



At one time Linda Faiss and her husband, Bob, were living the American dream, content in their home overlooking the Boulder City Golf Course. That was until six years ago, when they stumbled across a lot on the outskirts of town with spectacular views of Lake Mead and Fortification Hill showcasing impressive pink and purple sunsets.

Not only was it the picturesque southwest setting they had envisioned, it was the ideal location for them to live “green”—a practice that is, for more and more people,

becoming the new American dream. The Faisses decided that their new home, in the spirit of a traditional Santa Fe-style hacienda, would best blend with nature if they built it with sustainable resources. “I wanted it to look as if it were of the earth, not just on the earth,” Linda says.

Whenever possible, the contractor, Wayne Blue of Blue Design, used recycled, reclaimed, and handmade materials. Wood from a dismantled 1800s Great Salt Lake trestle bridge was used for the floors and exposed support beams over the entry, linear hallway, patio, and kitchen, as well as built-in bookcases and a custom desk for Bob’s den. When the supplier, Trestlewood, made the delivery,



# of the earth

This Boulder City hacienda truly blends into its southwest surroundings.

BY LYNN GOYA

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER SEDGWICK (RIGHT)

the Faisses were shocked. “We wouldn’t have believed that anyone would want it,” Linda recalls. “It was gray and cracked. Wayne sanded it and made that wood new all over again.” Yet for months, when it rained, the salt crystals that filled the crevices of the support beams showered her cookbooks and counters. When the beams were capped with copper, the crystalline rain stopped. “Actually,” Linda says, “the salt crystals were very pretty.”

For the perimeter landscape walls and the house’s thick, heavy walls, Blue found a Pahump company that produced Cempo Forms, 10-inch-thick blocks made from a composite of cement and recycled Styrofoam that

mimic the appearance of adobe. The walls retain heat or cool air as the seasons change. High windows let in natural light, minimizing the use of electricity.

Barrel clay roof tiles stripped from a 1940s Las Vegas apartment building add another authentic feature. “We went to look for tiles, and the distributor told us he had just gotten a pile of old tiles, and he could give it to us for half price. Wayne turns to him, ‘Don’t tell her that! She would have paid extra for them,’” Linda says with a laugh. When reused or traditional products weren’t available, the owners asked Blue to give them an old feel. “I wanted the fence to look rusty and worn,” Linda says.

Linda Faiss, owner of this Boulder City home, says don’t be fooled by the pool. “A pool uses less water than grass would in the same area,” she says. The hacienda-style house—Mr. Puppy models in the living room on the opposite page—was built “green.”

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#### HOW THEY DECORATED

Linda and Bob Faiss filled their hacienda-style home with original art culled from Boulder City artists and the annual Boulder City Arts Fair. A Brent Thompson oil painting (page 38) of the tip of a sailboat as it glides toward Fortification Hill presides over the fireplace. "I love the motion of the water," Linda says. "We also have Cliff Segerblom's painting of St. Jude's looking over Lake Mead and Austine Wood-Comarow's 'Desert Colors Cactus.'"

#### WORTH A VISIT

##### Springs Preserve

333 S. Valley View Blvd., Las Vegas  
springspreserve.org  
702-822-7700

Educational opportunities, including classes, on sustainable living.

#### NEVADA ONLINE

The Somerset Town Square in northwest Reno and Truckee's Village at Northstar also have implemented green-building design. To learn more, visit [nevadamagazine.com](http://nevadamagazine.com).



Above: Linda and Bob Faiss pose with their 12-year-old malamute-Akita mix in the backyard. Much of the interior, including the kitchen area (left), was trimmed with reclaimed 1800s trestle wood.

The kitchen-area flooring, handmade sun-baked clay tile from Saltillo, Mexico, is similar to that which is found in traditional Mexican haciendas. "It is uneven and real soft," notes Linda, who was willing to forgo convenience in this instance. "It has cracks, and if you spill red wine on it, it will be in it for a while. But I think you have to be true to the house. That became our guiding phrase, 'Be true to the house.'"

The patio bricks also were reclaimed and are sand set, with no mortar between them. "They give with the ground," Linda says. The yard, which in 2003 won awards from the Southern Nevada Water Authority Landscape and Nevada Landscape Association, looks as if it naturally grew from the surrounding hills. Using very little water, it features indigenous plants and subterranean irrigation for the zoysia grass lawn, which rarely—if ever—needs mowing.

Linda fought paving the driveway, preferring packed dirt or sand-laid brick, but was talked out of it by more practical minds and settled on an attractive aggregate alternative. The massive boulders, however, stayed. While others wanted to blast the stones into submission, she insisted that the driveway be built around them, creating a natural division to the edge of the property.

The couple had imagined an enclosed central courtyard, a traditional hacienda feature. To embrace the view, however, the Faisses went with an open feel and linked the inside to the outside with an oversized porch, tall windows, and double-glass doors.

The interior was painted a traditional cream with splashes of cobalt blue, turquoise, terra cotta, coral, aqua, and yellow. "I wanted the colors of the sky and the sunset, the colors of Mexico and Boulder City," says Faiss of her modern hacienda. "This house wouldn't work in Boston. It couldn't be transplanted anywhere east of the Rockies or north of Reno, but it works here and is an expression of what we love and where we want to be."