

HOLLYWOOD EAST

HOLLYWOOD SCRIPTWRITER
MARK ROSENTHAL LIVES IN A
HOME THAT COMBINES
QUAKER SIMPLICITY WITH
CALIFORNIA AIRINESS

by E. Ron Watson



The neat arcade, an enclosed curved hallway with a series of three glass double doors on each wall, ends in two choices: up the spiral staircase to the office, or straight into the guest suite.

Mark Rosenthal takes the stairs carrying an oversized mug of coffee. He emerges from the airy arcade into the high-ceilinged office, desk set in the middle of the room and surveys the clutter on it.

"I'm trying to work through a problem with a script, so I apologize for the mess," he says needlessly. This is what people expect of a screenwriter's space. The bookcases, however, are in order. There are no piles of papers on the floor. The artwork hangs level. There are several projects in progress, one or two on speculation. His partner in California does most of the



Photography: Randl Bye

Opposite, the Rosenthal family, Mark and Kim, joined by children Harry and Hayley. Above, the Rosenthal residence is really two: the main house on the left and guest house and office on the right. Side view of the house, left, gives a sense of the curved porch and the angles in the rooflines the owner likes to call "Bucks County vernacular."





Above, overstuffed French couches and family photos invite conversation and memories in the Rosenthal home. The openness to the dining and kitchen areas mean conversations can be shared by all in the space. Opposite bottom, wood and tile dominate the kitchen decor. Dark green counter tiles contrast with the natural earthtones of the floor tiles. Right, the arcade connects the main house and guest house. Mexican and Moravian tiles combine to add both an exotic and familiar touch. Rounded doorways were one of the many design changes the Rosenthals made.

face-to-face work with studio executives. Rosenthal conferences by phone and takes an airliner only when he absolutely must. In the meantime he deals with the problems of making movie scripts work, just as he has done for 20 years for Disney and Ron Howard, and who knows how many others in the fast-paced business Rosenthal tries to tame in Bucks County.

The office is an important part of Rosenthal's home, but it is purposefully placed above the guest suite and detached from the main house, connected by the arcade. It's a sanctuary in a house full of sanctuaries.

"I figured I write movies and create sets and everything that is in the sets," he explained. "Why couldn't I design my own house?"

But he is a realist working in an unreal world, so Rosenthal hired an architect and builder to complete his design. One hundred and twenty five changes after construction began, the house is just what he wanted, a perfect set for the life of his family, including wife Kim and children Hayley and Harry. It's also big enough for visits from his extended family, partner and friends, a key design factor for this unusual house perched on the side of a hill in Solebury Township.

Rosenthal calls the design "Bucks County vernacular." It has elements of traditional Bucks County architecture, such as a fieldstone foundation and a Quaker simplicity. There are also Mexican and Moravian tiles, Italian mantelpiece, Mission balustrades and California airiness. The home is





Gregg S. Bittner, the custom home builder who completed the Rosenthal house and all 125 design changes, takes a break on the front porch.

decorated with antique New England quilts, Tuscany pottery, prints and paintings from throughout the U.S. and overstuffed French couches.

"It shouldn't work," shrugged Kim Rosenthal. "Who would have thought these things could go together? But somehow it works." And it does work in a unique way, right down to the black lacquer piano in the great room, encouraging visitors to point in ways that would invite a mother's scolding.

There are obviously a lot of things at work in the Rosenthal household besides the movie scripts. But it was a movie that inspired the concept for this sandstone house on a hill with a curved porch and 80-foot arcade connecting the main living area with the office and guest suite.

The house is designed loosely on the central set for "The Housesitter," a Steve Martin and Goldie Hawn movie about an architect who builds a dream house for his intended bride but they split up and then an itinerant woman shows up looking for a place to live and... The plot doesn't really matter, especially since it's a picture Rosenthal didn't write. The real life Rosenthal house is really two: The main house serves as the living quarters for the family; the arcade connects it to the guest suite and office, built in a separate two story building with the same appealing quirks of design and space as the main house.

