

A house with a creative spirit

JESS LANDER
 For the Register

One of Napa's most intriguing hillside homes is on the market. The curiously-round structure atop Alta Heights known as the Sundial House acts as both a home and tracker of the time and seasons.

Though several had tried and failed before her, owner Phyllis Hunt managed to get approval to buy and build on the 7.75-acre property on Maxwell Avenue, which was formerly being used as parkland and designated by the city of Napa as scenic easement.

How did she pull it off? She met with the neighbors.

"When I first walked up on the property, I thought, 'Boy, if I was living in this neighborhood, I'd be very concerned about having this property for sale, what was going to be done with it and by whom,'" said Hunt. "It was very clear to me that it was being used as parkland. I just assumed that there was probably some vested interest in what was going on, and I asked the real estate agent, and he looked at me and said, 'How did you know that?'"

Hunt finished building her 2,634 square-foot house, with three bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths, in 1996 on just about an acre of the entire property, and has left the rest as peaceful and natural as she found it. With a view of Mt. Tamalpais that also overlooks downtown Napa, the home has three living levels and an additional level of storage.

Now approaching retirement, she is offering her multi-purpose home to new inhabitants, for the

listing price of \$1.850 million.

Berkeley architect Craig Henritzy of Indigenous Designs shaped the home as a tribute to the indigenous American tribes and the ancient, ceremonial round huts they were known to build. He also meticulously oriented the home in alignment with the celestial guide to solstice.

The living room doubles as a living sundial, with the sun flowing through the floor-to-ceiling collection of various-sized, Frank Lloyd-inspired windows, and marking its shadow at the solar noon on carefully-placed cement blocks. Iron markings in the house also track the winter and summer solstices, in addition to the twice-yearly equinox.

Clay-colored walls give off a Southwestern adobe vibe, and they were built with an insulated, recycled material called Rasta Block. Its light, sponge-like core is filled with cement and it's said to be both fireproof, and highly tolerant of earthquakes.

Sustainability is a theme here, from the Rasta, to the passive solar system, to the recycled golf balls found on the property and incorporated into the stone walls outside.

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The home never needs to use a heating system, for the combination of the insulating Rasta, the windows and acid-stained concrete floors keep the home toasty and comfortable—although there is a fireplace in the kitchen. In the summer months, you won't need to

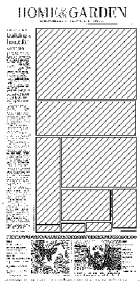
worry about running the air conditioning either.

The open space encourages communal living and connectivity, and was made for entertaining, as the living room seamlessly flows up a few stairs to the dining area, and up a few more to the kitchen, all without doors or dividing walls. From the third floor bedrooms, cutouts in the walls look over the action in the kitchen, which overlooks the living room.

"That was the driving concept with the house, I wanted something very open, very warm and welcoming," said Hunt. "If you do any entertaining at all, you probably know that if you're the hostess and you're in the kitchen, that's where people are. I wanted a space where people could interact and never feel left out, where they could kind of wander around, but still be connected, and that's exactly what happens."

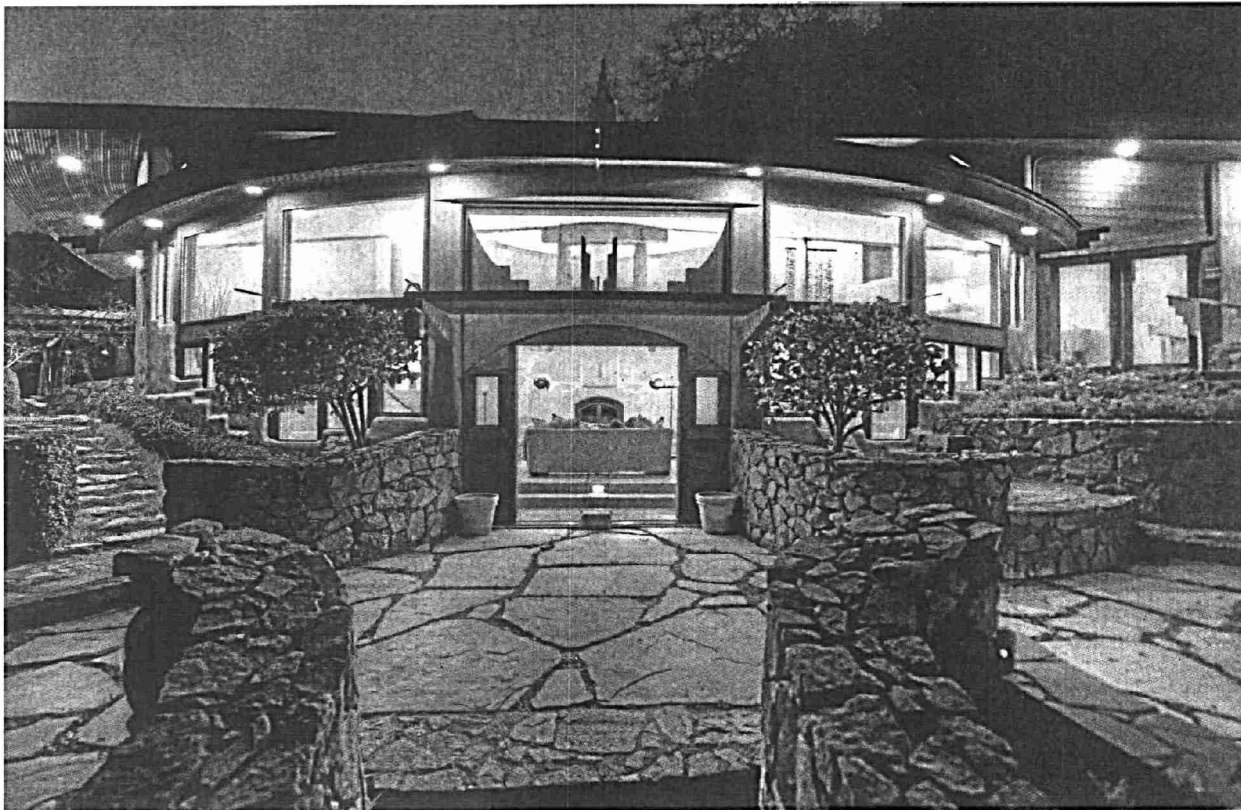
Outside, the perfect Fourth of July fireworks viewing point and where deer sightings occur pretty much daily, stone walking paths snake in and out of a series of patios built off the bedrooms. Not fully enclosed and connected to one another, they offer privacy and welcome company at the same time.

