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Photo by Addi Larson

After 41 years of living and working on a dairy farm, Art and Carol Lahr designed their one-level patio home in Eden Valley to accommodate their new lifestyle. Two lots provide elbow room and a smooth transition from their country home to city living. They built their new home, located on State Street in Eden Valley, last summer and moved into it during the first week of October.

Off the farm, Lahrs construct patio home in Eden Valley

By Addi Larson

Art and Carol Lahr built their one-story home in Eden Valley with two themes in mind: aging and grandchildren. Several of the choices they made during the designing and building process were due to their thoughts that they will not always be as young and agile as they are today and due to desired safety for their 16 grandchildren.

The Lahrs retired from their previous home, northeast of Eden Valley, after 41 years on a dairy farm. Their daughter bought the family farm, and they visit fre-

quently. Art said he needs the farm to be available; it is important to them.

Art said that he was once asked if he and Carol were "going to keep milking cows 'til we were 80 years old." They knew that eventually they would want to retire off the farm; they just weren't sure where.

They bought their two-lot property and pre-existing house - after approaching the family of the previous owner - and decided to build a new home, designed to fit their vision. "We basically bought the property because it had two lots," said Art.

A 206-foot lot was enough for a smooth transition from the country into town.

"We wanted some elbow room," agreed Carol. On State Street in Eden Valley, the couple noted a benefit of their new location. "The handiness of being able to walk up town to do everything," Art said. "We really like it here. We have good neighbors."

Carol added that they often walk throughout the neighborhood and town.

The floor plan - designed by the Lahrs, for them - came about after looking at pre-designed plans and not finding one that exactly fit their desires. "We just kind of had a list of some of the things we had in mind," said Carol. So, they drew what

they both liked. "This floor plan really resembles the floor plan in the country," said Carol, adding, "There wasn't really a lot that we disagreed on."

The Lahrs hired all local contractors, whom they thought were "wonderful." Carol added, "They were people we knew, and we just knew we'd be satisfied."

One noticeable difference between their farm's floor plan and their new floor plan is that they now live on one level. "Because of our age," Art said, "we wanted everything on one level." In the country, they had three finished floors, but really only lived on the main level, said Carol.

In the kitchen, their dishwasher is elevated off the floor, with a storage drawer below it. This prevents Art and Carol from needing to bend their knees and backs to load and unload dishes. The microwave is also raised, as well as their front-loading washer and dryer down the hall.

Roll-out cabinet shelves, throughout the kitchen, create an easy reach and eliminate searching within dark cupboards, "so all our dishes come to us," said Carol. A roll-out wastebasket also provides an easy reach. "All of our dishes, we put in roll-outs too," added Carol.

LAHRS - see page 2C

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**LAHRS –
from page 1C**

A warming drawer – on one side of the island in the kitchen – makes for added convenience when visiting company brings cooked food to keep heated. Carol said she has really appreciated the difference a warming drawer has made during gatherings. A walk-in pantry, something Carol said she always wanted on the farm, stores a large stock food for two.

The kitchen appliances are white, which the Lahrs both like. They had seen a lot of homes that have stainless steel appliances but decided they “just wanted to stay pretty basic,” said Carol.

The Lahrs originally designed an L-shaped island but were convinced by the cabinetmakers to change the design to an asymmetrical hexagon shape. They agreed this is better because they are able to move around the island more fluidly. Out of personal preference, they chose laminate countertops over granite.

The kitchen cabinets, constructed of oak with American-maple stain, are hung in staggered fashion, which their cabinetmakers said makes a kitchen look larger. “It brings a little character to the kitchen,” said Carol.

“We were kind of amazed by all the cabinet space we have,” she added.

The wall colors – light shades of bisque and sand – were suggested, due to their neutral quality, by designers at the couple’s lumber yard. Art and Carol said they have been happy with the paint choices. “I didn’t want anything drastic,” said Carol.

Nine-foot-tall ceilings include tray ceilings in the kitchen and sun porch and race tracking on the wall above their gas fireplace, specialties that add a dimensional appeal.



Photo by Addi Larson

Maple-stained oak cabinets have roll-out shelves, an added convenience, in the Lahrs’s kitchen. An elevated dishwasher and above-the-stove microwave reduce the need for the Lahrs to bend knees and backs in their new kitchen. A walk-in pantry provides extra storage for their stock of food.

