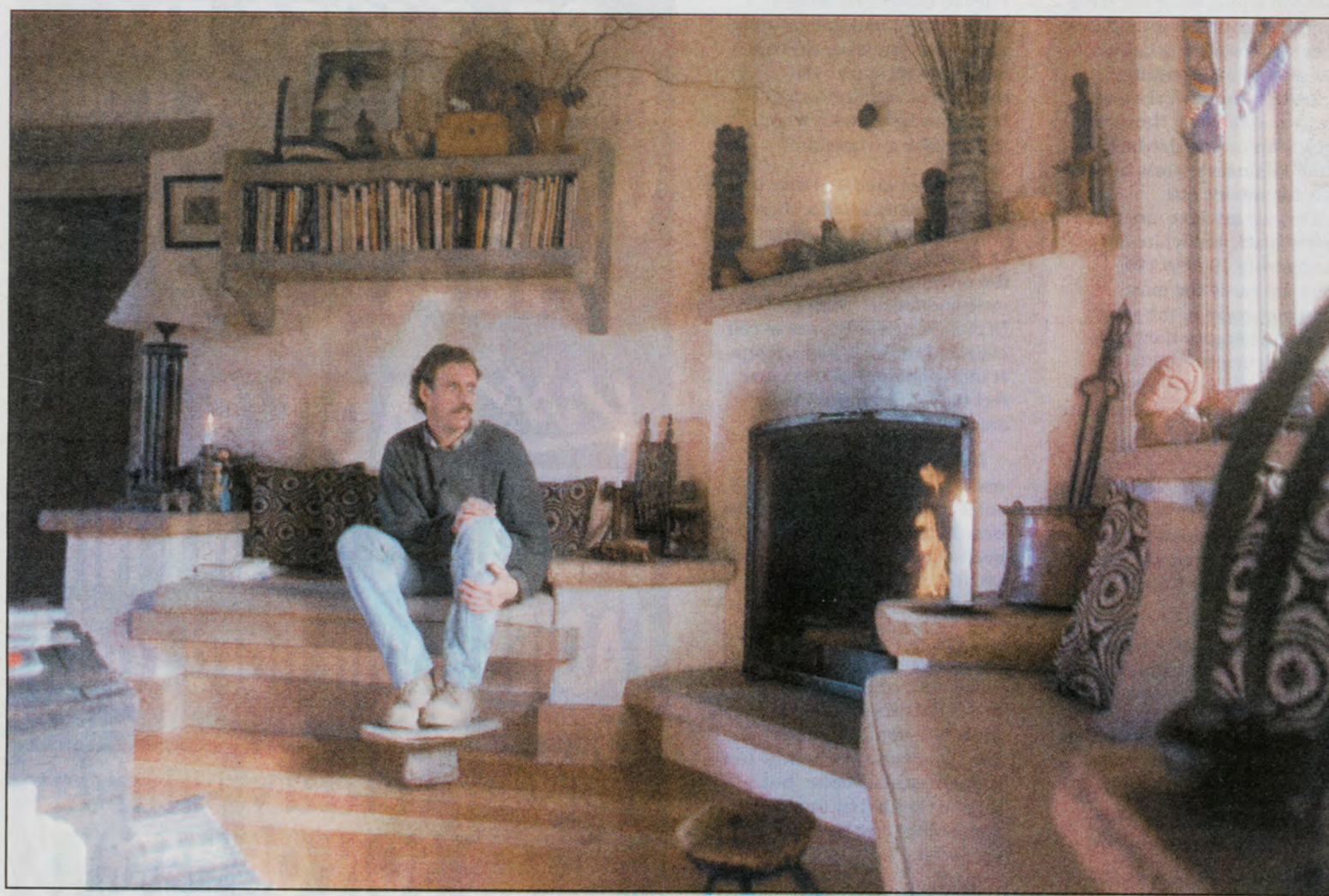
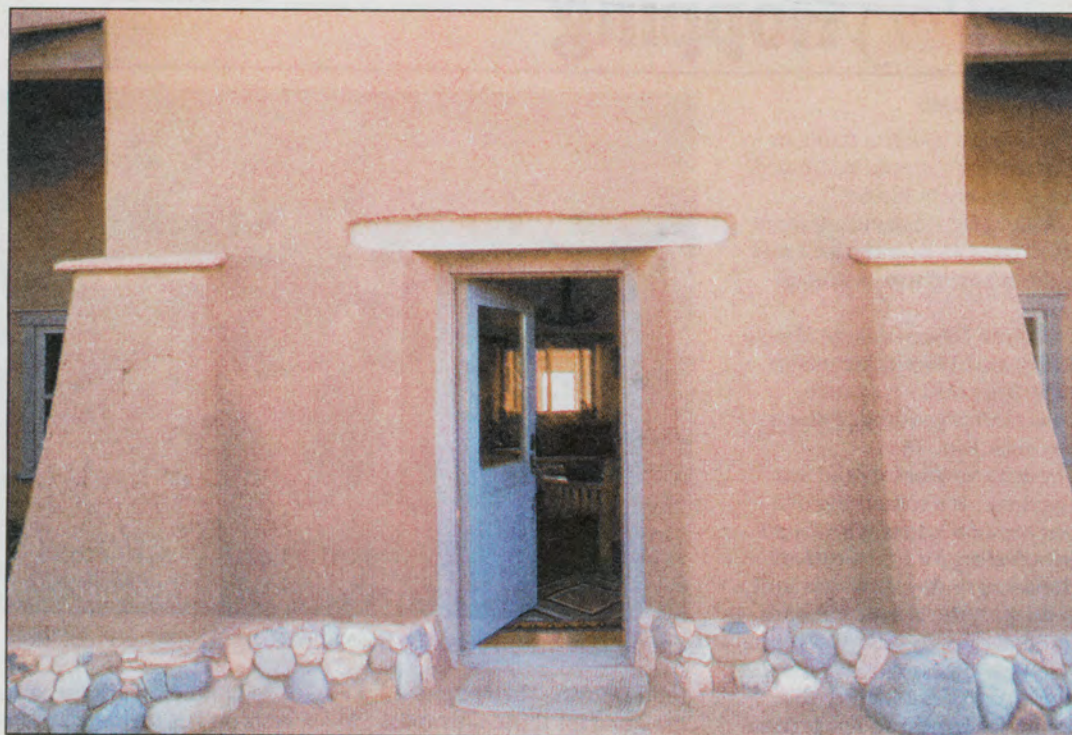


