



**VANTAGE POINT**  
Frank Lloyd Wright designed the spiral form of the house to hover above ground, providing views of Camelback Mountain over the original citrus trees and creating a shaded courtyard and carport. The conical form on the left is one of the home's two fireplaces.

# PRESERVING WRIGHT

In Arcadia, a home Frank Lloyd Wright designed for his son gets a new lease on life.

*By Nora Burba Trulsson*

**I**n 2012, a vintage house on a large lot in Arcadia was owned by developers and scheduled for demolition, to be replaced by two new estate homes. On the surface, this read like a typical real estate story for this desirable Phoenix neighborhood, where older, smaller homes often make way for larger, modern abodes.

Only this wasn't a typical story. The house in question was designed in 1950 by Frank Lloyd Wright for his third son and Frank's daughter-in-law, David and Gladys Wright. The home's elevated spiral and ramp form a precursor to Wright's plans for one of his most famous buildings, New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, built a few years later.

When news of the proposed demolition spread, an international outcry ensued. The developers backed off and the property was sold to an LLC headed by Zach Rawling, a Las Vegas home builder with childhood ties to Arcadia and a passion for good architecture. He established the nonprofit David and Gladys Wright House Foundation, opened the property for tours, and preserved the house as an architectural and cultural center. **CONTINUED...**



**WORK SPACE** On the plans, Wright labeled the kitchen a “work space,” detailing it with 1950s state-of-the-art materials.



**GOING IN CIRCLES** From top: Block walls and a metal roof mark the home’s exterior, where a ramp leads to the front door and roof deck; inside, the home is now furnished with reproduction Frank Lloyd Wright furniture and includes a custom rug based on a Wright design.



« *“We want to make sure this building is preserved. It’s only safe if every generation falls in love with it.”*—Zach Rawling, founder of the David and Gladys Wright House Foundation »

...CONTINUED But before the house became a cause célèbre, it was a family place, a private retreat. David had purchased a 10-acre parcel in Arcadia with his wife, when they asked his father to design the home. As a representative for a local concrete block company, David wanted to showcase the material in his new house.

Frank traced out the home’s basic design in 45 minutes, raising the three-bedroom, 2,500-square-foot home above ground for views, shade and breezes. The interior was detailed with red-concrete flooring, mahogany millwork and built-in furnishings. Construction was completed in 1952. After opening the house to tours for a few years, David and Gladys opted for privacy. David died at the age of 102 in 1997. Gladys passed at 104 in 2008.

When Rawling first acquired the property, he spent many a night “camping” in the then-empty living room and watching sunsets from the roof deck. “I grew up not far from here,” he says, “and my mother and I would ride our bikes past this house, admiring the architecture. It’s a magical place.”

During the past three years, Rawling has supervised the cleanup and stabilization of the house, the guest house and the landscape, furnished both buildings with Wright reproductions and has begun the painstaking process of restoring the property.

“We bought this house to share it with the public,” Rawling says, “and to celebrate the architecture and history of this area. We want to make sure this building is preserved. It’s only safe if every generation falls in love with it.”

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