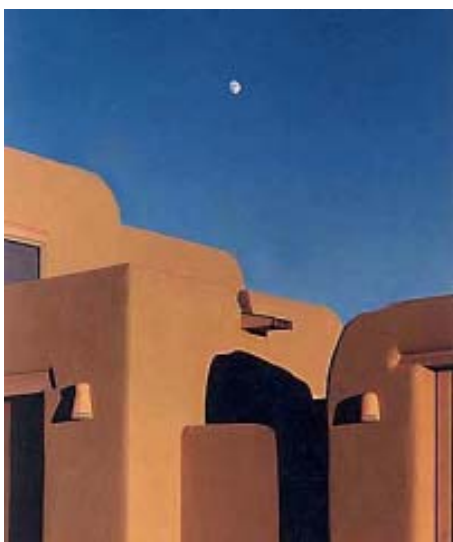


“*The Real Thing*”



BY JHERI FLEET

“I GET TO KNOW MY CUSTOMERS, because I’m not building an architectural monument. It’s a home—and it’s not my home,” David Peterson says. As one of the top builders trained by Nat Kaplan, the legendary New Mexico adobe builder, Peterson understands that houses are for the customer.

Each year, thousands more people flock to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and begin a love affair with adobe—whether it’s the traditional pueblo style, the formal territorial style the pitched roof of Northern New Mexico or the Spanish Mission style.

In New Mexico, adobe is considered an alternative building material, even though the blend of Spanish and Indian cultures is 2,000 years old. Over centuries the energy efficiency and aesthetics have kept adobe popular in this hot, arid region, where winds may hit hurricane speeds.



Lime Paint washes the walls of this Master bedroom.

David Peterson, owner of David C. Peterson Construction Company, explains to his customers the difference between building a wood-frame faux-adobe house and building his specialty “the real thing.” He also points out that a Peterson Adobe home can give the owners of a 3,200-sq.ft. house bragging rights to gas bills that average \$28 a month, including hot water.

KEEPING IT FRESH

Clients seek out Peterson because of his reputation as a “hands-on” designer/builder. He keeps his crew of five men busy. Most of them have been with him for ten years, and each one is expert in more than one

area of building.

“None of them would want to clear land every day, nor would they want to lay adobe block every day—all year long,”

Peterson notes. “I sub out the electrical and plumbing, the roofing; and we stick to what we know and do best. We like to rotate jobs for a few weeks at a time. It keeps us fresh and looking forward to the next step of the building process. “ The method also ensures that each member of the crew knows what is going on at any time in any part of the house.

“ I look at each little detail—and the crew likes doing quality work—so we can meet the expectations of our customers.”



Someone may move in and live in the home for awhile, but it will always be a Peterson home—and my crew takes great pride in being part of building our reputation.” Through technology such as energy-efficient windows that take advantage of new glazing technologies, Peterson makes the money go into building the home and, not the energy bills. The rigid exterior insulation materials and the under the floor radiant heating reduce future bills, while the El Rey “KraK-Master” stucco increases the durability of the exterior.

ART OF LISTENING

Peterson’s clientele can well-afford his homes, which start at about \$350,000. More frequently these days his homes run around \$1 million. He says his clients want a builder who understands their needs to display pricey art collections, their longing for quiet and comfortable surroundings that promise on-going appreciation.

“ Listening to what each client wants, hearing details about their lifestyles, “ Peterson says, “ is the only way to build their home.” Since he builds most homes for non-New Mexico natives, they bring with them ideas and design details they would like and David must

figure out how to incorporate them into the design. “ Some times clients do 8-hour day long marathons, skipping lunch and going over details. Others have a more relaxed approach, “he says. “I have to adjust to each to each one.” Because he spends a year or more on each home, Peterson wants the investment of time to be a pleasant experience for everyone involved.

STAYING CENTERED

“The home becomes the only thing I think about—the only thing I do, “ Peterson says. “ It used to be a very scary time for me, but now it’s exciting. I go up and break ground and pour the concrete and I’m back into the physical part of building that I love--laying adobe; building fireplaces.”

“ I also get to drive the front end loaders,” he adds with an enthusiastic grin. I rent the equipment, but I drive it myself.”

Peterson may allow himself to be consumed by home, but he like his clients to feel lie they don’t need to. Too much fanaticism from clients takes a toll on both sides of the coin, he says, and makes his job more difficult.

“ It needs to be important to them, “ he says, “but I prefer that it doesn’t become the only thing in their life. I focus on their home twenty four hours a day, five or six days a week.”



A 6 ft- high adobe wall screens the south facing portal and pool and connects a 600 -sq. ft. *Casita* to the main house.

“So I say, please don’t call me on Saturday, don’t call me on Sunday, don’t call me at ten o’clock at night, and if you want to talk to me on the job site, its best to make an appointment, don’t just pop onto the work site. That’s because I’m working— totally focused on their home—and they are taking me away from something I *love* to do. That is the difference. If I didn’t like what I was doing, I’d say “Sure, come on over, get me away from this. Let’s sit and talk.”

MASTER AND PARTNER

Generally Peterson’s clients have built four or five other homes before. They know the process and want to try new things: adobe, a nicho, or vigas—but the engineering would be a nightmare without Peterson’s expertise to guide them.

To illustrate, this adobe house required 10,000-20,000 35-40 pound adobes, which are set in mud as mortar because only mud will adhere to mud. The height of the walls depends on the thickness of the walls, because adobe cannot be reinforced with rebar. Resting on top of the walls are the 24-ft. long, 16 inch diameter vigas. Then come the latillas, the adobe parapet, and the roof.

Peterson learned the adobe side of building while he was in college, but with 17 years in the business, he takes advantage of the latest

technology, the popular style and his own innovations to create all the sophistication and amenities that New Yorkers and Californians expect.

While some designers don’t want to incorporate architectural details of other houses in their designs that the clients bring to them, Peterson considers it noble service.

“I realize it isn’t my home,” he says firmly. “They are paying me the money to build their dream home. I don’t have the right to tell somebody what their dream is.”



BUSINESS PROFILE

David C. Peterson Construction Company
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Principal: David C. Peterson
Structure: Sole proprietor
Business Activity: Residential Construction.
Years in Business: 17
Homes per year: 1 – 2
Size range: 2000 - 8000 sq. ft.
Avg. Cost per sq. ft. - Varies
Services: Design/Build
Computerized operations: Accounting.