSTRUCTION: Begun August 2000, moved in April 2001

LIVING SPACE: 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, and 3,180 square feet of living space, not including Mark's eight-car garage and Leanne's six-stall horse barn.

STYLE: Southwestern Contemporary

RESOURCES

HOME BUILDER: Charles Lathrem, Lathrem Homebuilders, Tucson, Arizona,

Mark is in the pool business, the couple never doubted that a fabulous outdoor living area would

520-579-0456

POOL: Patio Pools and Spas, Tucson and Sierra Vista, Arizona, 520-886-1211, www.patiopoolsaz.com

DESIGN : Kelly Hales, Design Solutions, Tucson, Arizona, 520-325-4936

be essential for living the good life at home.

ASSEMBLING THE HOME TEAM

From the outset, the Ragels had a clear vision that they wanted a kitchen, living room, and dining room at the center of the home, with all other rooms branching off this main living area. "We terminated our agreement with our first designer after six months because he tried to incorporate so much more into the house than we wanted," says Leanne.



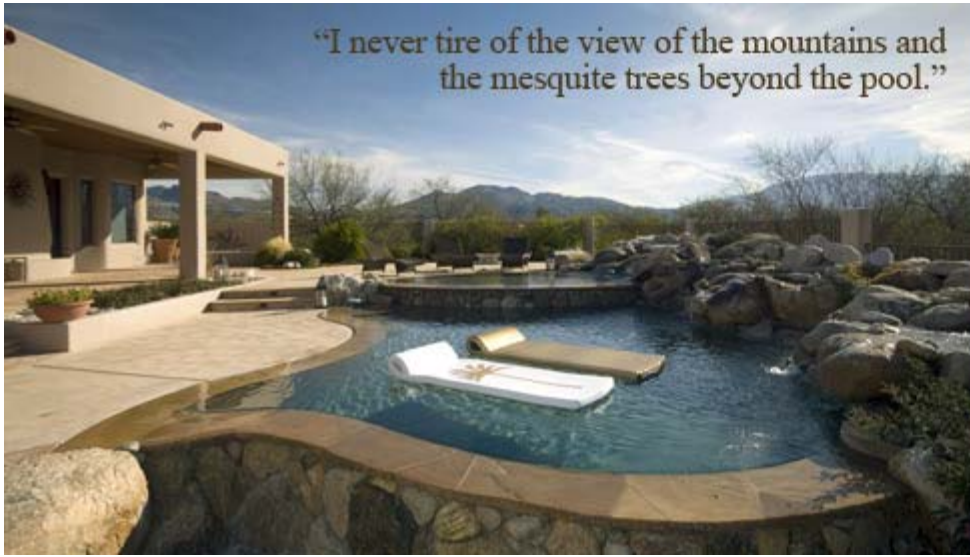
In the end, it was for the best. Armed with a basic home layout discovered in a magazine and a desire for the latest in energy-efficient home design, the Ragels began to search for a builder experienced in alternative construction techniques like building with Insulated Concrete Forms, a method that uses rigid Styrofoam to hold concrete in place during curing. The foam remains in place afterward to serve a lightweight, energy-efficient insulator.

The Ragels' research led them to Lathrem Homebuilders in Tucson, which had a great deal of experience in ICF construction. After agreeing to take on the contracting job, owner Charles Lathrem introduced the Ragels to Kelly Hales of Design Solutions; Lathrem had worked with Hales before in designing several ICF homes. "Our homebuilding crew was like a good marriage. Kelly Hales listened to what we wanted and worked with the plans we'd roughed out. He came up with the final footprint, which we loved," says Mark. "He and Lathrem Homebuilders formed a great team right from the beginning, and it made all the difference in the world."

With everyone working in harmony, the Ragels were able to keep the design of the home within their budget; cost-saving ideas were readily offered, and they never felt trapped into overspending on extras they didn't want or need. Adds Leanne, "It's really fun to build your own home if you've got the right team. I'd take our dogs over to the house every day during construction, and got to watch the house being crafted with such love. We had great tradesmen working on the house, and it was a joy to watch it all come together."

Topped with Corian® counters and surrounded by warm maple cabinets, the center island in the kitchen is a hot spot when the couple entertains. Find ways to make your serving area inviting within our [Kitchen & Entertaining](#)

“I never tire of the view of the mountains and the mesquite trees beyond the pool.”



After moving in and living in the home a few months, the Ragels began experiencing another joyful benefit: reduced energy costs. It was Lathrem's numerous energy-saving insulation and construction techniques and the 18 SEER dual-speed HVAC system—the most technologically advanced model available at the time—that worked together beautifully. The Ragels take pride in the 2002 United States EPA Energy Star® award they received from the city of Tucson for building *Southern Arizona's Most Energy-Efficient Custom Home*.

Building the home's three stone fireplaces on a common foundation also reduced material waste and simplified construction. The triangle of fireplaces – one in the master bedroom, one in the living room, and one on the outdoor patio near the private spa—are formed together in a central hub, separated by walls.



The spacious bathroom combines soothing marble and wood elements with invigorating natural light from the windows flanking the bathtub. Outfit your bathroom with Frontgate's inspired [Bed & Bath](#) essentials.