"We wanted the guest house to be private, a place where you could walk around in your underwear and

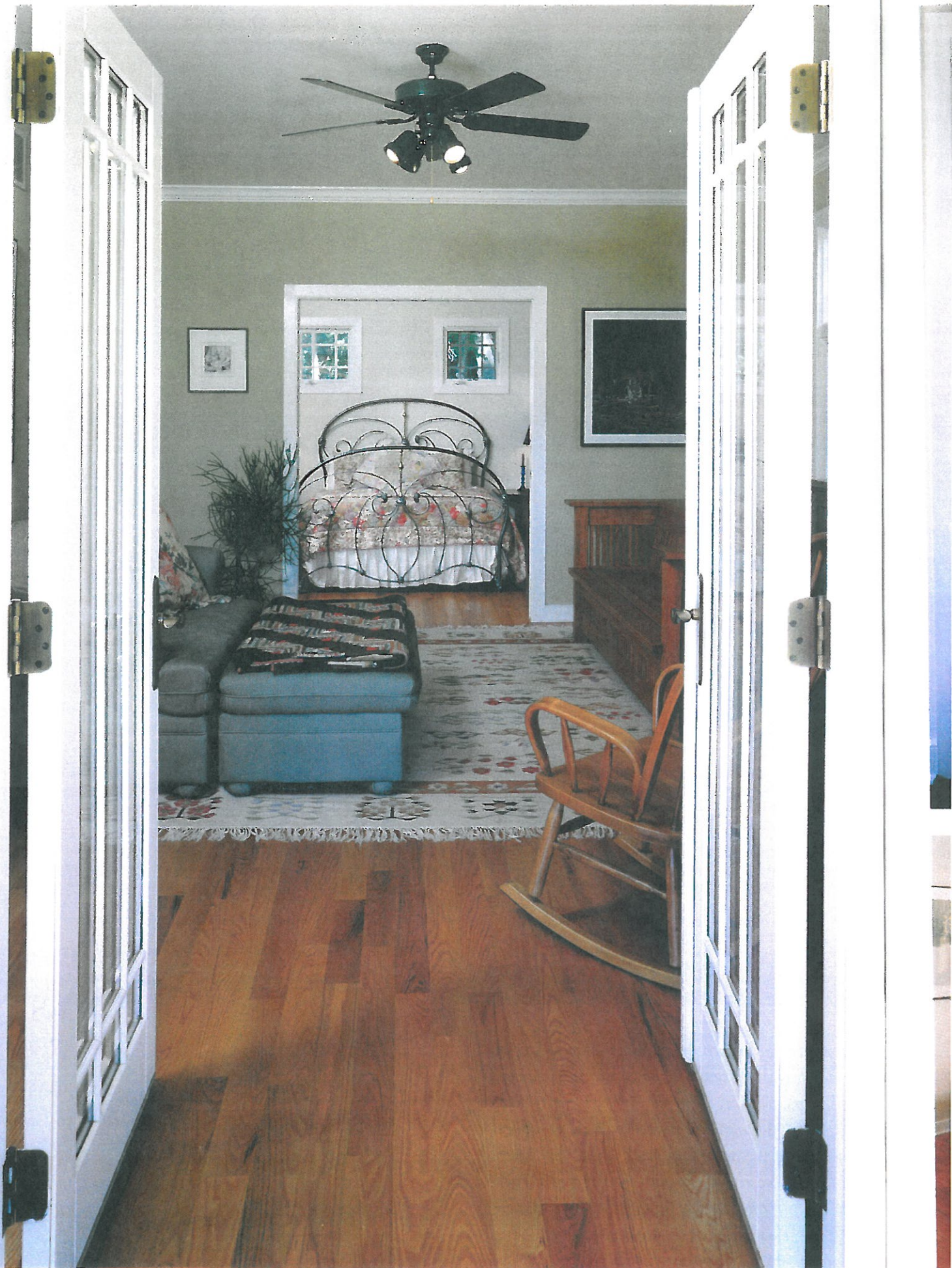


A
ar
j
th
u



Above, the main living area of the house is open and bright, without columns or walls. Hardwood floors, wood trim and tile are used throughout the 4,500-square-foot residence. Right, a natural wood spiral staircase leads up to the office where Mark Rosenthal works on movie scripts. The guest suite is below the office with a private entrance from the arcade and porch.







Opposite, double doors from the porch open into the guest suite sitting room and the bedroom beyond. Left, the children's bedrooms share a bathroom and passageway to a hidden playroom above the garage. Top right, an antique New England writing desk is coupled with a Far Eastern mirror in the master bedroom. Bottom, the master bedroom.



feel at home," Rosenthal said.

Privacy in the guest suite is maintained by a separate entrance to the office via the spiral staircase in the arcade. The only other door in the office opens to a small porch—not big enough for a chair—that commands a view of the woodland and hill in the backyard. "I was careful about the depth of the porch. It's big enough for my partner to go outside for a cigarette, but he can't put a chair out there and get too comfortable. I measured it myself," he said. The porch, actually more of a balcony, is one of the many refinements that were made as the house took shape during nearly three years of planning. The mini-porch is uncharacteristically designed to limit a person's—a smoker's—pleasure. The rest of the house overcompensates for it.