The inseparability of life, work & home

By GUSSIE FAUNTLEROY



Above, the front door of the Joyce residence. The walls are made of dirt and stones from their property; Left, Joyce sits in the spot in the living room where he reads every morning. /Photos by Kitty Leaken

Irene and her friend Mia were sitting at the kitchen table, stirring up something in mixing bowls and saying they didn't know what they were making.

They must have figured it out; before long, the kitchen and living room were filled with the sweet smell of brownies baking.

While the girls played cards and waited for their concoction to cook, Irene's father, blacksmith Tom Joyce, pulled photos down from the fridge door and reflected on home and family, and how the subtlest of memories are contained in the very materials of a house.

The first house he and his wife, Julie, built on West Alameda, for

less than \$500 and entirely from used and found materials, wasn't built to be permanent. When they sold the property they advised the new owners to tear down the former chicken house onto which, over the years, they had added six small rooms.

As the day came for the structure to be demolished, Joyce thought he'd done his grieving for the home where he and Julie had been married, where his oldest daughter Kate, now 15, had been born. But then the backhoe showed up and he found himself flooded with emotion, as if the most minute memories of daily life in the house were being swept out of the weathered and twisted wood before the blade

could hit it.

The subtle memories — of kids playing cards or Kate's face looking out the window at snow the first time she was old enough to stand — are the ones not easily jarred into the present, Joyce said.

"It's like breathing: Were I not able to breathe, I would have to confront that loss of breath, but you don't remember all those daily breaths." And just as life is a series of unremarkable breaths, home is made of all the forgotten moments of living with people you love, he said.

