

ATTACHMENT B:  
Photographs & Excerpts from the Text Buff &  
Hensman (Architectural Guild Press, 2004)

## **BUFF RESIDENCE: RAPOR**

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA, 1977

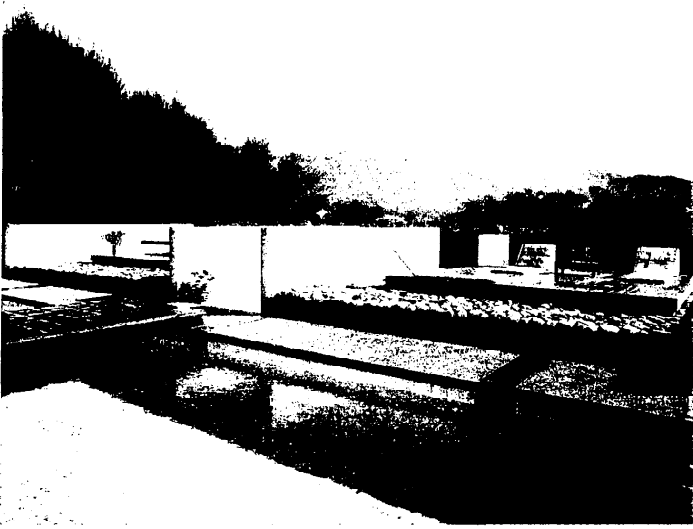
Conrad Buff has designed more than 200 houses while a partner in the firm of Buff & Hensman, but only this one for himself and wife, Libby. It is a modest 1,600 square feet, with just two bedrooms. He limited materials to redwood, teak, stucco, glass, and quarry tile. Colors are natural and the house has a low profile. It is unusual in the way it reflects the Buffs' lifestyle. It is not trendy, but is a sound design based on tried and true principles related to its region.

The house occupies all of the site allowed by code, atop a private knoll overlooking Pasadena. A window wall looks due east to the view and the morning sun. To the south and west, walls have a limited number of windows to prevent heat gain during hot weather. It feels private but has a spectacular view of the entire San Gabriel Valley.

The house is first seen from the driveway. Judy Jensen created a pair of stained glass entry doors that are located between inner and outer courtyards. Attention to

detail unites outdoor and indoor spaces here. We delineated the interior by using changes of level. The garage and workshop area for making Conrad's jewelry were located on a lower level under the pool and deck terraces.

Conrad Buff inherited many paintings of the Southwest from his father, who was a landscape artist. For many years, he also collected American Indian weavings, pottery, and artifacts, as well as museum-quality pre-Colombian art from Mexico. To display these treasures, Buff designed a variety of ledges and shelves for the 23 foot x 40 foot living area. He planned wall space for the paintings and hangings, then covered the walls with a coarse jute material. It conceals nail holes and makes it easy to move things around. The final step was lighting. Buff arranged a wash of light along the walls from two sources: down from a skylight and up from ledges at the base. The skylight is continuous around the perimeter of the living areas and contains fluorescent tubes so that it



can function both day and night. In addition, there are spotlights in the ceiling to illuminate specific areas, such as the dining table and sofas, obviating the need for conventional floor and table lamps. There are seventy-five light sources in the living area alone, all controlled by rheostat so that the light intensity can be infinitely varied for changes of mood and function.

The symmetrical plan contributes to the simplicity and strong sense of order here. This was suggested by the need for two bedrooms, one for the Buffs, the other for guests, and each with its own bath. However, the dominant element is a tiled walkway that begins at the motor court. It rises straight, like the trunk of a great tree, to the level of the pool and passes to and through the house. Everything is composed around this walkway.

This design is a far cry from the 1950s, when Conrad and I, fresh out of USC School of Architecture, were preaching the gospel of post-and-beam construction with great areas of glass and space devoted to indoor–outdoor living. The avant-garde house of that period was a tentlike thing, almost transparent, composed of minimum materials. What changed? As Buff says, “Part of it was sheer boredom with post-and-beam, but a good deal was due to the energy crunch. We had to learn to use glass only where it was meaningful to the inhabitants. We sought greater mass in our buildings, making them easier to heat and cool, and we wanted a look of strength. We found in the long run, however, that bearing wall architecture doesn’t hold up too well. I think my house will, but we’re still learning.”