

The
Business Journal

LUXURY LIVING

custom HOMES

*From elegant to extravagant, Valley
homeowners creating personalized retreats*

**At Home with Butte Properties President Ed Lewis
Collector's home graced with famous rocker autographs
The Boulders offers golfers exclusive desert hideaway**

From Tuscan-style retreats to equestrian estates, Valley residents with discerning taste are opting to build custom homes filled with personalized touches and elaborate amenities. These one-of-a-kind dwellings are trending on the larger size — some spanning as much as 12,000 square feet. The following pages are just a few examples of these incredible creations.

When custom home builders refer to the tremendous amount of detail that goes into constructing a house of dreams, Joe and Karen Potenza know exactly what they're talking about.

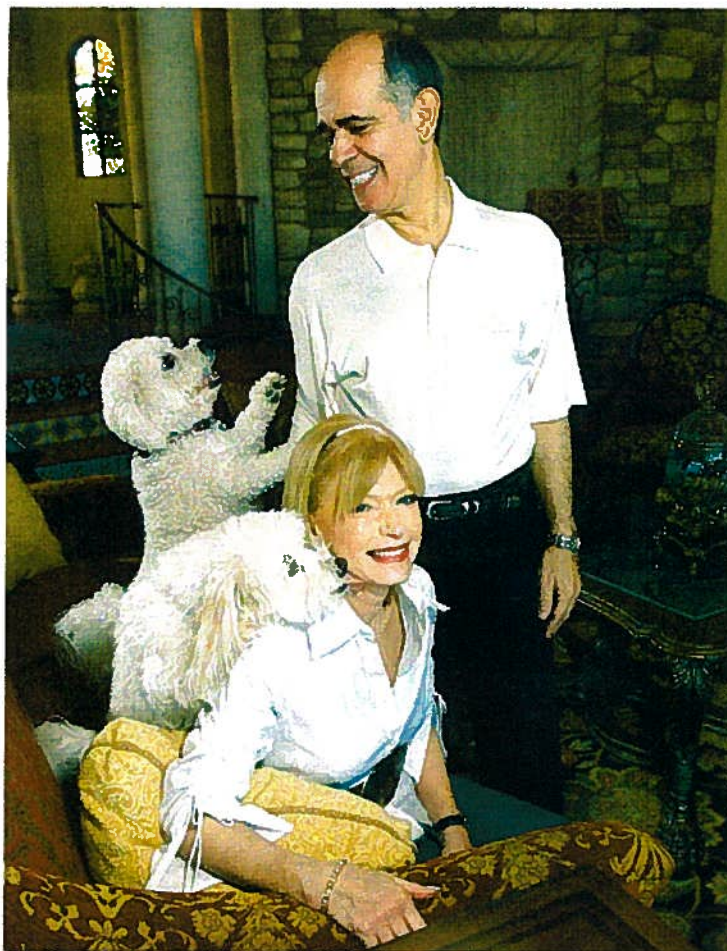
The couple, who spent three years building a 9,200-square-foot home in Fountain Hills' FireRock Country Club master-planned community, painstakingly chose every cobblestone, decorator tile and Venetian plaster-finish now on display in their authentic, Tuscan-style creation. The

home is a loving tribute to their favorite travel spot — Tuscany, Italy — and a showcase for the amazing collection of Italian art and artifacts they have amassed during their many trips there over the years.

The home's location, amid the rolling terrain of Fountain Hills, also is a nod to Tuscany; and was selected after a friend casually mentioned that FireRock's setting closely resembles that of the Potenzas' favorite Italian region. That was enough for Joe, a 59-year-old intellectual property attorney, and Karen, a 61-year-old travel agency owner, who often had fantasized during their many trips to the Valley about one day building or buying a home here. They knew this was their opportunity to fulfill that dream.

The couple, who also own a luxury condominium in the Washington, D.C., area where Joe's law firm is based, set to work with Scottsdale architect William Schroeder, Guy Loist of Rowland Luxury Homes, also in Scottsdale, and Anita Mueller of Interior Motives in Fountain Hills, to design what ultimately would result in the five bedroom, four-and-a-half bathroom *Casa Far Nieta* — the home's Italian name, which translates to "without a care."

One of the Potenzas' primary goals was to make the house look as authentically Tuscan as possible. Witness the Venetian plaster-coated exterior, which creates a streaked, weathered appearance after a rainfall; embedded pottery shards in the outside walls, reminiscent of ancient European ruins; antique-looking gas lanterns mounted on the back walls, an idea Karen copied from a photo she saw in *Architectural Digest* of Cher's Malibu mansion; and the long driveway paved with hand-tumbled cobblestones to resemble



PHOTOS BY TIM KOORS/SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

the worn streets of Italy.

Not everything is meant to look old, though. The home's backyard features an authentic, imported wood- and gas-burning pizza oven, and a resort-style swimming pool complete with a Karen-designed lion's head fountain. Seven fountains, total, grace the inside and outside of *Casa Far Nieta*.

Inside, the Potenzas are surrounded by hand-painted frescos — including one on the ceiling of the home's elevator — stair risers mounted with colorful, hand-crafted tiles fashioned from old ceramic plates Karen selected in Deruta, Italy; 20-foot ceilings; ornate iron work; and a bookcase in Joe's study that swings open to reveal a secret passageway into a bathroom

Joe and Karen Potenza nicknamed their Tuscan-style home "*Casa Far Nieta*," Italian for "without a care."

featuring custom stonework and hand-carved Tuscan sinks.

The Potenzas say, for them, working with highly qualified experts, with whom they felt an immediate chemistry, was the key to building a home they absolutely love.

"We hit it off with these people immediately and have become very good friends," said Karen.

Adds Joe: "There was synergy, and there was creativity. They saw our vision."

— Linda Obele