LAHRS – see page 4C

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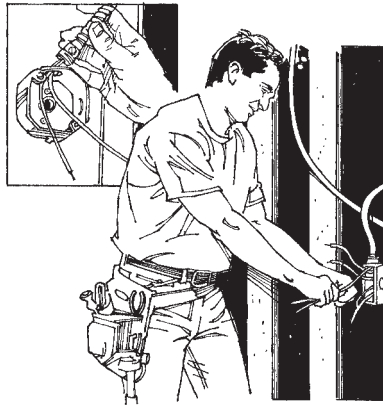


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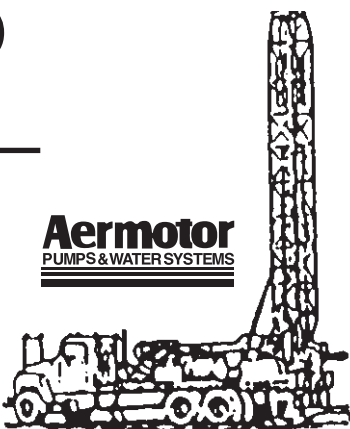


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The Lahrs have received several compliments on their wide-framed woodwork, which exists on the fireplace mantel and on pillars under the archway to the south-facing porch. The living room in their new home adjoins both their kitchen (not shown, at right) and the sun porch (through the archway).

Photo by Addi Larson

LAHRS – from page 2C

The natural gas fireplace has a thermostat and blower. The couple was originally going to put a flat-screen television above the fireplace but opted for framed photos, instead.

Laminate wood floors run throughout the kitchen, living room, and down the hallway to the bedrooms. The sun porch, bedrooms, and game room are carpeted. All the floors are heated with an electric boiler. Floors in the garage are also heated and can be controlled separately from the house.

The Lahrs wanted heated floors for added comfort, especially without a basement, since floors without a warm basement below them tend to be cooler.

The couple utilizes their garage for entertaining, including an upcoming Easter gathering with about 30 family members. They received a dual-fuel rate from their electric company, and their natural gas furnace with central air acts as a backup, Art said. Their insulation was blown in, something they saw in other new construction with higher R value. Their furnace room currently serves a dual purpose, as extra storage space before a garage sale this spring.

The 2,357 square-foot, single-level home – with an additional 1,000 square-foot, three-stall garage – has three bedrooms, with one bedroom presently being utilized as an office. The closet in their bedroom-turned-office has shelving to organize paperwork. The Lahrs work full time in real estate and needed a place to work at home.

Added storage cabinets – throughout the hallway to the guest bedroom, guest bathroom, and master bedroom and bathroom – hold rugs, clothes, extra towels,

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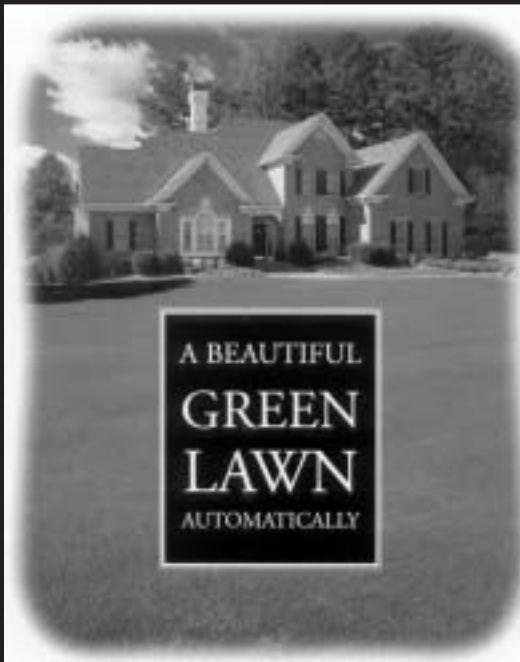
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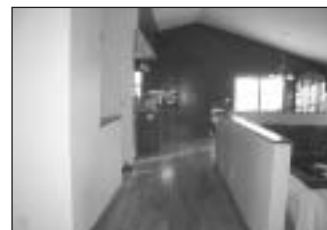


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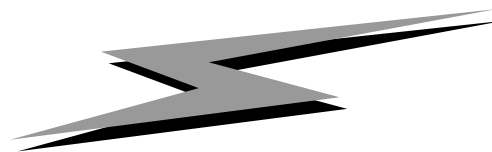
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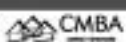
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LAHRS – from page 4C

and paper ware, said Carol. In the laundry room, there is a built-in ironing board that folds up to appear like a cabinet. Cabinets, counter space, and a soaking sink add convenience.

