

What's the result when a builder builds his own home? Nothing short of glamorous, from the looks of Ken Samson's home in Stone Canyon.

It's not exactly a big surprise that Ken Samson and his family live in a spectacular custom home. Ken, after all, owns KS Classic Homes and has been building unique dwellings in Tucson for seven years. But it's not just the fact that he's in the business that inspired Ken and his wife, Michele, to design and build a home for themselves in Oro Valley's luxury golf development, Stone Canyon. Rather, Ken wanted to give his family, which includes 9-year-old Kenneth Jr., the same type of made-to-order comfort his clients enjoy. Working with local architect D. Alan Roberts, Ken designed a house that incorporated all his favorite elements from homes he had built in the past, as well as a few fabulous new features.

After 20 years of homebuilding, Ken and Michele knew better than anyone that the design-and-build process, while exciting, could also be marked by challenges. The first (and most significant) hindrance came immediately. The lot the Samsons chose was perfect for giving them panoramic views of the Tortolita Mountains and Catalina Mountains, but, true to its community's name, it was almost completely covered by stone. "It was all solid rock," Ken says. "We had to chip and grind all that rock out of here...so we could build a foundation."

The next task was selecting a group of subcontractors who could make the Samsons' visions a reality—a process made significantly easier by Ken's industry contacts. "We have faith in all of our subcontractors, and once we're able to give them an initial design, most of our people can take it from there and make some positive changes to it," Ken says. From kitchen countertops to bathroom tile to flooring, the subcontractors took care of the details, allowing the Samsons more time to focus on the elemental aspects of the home's design.

Making the design absolutely perfect presented the final challenge. The Samsons worked with Roberts to make sure the home was functional, chic and took full advantage of the lot and the views. "We probably changed [the design] 40 to 50 percent. We worked closely with Alan and spent countless hours with him trying to get it perfect," Ken says. They added windows and doors, and ultimately "opened up" the home significantly. For example, the home office where Ken and Michele both work was originally fashioned to have just one small window, but the pair opted to install a large window wall with a sliding glass door instead, making the space seem bigger and letting in much more natural light as a result.

The home took about 13 months to complete, and the Samsons couldn't be happier with the result. In fact, several aspects of the home exceeded their expectations. "We didn't expect the backyard to come out like it did," Ken says. "We altered the plan for it quite a bit, and once it was finished, we were blown away by the beautiful views." Indeed, the yard is spectacular, affording the family and their frequent guests vistas of both the Tortolita Mountains and Downtown Tucson. The outdoor kitchen, complete with a gas grill, refrigerator and ice maker, promotes fuss-free entertaining. The putting green affords a fun diversion. And, in a nod to Las Vegas-style showmanship, the large rectangular pool has three water features with metal rings that actually shoot fire into the air when turned on. The adjacent, above-ground spa, meanwhile, took a more organic approach: It's surrounded by faux rock, which nods as much to the stony setting as to natural beauty.

Inside, distinctive touches define each of the three bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms. Kenneth Jr. has the room all young boys dream about: It's prewired for all of his electronic gaming systems, which are connected to a large, flat-panel TV. A massive, mural-like photo of an A.T.V. rider also hangs behind the head of his bed, and his tae kwon do uniforms line his spacious walk-in closet. A Zen-like aesthetic permeates the master suite, which features two patio retreat areas—one looking out at the waterfall in the front drive area, and the other leading to the backyard.

But it's the great room, with its tall window walls and the views they afford, that the Samsons love best. "We knew when we found this lot that by putting the backyard in the front, we would be able to capture everything we wanted, and those windows allow us to do that," Ken says. It took endless planning and preparation—not to mention hard labor—to build the Samsons' home, but now that the process is complete, they can sit back in their spacious great room and enjoy a home that, for them, is perfect in every way.