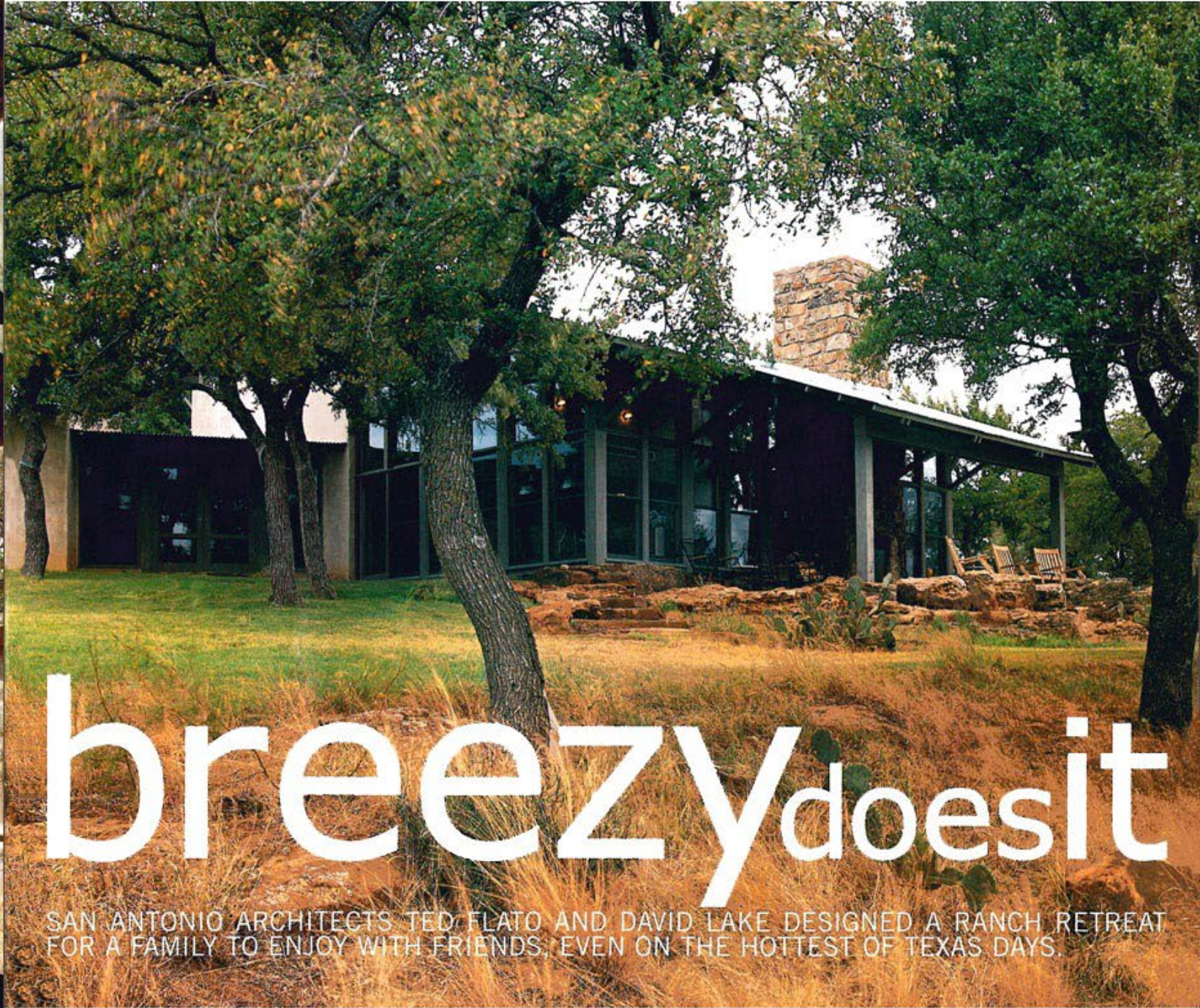
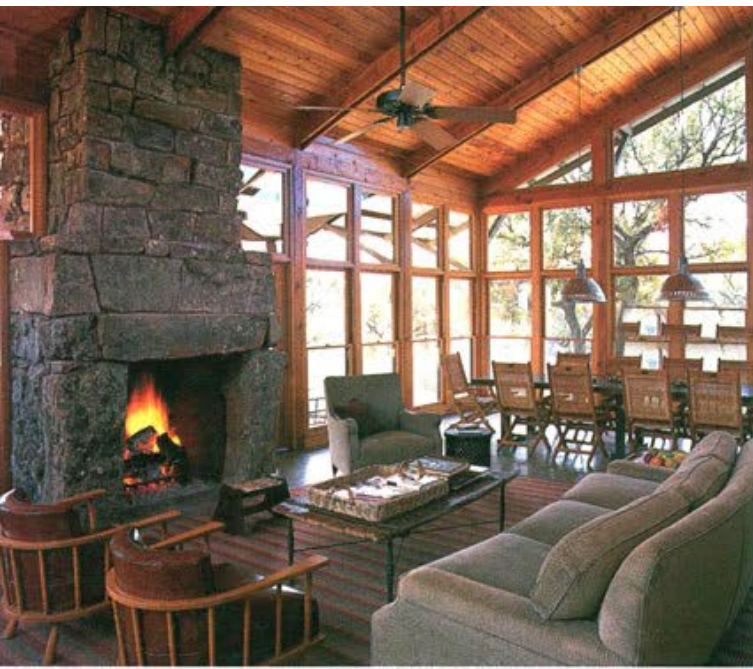


