

meanwhile... back at the ranch

People often ask how we find feature homes and, for the book we're working on, it was a combination of outreach—enthusiast groups, past contacts, our Facebook friends (dozens and dozens of responses)—and also sifting through daily emails from proud homeowners. Gathering the possibilities was relatively easy, but culling was arduous. In addition to geographic diversity, a range of styles and enough strong rooms to support a chapter, homeowners had to be willing to devote considerable time and effort to present and talk knowingly about their house.

Extensive scouting photos helped us develop detailed shot lists, but it was with some trepidation that I set out to photograph places we hadn't actually visited. Happy to say, there were no heart-sinking surprises, no Oh-my-God-what-have-I-walked-into? moments. On the contrary, I was always impressed with the preparations and hospitality of each owner: spic and span homes, custom-made duvets, just-washed windows (always a big deal in a ranch), even new carpet and vinyl tile at one home awaited my arrival.

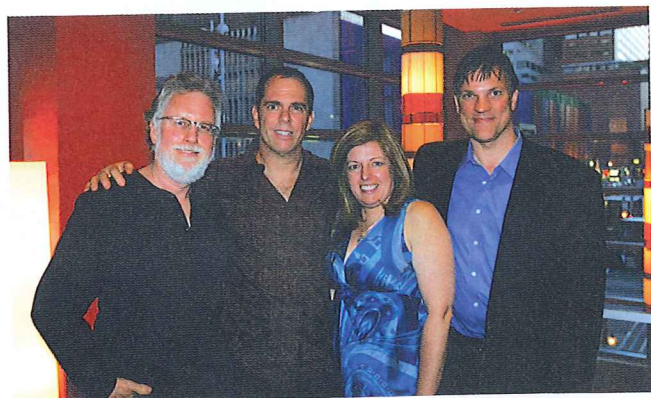
Food was a big part of every trip, and there were nice dinners with fellow enthusiasts in Cincinnati and

Hollin Hills, and lunch at Elmer's BBQ in Tulsa. I was even introduced to Manchego cheese and membrillo (quince paste) at an Argentinean household in San Mateo. One homeowner took my low-cholesterol needs into account and prepared a killer lentil dish, only to rightfully chide me when I admitted to grabbing an incredible cheeseburger at a Five Guys when blowing through Alexandria, Va., in a rainstorm. ("So much for Mr. Low-Fat," she said. In my defense, I only had a few fries and didn't even touch the peanuts.) But the lowlight gastronomically was the Denny's breakfast in Garland, Texas, where it was just one other patron, a retired codger downing a Grand Slam and reading the local obituaries, and me, with a sad bowl of oatmeal. Maybe I was atoning for that burger.

One thing people asked me on the road was to name the great midcentury neighborhoods I've visited; I some-

times got the impression that they felt their area was not worthy. My experience indicates those feelings of insignificance are misplaced, because I've had the opportunity to actually see first-hand my oft-repeated mantra that good ranches are everywhere. Whether it was driving through the White Rock Lake development in Dallas, touring Lortondale in Tulsa, or a quick spin through Cincinnati's Amberley Village, it deepened my appreciation of our basic concept. While one should admire and visit the famous bastions of mid-century (Palm Springs and Chicago, anyone?) be proud of where you live and the history of your region's builders and architects. There are wonderful examples in your own back yard.

Jim Brown, Publisher



Dinner at 'Nada' with members of cf3 (Cincinnati Form Follows Function).
Left to right: Me, Arlen & Susan Rissover and Lou Batsch.