That's why when, six years ago, he and Julie began building their present house southeast of town, they decided not to seal the wooden floors, the furniture or

mud plaster walls to prevent scratches and stains from marring its new-made perfection.

"So with the markings left by my grubby boots, the marking of age as the kids go around the stairwells, there's that marking of the passage of time," Joyce said. "The scratches and dings and dents are what bring a home to life."

Joyce is an internationally acclaimed architectural blacksmith whose work also is exhibited in galleries. He currently has small works in a show at Okun Gallery, has created railings for La Posada de Santa Fe and Cookworks, made a small gate for Fenn Galleries and has work in the colonial section of the



Albuquerque Museum.

Both his home and the objects of his craft are meant to be used, to have their undeniable aesthetic qualities absorbed through subtle daily contact, he said.

Like hands on the curving iron stair rail or dozens of door handles he made for his house, and like the utilitarian implements created by blacksmiths throughout history.

"The gallery work I do is no different from the other work," he said. "What I need to bring to the work is still considered from a meaningful place, regardless of whether the work is meant to open an entry to a home or is seen in a gallery. I think about it with the same sensibility."

That's one reason there are numerous ethnographic artifacts — often of dark, carved wood — against the warm earth color of the walls and fireplace in Joyce's home.

Most of the objects were made to be used and are integral to people's lives, Joyce said, like the large, intricately carved African wooden door lock made by tribal blacksmiths who were an important part of their village's ceremonial life.

These objects "teach a completeness and wholeness, the inseparability of life, work and home," he said.

Joyce's own work and home life are intimately connected. On a juniper-covered piece of land with views of the Sandia and the Ortiz Mountains, a short graveled path connects the house with his large workshop. The blacksmith shop was built first, set partly into the earth to muffle the sounds of iron being hammered. The earth that was removed

went into adobe bricks that formed the structure.

Joyce, his wife and several friends built the shop and house themselves over five years, hauling stone from their West Alameda riverside property.

Along the south side of the house is a large greenhouse that provides most of the heat for the house.

Close by are a chicken house, a cistern system that collects rainwater for all the outside watering, and raised garden beds that in summer are thick with the green of intensive gardening.

The house itself was designed for family living rather than entertaining, although an almost constant stream of friends and visitors finds its way there, many met while Joyce was on international speaking tours.

"Kitchen living is central," he said. "We hang out at the table a lot; meals usually go for a couple of hours."

Balanced with being together is the need for privacy, and for that, Kate and Irene's rooms are side by side off their own small communal room, on the opposite end of the house from Tom and Julie's room. A guest suite, reached by a separate staircase, also is removed for privacy.

The living room is used for living, Joyce said. Early every morning after waking at 5:30, he lights a fire in the fireplace and settles into the cushioned *banco* next to it to read for a couple of hours. Often, Irene asks to be awakened early, too, so she can draw while he reads, he said.

When the girls leave for school, Joyce walks over to the shop and starts his work, assisted by Jan Rappe

and Maria Larsen.

The barn-like shop has dark adobe walls, three large hearths, industrial blacksmithing equipment and tools lining the walls; and it's a place where his daughters have always felt comfortable, he said.

They often spend time there on their own craft projects. A proud father, Joyce suddenly left the room and came back with an armload of objects the girls have made, in clay, wood, paper and metal, including a small iron vessel with a lid, a "tooth container for lost teeth," he said.

The current direction in Joyce's own work revolves around the idea of incorporating communal memory into the objects he makes. The baptismal font he created for Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Community's new church was forged in part from iron and steel objects — many with memories attached — donated by parishioners.

In June, the World Centre in San Francisco will receive a lectern he plans to forge using pieces of metal from dismantled weapons. The project will honor the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter. With the memory of war embedded in its structure, the lectern over the years will serve to hold the notes of people from around the world, speaking about peace.

The work "becomes a remembrance," Joyce said.

Like scratches on the floor, or the dark spot permanently worn on the flagstone under each family member's place at the kitchen table.



Top, Tom and Julie Joyce in the studio; Above, Joyce hand forged all of the door handles and key hole covers in his home. /Photos by Kitty Leaken