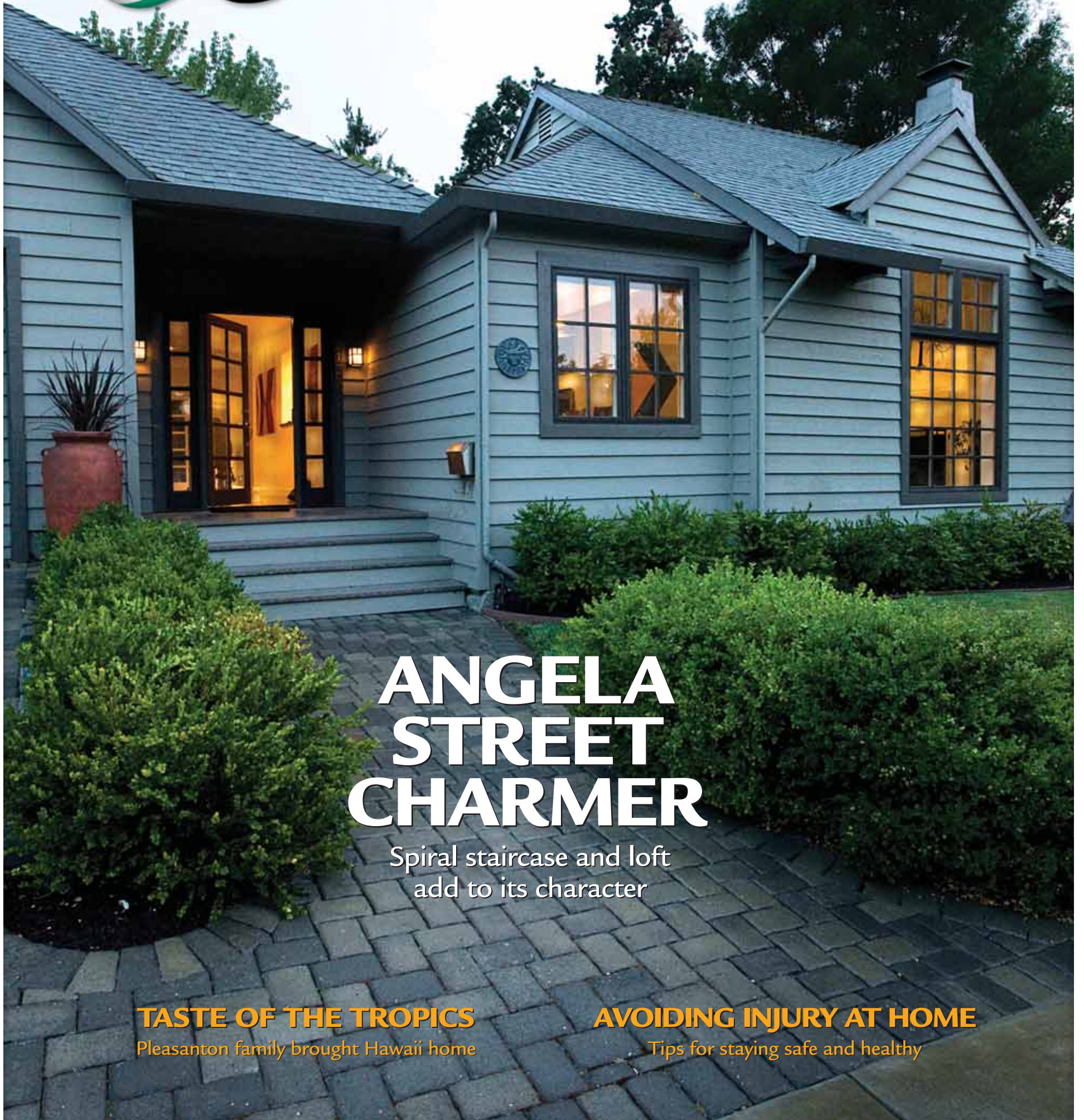


Home & garden



ANGELA STREET CHARMER

Spiral staircase and loft add to its character

TASTE OF THE TROPICS

Pleasanton family brought Hawaii home

AVOIDING INJURY AT HOME

Tips for staying safe and healthy



PHOTOS BY JERRY MORGENROTH

Simple, yet comfortable furnishings in this remodeled and expanded 1930 home at 213 E. Angela St. add to its spaciousness.

Home sweet home 81 years later

Spiral staircase, bedroom loft makes this an Angela Street charmer

By JEB BING

Talk about affordable housing. This stunning 2,200-square-foot home on prestigious East Angela Street just two blocks from downtown cost only \$198,000 when Patti and Jim Morgenroth bought it in 1993. It was even much less in 1930 when it was built.

But those were “the good old days” when housing and house size was less at the time the Morgenroths purchased the 950-square-foot house 15 years ago. A photo of that original home shows that it was not quite the charmer it is today.

Jim Morgenroth, a contractor who rebuilt Studio 7 Fine Arts and the Blue Agave restaurant downtown, added 1,200 square feet to the Angela Street house when he and Patti moved here from Cincinnati shortly after their marriage in 1992. Planning to take his time in remodeling, Patti learned she was pregnant and the timeline for fixing up—and expanding—the old house suddenly grew shorter.