The downstairs guest suite consists of a bedroom, sitting room and a bathroom decorated with ceramic


continued on page 126

Custom
Furniture Making
by
Wolfgang Woodwork




215-345-8688

If You're Looking to
Buy or Sell
fine Art & Antiques,
Call **ALDERFER'S**.



If you're looking to buy antiques & collectibles, auctions are held every Thursday, 9 AM at the Alderfer Auction Center, 501 Fairgrounds Road in Hatfield PA. If you're looking to sell, call today for a consultation. (215)393-3000 www.alderfercompany.com



ALDERFER AUCTION COMPANY
Auctioneers • Appraisers
Consultants • Movers

Hollywood East
continued from page 69

tiles that offers another glimpse of the eclectic tastes of the Rosenthals: Is it Mexican or is it Californian or did they just make this up? Whatever—it is comfortable and bright and cheery, with big chairs and a big bed and double doors to the porch that dominates the front of the home and wraps around the guest house.

The concave porch on the south side of the arcade offers a view of the valley and driveway. "One of the nice things about it is that you can stand at one end and look down to the other and see everyone who's on the porch. Great for parties," Rosenthal pointed out. On the north side of the arcade is a low-walled courtyard with a view of woods, hill and swingset.


Inside the house, opposite the guest suite and office, the arcade ends in a great room that serves as living and dining rooms, with unfettered access to the kitchen. There are bold Mexican tiles in the kitchen countertops and floor. Double doors open to the courtyard from the dining area and arcade. Except for the arcade, kitchen and bathrooms, hardwood floors are everywhere throughout the 4,500-square-foot home.

Upstairs are three bedrooms. The master bedroom has a wood ceiling and tiled bath. The children's rooms are joined by a bathroom, but each have their own sinks. The children also share a secret passageway to a hidden playroom above the two-car garage.

There are a couple of small rooms off the kitchen for laundry and other household necessities. A small television room is opposite the kitchen. There are no other visible signs of entertainment equipment outside the office and the TV and VCR in the playroom. The house seems to be entertainment itself, inviting comfort and conversation.

Mark and Kim Rosenthal settle into the overstuffed chairs in the living area with another oversized mug of coffee, and invite Gregg S.

Interior Intentions
Decorative Tile & Stone



- ◆ Domestic & Imported Ceramic Tile
- ◆ Handpainted /Handcrafted Tile
- ◆ Antiqued Marbles & Limestones
- ◆ Mosaics, Terra Cottas & Slate
- ◆ Limestone/Marble, Granite Tiles & Slabs
- ◆ Design Assistance ◆

(215) 794-7373
Buckingham Green, Route 202
Buckingham, PA
Closed Sun. & Mon.



Bucks
designer house

The Marshall Farm
Off Kitchen's Lane
Solebury Township

April 26 – May 24

Monday-Saturday:
10:00 am-4:00 pm
Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday evenings:
6:30-8:30 pm
Sunday: 1:00-4:00 pm

Donation: \$15
Information: (215) 345-2191

Sponsored by the
Village Improvement Association
to benefit Doylestown Hospital and
V.I.A. Community Projects

Bittner, who built their dream house, to join them. Theirs is an unusual relationship, they admit. So many homeowners are happy to see their builder finally leave; Bittner has become part of the extended Rosenthal family.

"My business is all about aesthetic choices," Rosenthal said. "But a lot of builders we visited want what they want. It was different with Gregg."

In fact the house seemed to unfold from the architect's drawings to the finished structure like a movie plot. Custom millwork and moldings were created by Bittner as required by changes,

"My business is all about aesthetic choices," Rosenthal said. "But a lot of builders we visited want what they want. It was different with Gregg."

windows became doors, a dead space in the main stairway was transformed into recessed bookshelves, materials and motifs were combined to develop the special character of the house.

Bittner, a custom home builder since 1991 with offices in Buckingham, has completed his share of Colonials. The Rosenthal home became a challenge with its open spaces, curved arcade and defiance to be labeled anything but authentically unique.

"There is no template for a house like this," Bittner said. "A lot of builders might be scared off by the challenge, but it was definitely fun to do. It helps that the customer had clear ideas about likes and dislikes, and I try to be different,



Because there's no place like home.



