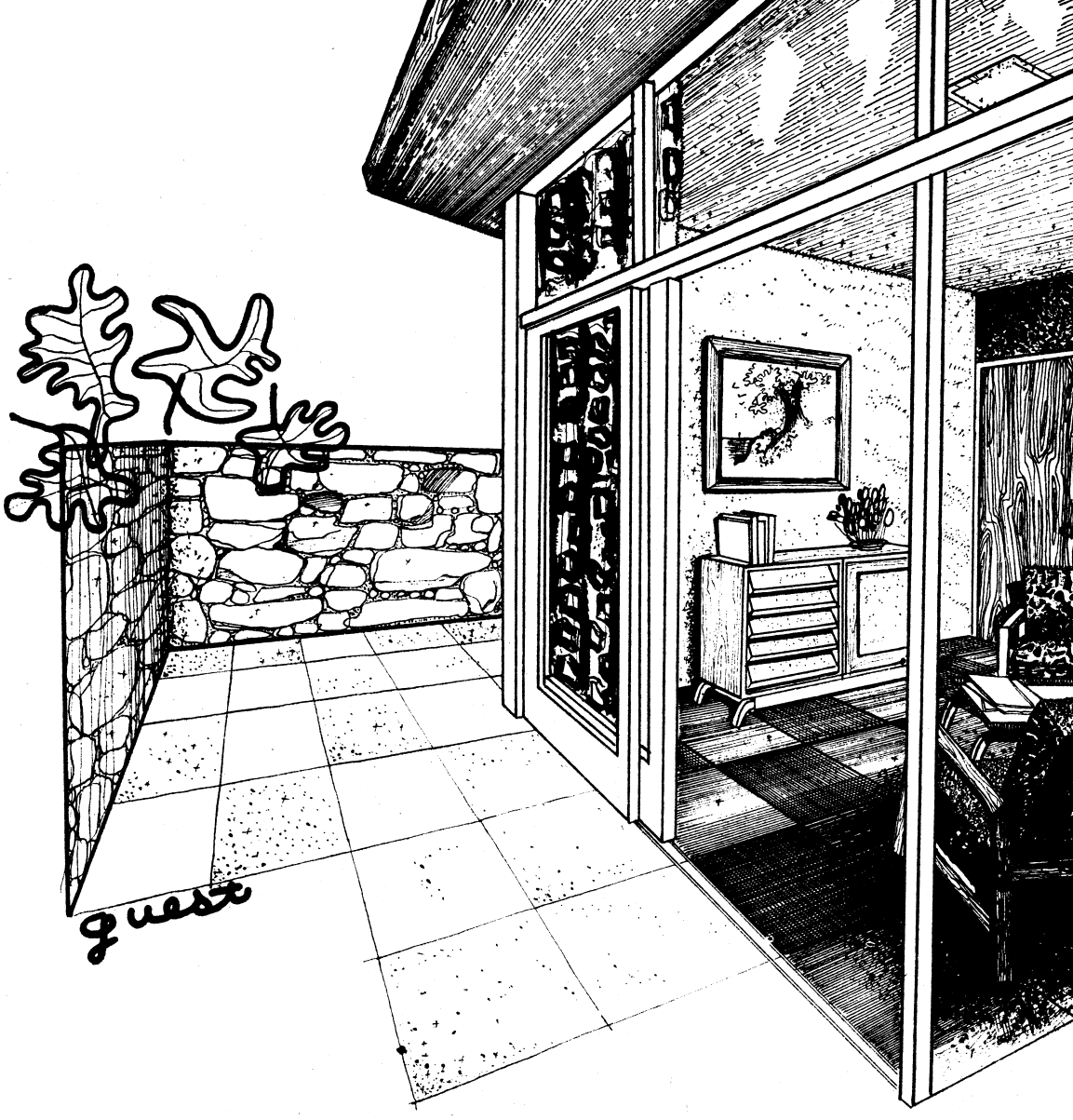
case study house 12

THIS IS THE TWELFTH OF A CONTINUING SERIES OF STUDIES BY NATIONALLY-KNOWN ARCHITECTS FOR ARTS & ARCHITECTURE'S CASE STUDY HOUSE PROGRAM. CONSTRUCTION WAS BEGUN IN JANUARY ON CSH NO. 11, AND GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES PERMITTING, CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN IN FEBRUARY ON SEVERAL OTHER HOUSES IN THE PROGRAM.



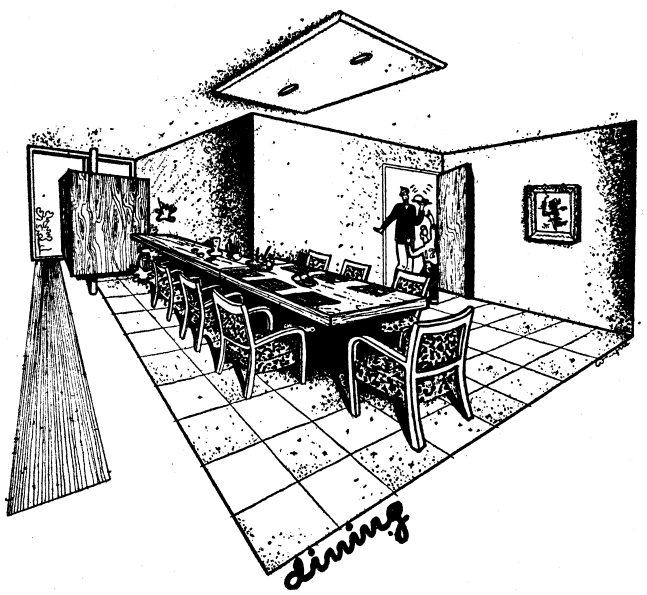
WHITNEY R. SMITH, A. I. A., ARCHITECT

There is the story of the amateur inventor who never had a better place to putter than a corner of a dark and crowded garage. . . . There is the story of the woman who designed her own clothes and never had anything but the dining room table to work on. . . . There is the story of the enthusiastic young photographer who took possession of the family bath two nights a week.