A POOL THAT DAZZLES

The home isn't all about practicality and function, however. A stunning three-tiered pool has become the centerpiece of the home, but its construction didn't take place until three years after they'd moved in. "I waited because I wanted a pool that was really special. Believe it or not, the design of the pool came to me in a dream, and I built a lot of it myself based on that original vision," Mark says, justifiably proud of his 18' x 40', three-level pool concept. Mark's brother Carl Ragel, a rock artist and owner of Natural Pools and Garden in Tucson, arranged the 40-foot-long boulder waterfall with rocks they'd stockpiled from Mark's job sites. Combining contemporary and natural styles, the sleek wet deck pool is a counterpoint to the granite rock background. The three free-form pools of varying depths and the multiple waterfalls conform beautifully to the sloping backyard topography.

FEATURED CATEGORIES

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Pool & Spa



The Ragels are loyal fans of Frontgate's unsinkable and ultra-comfortable pool floats, available in our expansive [Pool & Spa](#) collection.

Home Care & Storage



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Outdoor Furniture



Visitors can relax outdoors on teak chairs or these supremely comfortable Bain de Soleil chaise lounges. See more inviting [Outdoor Furniture](#), such as seating and dining sets, cushions, and pillows.

"The sound from the waterfalls is amazing because water is so special and rare in the desert," says Leanne. "I love hearing the refreshing sound of the water, and I never tire of the view of the mountains and the mesquite trees beyond the pool." Special landscaping and pool lighting provides a luminescent glow at sunset, while tropical plantings introduce splashes of green set against the gray granite border.

One of Leanne's summer evening pastimes is floating on her Frontgate pool float. "It's so big and comfortable. It feels like lying on a bed in the pool." Another preferred outdoor spot, a secret refuge poised around the corner from the pool, is the open patio leading from the master suite. With its cozy private spa and fireplace, Mark and Leanne frequently relax here on cool desert evenings.

In contrast to the quiet peacefulness of the spa is the home's busiest area: the 100-foot-long covered patio that spans the width of the home. The Ragels see to it that family and friends gather here frequently for relaxation and celebrations. "We can fit about 50 for dinner easily. It's a great buffet space because it fits long serving tables perfectly." The Ragels entertained family and friends during their son's 2004 wedding and their daughter's 2008 wedding. Leanne adds, "We rarely go out for dinner anymore because it's easier and more fun to have friends gather over here." The lattice-covered barbeque area with two grills, a bistro table, and barstool seating overlooks the peaceful pool close by and the mountains in the distance.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

At the outset of the home's design, Mark and Leanne divvied up the work so the home became an amalgam of everything they wanted. Explains Mark, "Both of us had areas that we wanted to make decisions about. Mine were the site work, plus the garage and the pool areas. Hers was primarily creating a great kitchen. She loves to cook, especially during the holidays." Adds Leanne, "I love having people keep me company around the big center island." A large plasma TV is visible from the open kitchen so Leanne, a fan of cooking shows and sports, never misses new recipe or the big game while she's preparing a meal. Maple cabinets and Corian® countertops lend warmth to the kitchen area, which is bright, airy, and commands a wonderful backyard view.

Both Mark and Leanne agreed on the concept that a living room should be all about *living*. Large enough for family gatherings and intimate enough for the two of them plus their cat and dog, the living room sees constant use. Furnished with a supple leather sectional sofa, recliner, and a cherry wood TV cabinet loaded with storage space, the comfortable space is warmed by a tile-surrounded fireplace. Large windows artfully provide a wide view of the tranquil pool area. "We really live in this room, and love it that way. We felt we didn't need a media room or extra family room," says Mark. "We stayed focused on practicality and energy efficiency."

Because both Mark and Leanne come from big families, building an accommodating dining room was imperative. Theirs seats 12 comfortably and is made intimate with the more than 50 family photos carefully selected by Leanne. "The photo gallery wall makes the dining room feel lively and full even when no one else is around," explains Leanne. "When family is over, there's always something to reminisce about in the photos."

Personal touches make the Ragel's house a home. Niches built into walls throughout the home contain rock sculptures they've collected together. Another case in point is the guest suite, which Leanne dubs *The Jungle Room*. It comes to life with treasures she's gathered from Hawaii and other tropical locales. Amid lively green walls, a 7-foot wooden giraffe, a monkey lamp, a banana tree, and a hand-painted map of Hawaii dwell side-by-side with heirloom furniture. "It's a really fun room," muses Leanne, "and since we have guests staying with us just about every month, it gets lots of use."

When they first moved in, Leanne ordered monogrammed coco doormats from Frontgate. "Since that time, they've held up beautifully to dogs and kids and dirt," she says. For her, these mats have come to symbolize the welcoming feel of their home at its busiest. And even after seven years, the Ragels still savor the peace and quiet they find in their desert oasis. "In the cool of the morning, sipping coffee by the pool, enjoying God's country...it's absolutely wonderful. We are so blessed to have this home and live here," marvels Leanne. From the nearby barn, her horses whinny as if in agreement.



Three free-form pools of varying depths and a 40-foot-long boulder waterfall conform beautifully to the sloping backyard topography. Browse our assortment of [Pool & Spa](#)

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