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By Christine Mather
Photography by Jack Parsons

Sharon Woods—daughter, sister, wife, mother, homemaker—it is a familiar sequence, but when you refer to her as a homemaker, you have to put it in the boldest terms. Sharon builds homes, lots of them. Sharon remodels homes, lots of them. Sharon builds dreams from the ground up and such is her dynamism that she seems like a force that could have shaped the pyramids or thrown together a temple or two.

Sharon has just moved into a home. (Not, it should be noted, the house featured in the accompanying photographs.) Already, she is in full remodel mode, the garage is under construction in the front yard, and visions are churning for improvements more to come.

“Can’t you just see big French doors along this wall, and I can cut a larger entryway through here.” She is off and running on the hundredth such remodel project. “I am not what people suspect when they first meet me,” she says, an understatement pronounced with a bit of an offhand smile. “You know the image of the big burly builder—then they see me.”

A petite whirlwind, Sharon has been known to level the mighty corporate CEO with an honest, but diplomatic, appraisal such as, “I don’t think you’re going to be happy with that.” Her ability to interpret dreams makes her a Freud among Santa Fe home builders. This is not hyperbole but rather the voice of one who trusts Sharon above all to interpret my own home fantasies.

The living room, with its stacked Anasazi stone fireplace by Sadhu Stone, opens to a large portal and views of the nearby golf course and faraway Jemez Mountains.

Opposite: A softly curving, flagstone-floored hallway wears lovely diamond plaster with a beeswax finish.



Sharon takes the greatest pride in hearing her homes described as “classic.” She feels she achieves this by striving for a final outcome for all her homes.

“All houses make a statement, but I don’t want to build them as monuments to me or anyone,” she says. “I want them to be serene.” Serenity comes from a classic sense of scale, volume, and proportion. Serene spaces are for Sharon what makes a home a sanctuary. She came upon her love for creating these special spaces almost by happenstance and through the most time-honored method—by doing.

As a young high school art teacher, she arrived on the Santa Fe scene in 1973. In 1978, building her own home, Sharon discovered her métier. “I never really had a particular love of an artistic medium until I discovered home building—printmaking was nice, photography and drawing, painting, I liked them all well enough, but when I discovered building, that was it. At first, I made every mistake.”

Once discovered, though, she found herself elbow-deep in the process. “Nine months pregnant with my second child and plastering a wall, I knew I had to move on to another part of home building, as much as I loved being hands-on.” Sharon became the idea person for Woods-Architects Builders and the person who could, and would, get things done. To this day it is still her primary form of artistic expression, although she has been known to work on a book project or two from time to time. (Sharon and I have collaborated on two books, *Santa Fe Style*, 1986, and *Santa Fe Houses*, 2002.)

Today she describes her work as a collaboration. Each new project is guided by a team of specialists—architects,

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Master bedroom: The owners wanted to create a sophisticated Old World master bedroom emphasizing comfort. Sheri Seely of Studio 4 Design created this bed design with large, handsome proportions and Spanish detailing.

Details: Three pots from Jackalope in Santa Fe line the hallway to the master bedroom. Francis Nowicki crafted the wrought iron powder room sink. Hand-carved doors by Armijo Design lead to the media room (right), which includes space for live performances.

Above: In the game room, an antique pool table sits beneath a coffered ceiling. Exterior Environments built the fieldstone fireplace.

