From Summer Cottage to Dream Home

This Contractor Had His Own Ideas For a Dream Home, So He Built It.

When Donald and Charlene Karecki of Chicago moved to Prescott, Ariz., they bought a run-down tract house in Highland Pines overlooking Prescott. A year later, thanks to the Kareckis' imagination and hard work, as well as the versatility and esthetics of exterior insulation, this 15-year-old woodframe structure is an award-winning home whose value has more than doubled.

The Karecki Home was chosen as firstplace winner in Better Homes and Gardens' 1985 Remodeling Contest. It was also featured in an article in the January '86 issue of BH&G.

The Kareckis, who own and operate an eight-year-old applicator-contractor firm called Chardon Enterprises, used 2,000 square feet of exterior insulation to retrofit the original 1950-square-foot building, plus a 600-square-foot addition. Total living area is now 2550 square feet.

Karecki and his crew used what’s called a “skip-trowel technique” to create an exterior reminiscent of the Old Southwest. The Kareckis used three-inch-thick expanded polystyrene board and six inches of batt insulation to create walls with an R-34 insulation value. “With all the snow we get up here in the Bradshaw Mountains, energy efficiency was definitely a consideration in our choice of Outsulation,” says Don Karecki.

To further maximize energy savings, the Kareckis built a “Solar Room” off the guest bedroom. This room features a glass-trombe wall and a circulating fan that together help keep this part of the house toasty warm in winter.

The Kareckis also used all glass on the east wall of the house to create a 180° view of the surrounding landscape. “We decided to use PPG thermal panes throughout. However, if you want curved windows, it can get...
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pretty expensive,” explains Don Karecki. “So, we used Outsulation to create curved arches and placed these above rectangular windows to create a curved effect at a more economical price.”

Although they used a local architect to draw up the plans of their three-bedroom home, the design concepts were the Kareckis’ own. Originally built as a summer cottage and later converted for year-round living, the Karecki House now looks more like a Spanish hacienda. A red-clay tile roof and a Spanish belltower—fabricated inside and out with exterior insulation and complete with a cast-iron bell—adds a touch of authenticity.

The Karecki home before remodeling.
In addition to living, dining and recreation rooms, a kitchen and a laundry room, and two full baths, a new “Octagon Room” houses a sunken whirlpool spa. Filled with plants, this glassed-in room offers a breathtaking view of the mountains and the town of Prescott. Formerly heated by electricity, the Kareckis converted the house to liquid propane gas heat, which is also used to heat the spa. Built into the side of a hill, the Karecki House also includes a 528-square-foot sundeck above the two-car garage.

Award-Winning Kinds of Work . . .

While in Chicago, the Kareckis did business as Donald Karecki Plastering Contractor; they now operate under the name Chardon Enterprises. Chardon is simply a combination of Charlene and Don, which Don Karecki says is only fair since “my wife handles the really important stuff . . . the books!”

Charlene Karecki says that “it’s been really hard building a business from scratch in a new area,” but she says she hopes that once people hear about the award-winning kind of work they can do—whether remodeling or new construction, residential or commercial—Chardon Enterprises will really take off.