Just outside the sun porch, cabinets hold special keepsakes, viewable through windows of the cabinet doors. "We had a choice of going solid wood or glass doors on those cupboards," Carol said.

Also outside the sun porch are maple pillars. "We did that for character," Carol said. The woodwork on the pillars matches the woodwork on the mantle of their nearby fireplace. "We've had a lot of compliments on the wide trim and the woodwork," Carol said.

Wheelchair accessibility exists throughout the home, including both bathroom doors and a handicapped-accommodating, sit-down shower in the master bathroom. A six-foot whirlpool tub and a walk-in closet are nearby, with the master bathroom being connected to the master bedroom.

A conscious choice to make the home accommodating to handicapped persons was for the possibility that they might be dependent upon wheelchairs someday. "Also, it makes it for re-sale," said Art. "You never know."

A second, three-quarter bathroom – with a shower stall, toilet, and sink – is across the hall from the guest bedroom. This is something the couple wanted so that guests are near a bathroom at night and don't need to wander through the dark.

A game room, at the back of the house, has a dart board, an entertainment system, exercise equipment, and a pool table. "I never had room, at the farm, for a pool table, and I always wanted one," Art said.

Also included in the game room is plumbing for the future installation of a four-foot bar. The entertainment system is

being planned to be elevated, so it is not accessible to their three-year-old grandsons.

Space in the backyard will allow for games of horseshoe, which Art enjoys.

Just off the game room is an open porch with pine ceilings and a ceiling fan light. The Lahrs, who moved into their home the last week of October, are looking forward to sunsets and outdoor grilling during the summer. "Maybe someday, we'll enclose it," said Carol of the possibility of making it a screened-in porch. "We don't know. We'll see how bad the mosquitoes get."

Art and Carol's kitchen stove includes a griddle, for indoor grilling, if the mosquitoes chase them inside.

Windows in the their new home are a prairie-grid style and tint in the daylight so outsiders can't see inside. The Lahrs wanted large windows in the sunroom for openness to the southern exposure. All up-and-down shades in the house allow for light from the top of the window, with privacy at the bottom. And a shade is built into the middle of the front door's window, calling for no cleaning, and lifts with a slide. "We're not curtain people, but we did need shades," Carol said.

All the lighting – installed once the framework was up and studded, and before the house was sheet-rocked – was chosen by the couple with a few recommendations from their electricians. "Electricians go through a lot of homes, so they have some ideas."

Local contractors also did the cement work, the driveway and the sidewalk. A separate, sand-point well waters the lawn. The front yard has been seeded with an underground sprinkler system, and the couple said more landscaping is a possibility.

A central vacuum system, throughout the house, means the Lahrs attach a hose and only have to carry it, not a machine,

to vacuum. The system delivers collections to the vacuum's body, which is mounted on a wall in the garage.

The three-stall garage has enough space for Art's tool cabinet, a deep freezer, and an extra refrigerator; in addition to Art's pickup truck and their boat. Art wanted to be able to store the boat at the house. "So if I hear the fish are biting, we can hook on and go," he said.

A storage room in the garage is built of concrete cement blocks and doubles as a safe room. It serves as adequate shelter from a tornado and includes outlets for a radio.

Above the garage, a pull-down ladder leads to an 8' by 12' attic for seasonal storage. Two ceiling fans in the garage will be utilized in the summer, they said.

The cement floors were painted with epoxy coating, by Art, and sprinkled with colored flecks. They wanted a garage floor that is easy to keep clean, said Art.

There is a separate entry to the garage from the front lawn. And a second door to the house, from inside the garage, is self-closing, which Carol wanted for when they are carrying groceries.

In the foyer, there is a cutout in the wall, which serves as a window between the front door and the kitchen. From the kitchen, the couple wanted to be able to see their guests arriving at the front door. Below the cut-out is a bench for putting on and removing shoes.

The couple said that when the cement slab was completed, they thought the house looked small, but when the frame was completed, they thought it looked larger. They wondered what the finished patio house would look like. "It all falls into place," said Carol.



Photo by Addi Larson

Leading to the backyard, a west-facing open porch, with pine ceiling, will serve well for outdoor grilling and watching sunsets for the Lahrs in Eden Valley.



Photo by Addi Larson

Their game room currently includes a pool table and dart board as well as exercise equipment and an entertainment center.