- Caregivers
- Homemakers
- House Cleaning
- Transportation
- Hair Care
- Dietary Assistance
- Light Maintenance
- Meal Delivery

For more information, call

(215) 340-7777 (215) 598-0700 (610) 847-4700
Doylestown Wrightstown Ottsville



The Thrill of a New Bicycle

Whether it's your first one with training wheels or an all terrain to go with your new lifestyle. It feels the same! **And this month feel an extra thrill with special sale prices on all '97 models in stock.**

Sales • Service • Rentals

New Hope
Cyclery 
SKATEBOARDS

186 Old York Rd., New Hope, PA
(215) 862-6888

Picture Perfect

Stone Creek Farm

Personalized
Landscaping
Service



Carversville Road • Carversville, PA
1 mile east of Rt. 413 • (215) 297-8459

Show Her Your Sense of Humor

Just for the fun of it . . . shimmering Sterling Silver "Oh My" pin and earrings. Pin \$27, Earrings \$30

For the Finest in Hand Crafted Sterling Silver & Custom-made Gold Jewelry

Orb silversmiths

127A South Main St., New Hope, PA
215-862-2196
www.weballiance.net/va/orb/

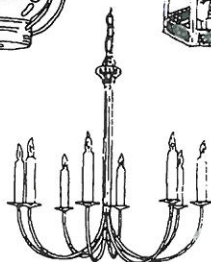
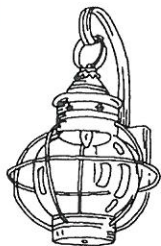
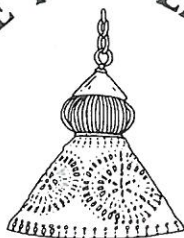
**Warminster
Symphony
Orchestra**
Joseph Lovecchio
Music Director/Conductor



SOLOISTS:
Dorothy
Cardella,
Soprano
Frank
Tenaglia,
Tenor
Randolph
Messing,
Baritone

**Gala
"Night of Opera"**
May 16, 1998 • 8:00 PM
William Tennent HS
Warminster, PA
For information call: 675-7915

THE POST LIGHT



Specializing in 18th Century
Reproduction Lighting

51 E. Bethlehem Pike, Chestnut Hill, PA
(215) 242-3810

too."

"We had another builder looking at it, but we wasted a year going back and forth," Rosenthal adds. As much as anything, there was a meeting of minds, a philosophical union between homeowner and builder that made the house possible. Bittner admits Rosenthal's ability to communicate was an asset, even if the mixture of styles and designs appeared incongruent on paper.

Rosenthal borrowed ideas from places he lived in Vermont, Seattle and the Los Angeles area, but developed them with his Bucks County destination in mind. He grew up in the Roxborough section of Philadelphia; his family often visited the New Hope area and he always enjoyed the day trips.

"Family has always been important to me," he said. "We have a very big extended family with cousins and all, and I was trying to figure out a way to bring them all together. It's funny. When we were living in LA, people thought we were nuts, wanting to build a place like this. LA is a place where people go to flee their families and roots." Bucks County, Rosenthal decided, was where he could establish a permanent home that would combine his experiences and accomplish his goal of gathering the extended family for big parties and overnight visits.

Bucks County is also providing the impetus for a new movie project. While renting in the Washington Crossing area during the house construction, Rosenthal hit on an idea for a movie about the American Revolution. He envisions someone like Sean Connery in the role of George Washington. If it sells, Hollywood will probably get the credit for producing it. The all-important footnote to the production, however, will be that Mark Rosenthal—like Gen. Washington—slept here. ♦

E. Ron Watson is a freelance writer and public relations specialist who lives in Ottsville, PA.

**WHEN YOU
ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY
HAVE TO BE THERE!**

**Trust
our 4x4's!**

The 1997 Hummer...go anywhere
anytime - nothing can stop you!



**NEVER PAY
RETAIL!**

The 1997 Toyota Land Cruiser...
the biggest, safest, most luxurious
4x4!



**NEVER PAY
RETAIL!**

You can shop by phone
at America's only
Full Disclosure Auto,
Truck and 4x4 Dealer.

THE TOYOTA OUTLET • THE HUMMER OUTLET
NEW & USED LANDCRUISERS, 4-RUNNERS & HUMMERS
Rt. 202, Flemington, NJ • 20 minutes from Bucks Co.

Delivery
to your home or
office—call for information

**1-800-TOYOTA-6
1-800-HUMMER-8**