"It's a very interactive space at all levels," said Hunt. "This is a house that



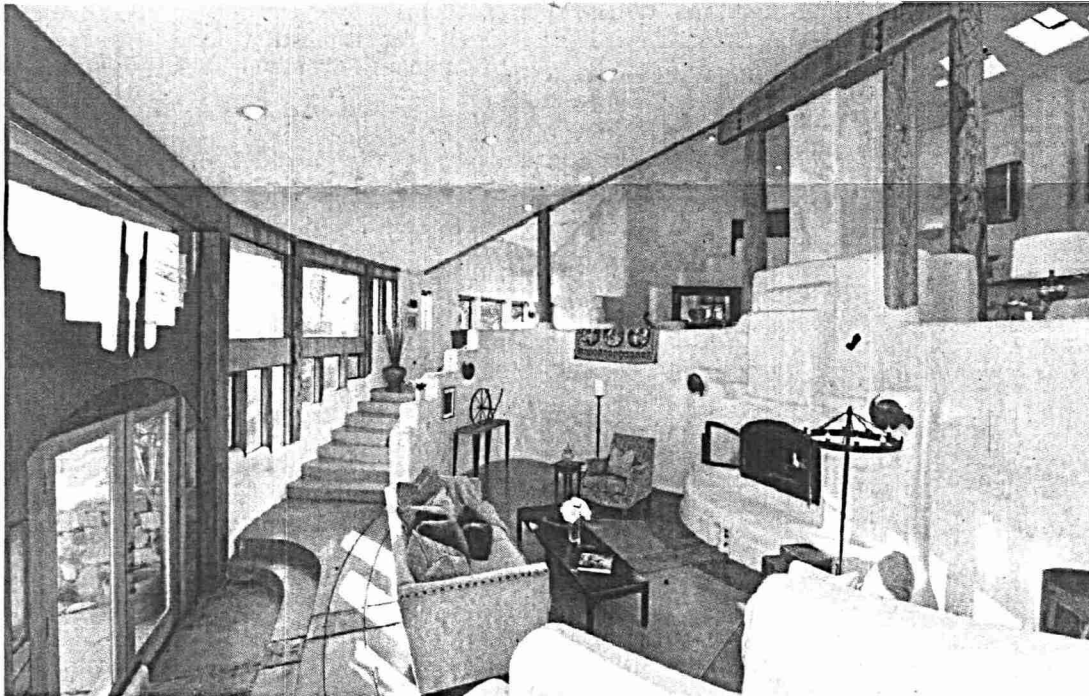
welcomes people, and welcomes their creative spirit.”

For more information about the property, contact Stefan Jezycki, Pacific Union International Real Estate, (707) 738-2945.

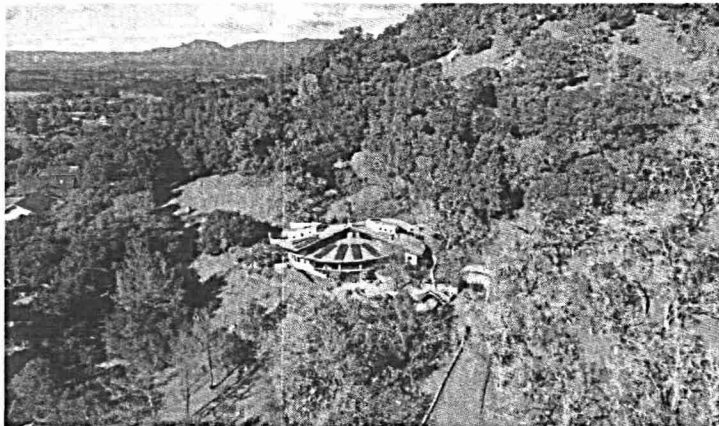


SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Berkeley architect Craig Henritz of Indigenous Designs designed the distinctive Napa house as a tribute to the indigenous American tribes and their ceremonial round huts.



The house at 1515 Maxwell is designed to be open and welcoming.



An aerial view of the Alta Heights house, which is set on 7.75 acres.