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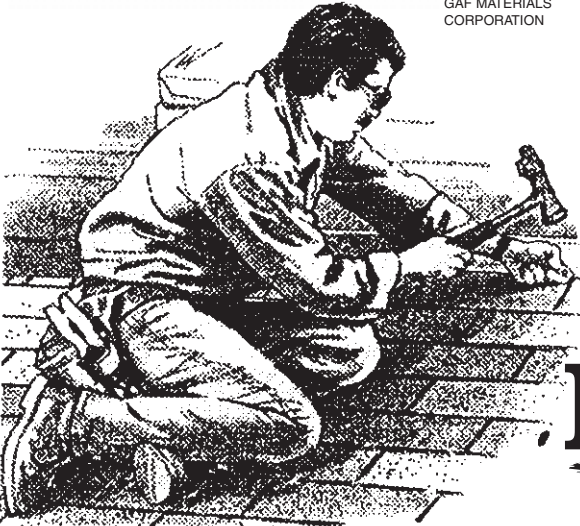
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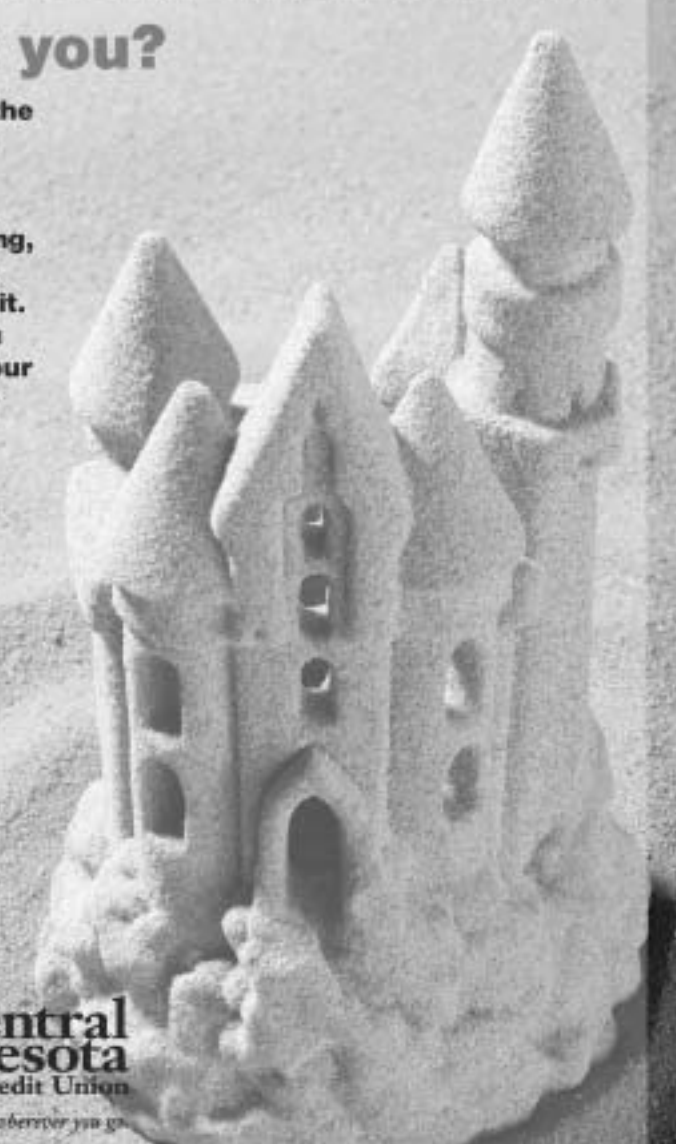


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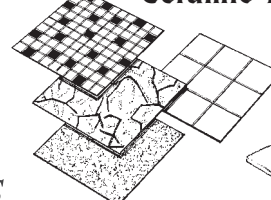
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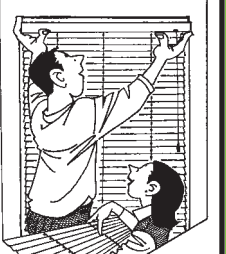
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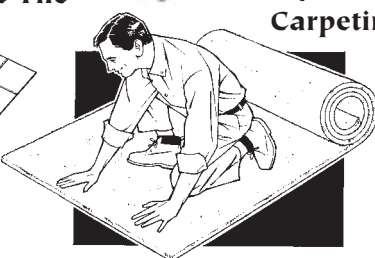
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