Working nights and weekends after a regular week of building other facilities, including many involving construction contracts with the city of Pleasanton, Jim Morgenroth gutted the house, ripping out the old lathing and plaster except for the living room, which he felt had architectural value. He put in new flooring, upgraded the kitchen and a bathroom and installed new flooring.

By 1996, with two children aboard and more likely, he also added a loft for his expanding family, which now numbers four children from 14 to 6



Jim and Patti Morgenroth stand on the maple spiral staircase that they had custom-made by a Southern California manufacturer.

years old. The loft—really a second floor—can be reached on a unique maple spiral staircase which, though it looks custom made, actually came from a mail order house in Southern California. Built there to match the specifications Morgenroth sent them, carpenters constructed the stairway, then disassembled it in pieces, shipped it here and Morgenroth reassembled and installed it at one corner of the living room, with it reaching to the center of two daughters’ bedroom. It’s a craftsman’s delight, with polished maple banisters and all.

Although the house has been doubled in size, it’s proving to be too small for Jim Morgenroth, who finds space increasingly crowded with his family of five females, especially when it comes to morning time in the two bathrooms. Surrounded by curlers, hair dryers, makeup and some in the family who like long showers, Morgenroth needs to get up very early. The home is also becoming more crowded because of the growing number of teenage friends the older daughters are inviting over.

“My kids come home from parties at their friends’ newer and more spacious homes and think we live in a shack,” Morgenroth joked. “Actually, we are a very close-knit family and this house suits us quite well, but we felt it was time to look for something bigger.”

So last year, he bought a house on Second Street next to his office at Second and Kottinger Drive and has rebuilt it with a Frank Lloyd Wright architectural design. The outside has that distinctive 1930s look, but the inside is ultra-contemporary, with open

spaces and few walls that resemble the Eichler-style homes of the 1950s. Walk in and you're in one large room that includes the living room, dining area and kitchen. Only a guest room, which also serves as an office on the first floor, has walls and a door. The five bedrooms upstairs and, of course, the three bathrooms, also are enclosed.

But once in their new home, when the girls bring their friends over for an evening of fun in the living room, parents Jim and Patti are likely to be right there, whether at the kitchen sink or reading at the dining room table.

The daughters are Hali, 14, who is starting her freshman year at Amador Valley High School; Makala, 13, now in the eighth grade at Pleasanton Middle School, and Olivia, 9, and Zoe, 6, who are in the fourth and second grades, respectively, at Valley View Elementary School. All four speak Spanish as part of their dual immersion language training at Valley View, with even Zoe now fairly proficient as a second grader. Hali has signed up for third-year Spanish in her first year at Amador.

Since neither parent speaks Spanish, they're never sure what's being said when the kids switch from English to Spanish in their conversation, although their thoughts about the wall-less big room at the new home might be a topic of conversation.

After graduating from the University of Cincinnati with degrees in finance and real estate, Jim married Patti in 1992 and the newlywed couple headed west.

Jim's parents, Mary and Jerry Morgenroth, had moved to Livermore years earlier, where Jerry owns the distributorship for Flowmax, a valve manufacturing company that builds special products for major customers, such as PG&E and local wineries. Mary recently retired as a nurse at ValleyCare Medical Center.

Jerry Morgenroth also is a freelance photographer. His full-time work in Cincinnati and now here has kept him from pursuing his hobby more vigorously, as he'd like to do, although he just acquired a new \$8,000 digital camera to do more photography. Jim Morgenroth said that going digital was a "sea-change" for his father, who used to spend many nights in his basement darkroom developing black and white photos that often appeared in Cincinnati publications.

Besides his parents, Jim Morgenroth has a younger sister, Monica, who is married and now lives in Discovery Bay. Another sister, Emily, who was a Sacramento police officer, was killed in the line of duty in 1997 when her police car crashed while she was pursuing a stolen vehicle.

"It was a difficult time for all of us because we are a close family," he said. "It was sobering and makes you think about how much you can protect your own children."

Patti Morgenroth's parents, Bunchy and Fred Thompson, still live in Cincinnati, but visit often.

"That's another reason why we need a bit more room in our home," Jim Morgenroth explained.

The Angela Street home, which the Morgenroths bought for \$198,000 in 1993, is on the market with Realtor Mike Carey, priced at \$1,260,000. With current home sales slowing down, Morgenroth said he might just rent the house until the market turns positive again, unless, of course, a buyer comes along.

"It only takes one," he added. "And this is truly a splendid home." ■



Above: Dining and living rooms open onto East Angela Street in a prestigious neighborhood just two blocks from downtown.

Left: Hali Morgenroth, 14, and her sister Makala, 13, look over the spiral stairway banister in the second floor loft they share at their Angela Street home.

Below: At left, a covered patio just outside the Morgenroth's spacious home offers plenty of room for entertaining with the manicured (at right) rear yard especially inviting for outdoor activities.