"The living room," the architects explain, "is basically just a porch," although there's plenty of outdoor seating too. The house faces south to maximize the cooling effect of moving air.



breezydoesit

SAN ANTONIO ARCHITECTS TED FLATO AND DAVID LAKE DESIGNED A RANCH RETREAT FOR A FAMILY TO ENJOY WITH FRIENDS, EVEN ON THE HOTTEST OF TEXAS DAYS.



Summer in Texas is both the best of times and the worst of times. The heat is often so overwhelming that by June the faint of heart have headed north. But that didn't stop a Dallas couple from asking San Antonio architects Ted Flato and David Lake to design a hospitable retreat, on a ranch about two hours west of Dallas, that would draw them and their guests outside as much as possible.

Lake and Flato have never regarded Texas weather as the enemy, and they relished the chance to have fun with this project. The ranch is located on a sweep of mesa at the end of an ever-narrowing winding road. The couple had been using another house on the property, cantilevered over the prow of a cliff, and its fabulous view tempted them to remodel instead of building new. "But the wind was all wrong there," says the wife about the north-facing house. "We could see the river, but in the summer we were stifling."

To catch the coolest breezes, the house needed to face south, and Flato and his partner David Lake found just the spot: The site had a grand vista. Up close the scene was subtle: grasses, slender gnarled oaks and hunks of rock providing the context to which Flato responded by designing a low-slung house. "It's like a wall," he says, "that puts a natural edge on the big open field."

Utilitarian, with shed roofs, the parenthetical curve of stucco buildings affords a modest presence. Inside, however, the simple living/dining room opens up to expose the spectacle of river beyond, clouds on high and red-tailed hawks gliding by, surfing the wind currents.

Opportunities for mingling are a focal point, from the living/dining area (top and opposite) to the front motor court (above center)—which doubles as an archery range—to the patio by the pool.

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO AND DIANE CARROLL.
PHOTOS BY GREY CRAWFORD. WRITTEN BY HELEN THOMPSON.





It was a simple idea," Flato claims. "There is one big roof under which kids and adults play together in an open space. It's kind of like summer camp." Especially for the children, because the upstairs bunk room is their communal bedroom: it looks onto the living room below, encouraging the togetherness that seems to flourish on porches.

Downstairs, the house is also geared for activity. Durable concrete floors and hand-troweled stucco walls are mottled and evanescent "like the fog off the river," the homeowner says. The couple wanted furniture and accessories to be unobtrusive and sought the help of Dallas designer and architect Mil Bodron. "They did not want the place to look too designed or too ranch-y," he explains.

Bodron chose surprisingly elegant pieces, even though the rock fireplace is massive and ceilings are high, such as the bow-backed sofa covered in a nonchalant chenille. "I think

that furniture should always be in scale to the other pieces," he says, "and not be scaled to the room."

Because the 3,200-square-foot house is so transparent beyond its front stucco wall, Bodron chose furniture with see-through traits, such as the Robsjohn-Gibbings chairs in the living room, still upholstered in the original Naugahyde.

Bedrooms are in wings flanking the main living room. "We asked the architects to make them a nice size," says the wife, "but not too huge, because no one will spend a lot of time in them. The whole idea was to offer an experience different from what we would get in an urban environment." mh

See Resources, last pages.

Above: The master bedroom, where the river is visible from the bed. Opposite, top: Landscape designer Tary Arterburn conceived the round pool, its shape a tribute to the stock tanks that are a ranch fixture. Opposite, bottom: The children's bunkhouse and (far left) the downstairs bathroom.