Was there ever more tortuous procrustean fitting than that imposed by a stereotyped house?

Take it or leave it or make it what you can. This is the formula built in rows on 10,000 streets: bedrooms and bath . . . living room, dining room, breakfast nook, kitchen . . . service porch, garage.

Now here and there is an encouraging sign. The stereotyped pattern of middle class living is being disrupted by extra-curricular special interest activities, and in spite of all the away-from-home attractions, these Special Interests are earning space that is an intrinsic part of the home. And when



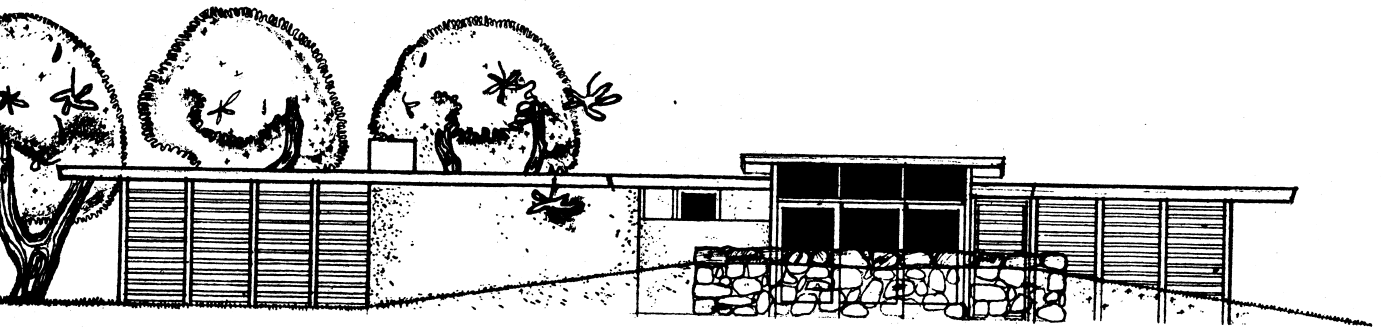
the primary and universal living needs are met in a plan, when standard units are turned out prefabricated in mass production, it is provision for Special Interests which will make the Jones House an individual house, different, not in superficial externals or arrangement of rooms, but in actual character and motivation from the house next door.

So here is the story of the man who has nurtured his rare and wonderful plants in a lean-to made of lumber scraps. Instead of planning his new home with the housing for his horticultural collection back of a garage with the chicken coop, the LATH HOUSE was recognized as a distinguishing symbol of the client's living pattern and made the dominating motif of the architectural design.

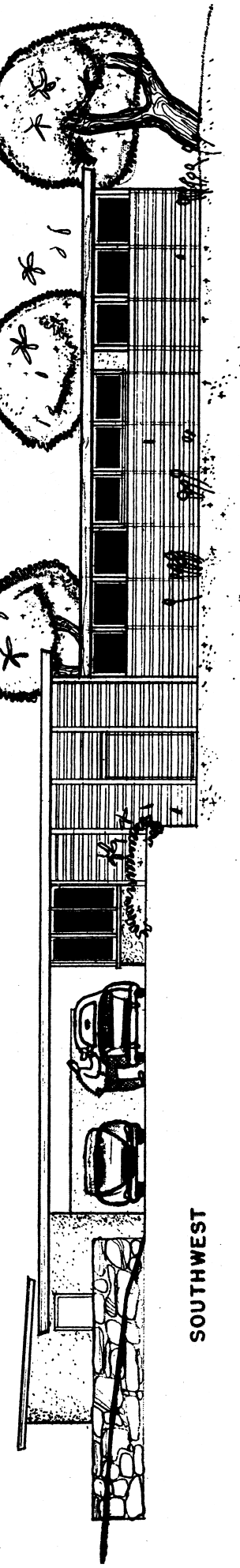
The plan is so arranged that one lath house provides inviting transition from the outdoors to the glassed front entrance; another, at the opposite end of the large multi-use room, makes a background for a free-standing fireplace. At least one of the lath houses, with decorative and delicate plants which thrive in a shaded sanctuary, is visible from any part of the main living area. The effect is particularly rich in contrasting elements of light and shadow, sun warmth, fire warmth, and cool forestlike shade . . . a space of openness and shelter defining the zone of the main living area.

Though the front Through-the-Lath-House entrance gives convenient access to any part of the house, each part is a distinct self-contained area zoned for orderly and unconfused function by means of distance and orientation. The private rooms face away to a sun-bathing terrace, and are acoustically insulated from the main living area by indoor planting and the ample wardrobe and storage cabinets. The car port, close to both service and front entrances, opens to a drive large enough to provide off-street guest parking and back adjacent to an outdoor area isolated enough to do well as a general work and tinkering terrace. The extra room with bath has a degree of privacy and its own walled garden which would be a haven for the late-sleeping guest, a prize for an independent adolescent, a retreat for the studious . . . or an inducement to a resident housekeeper.

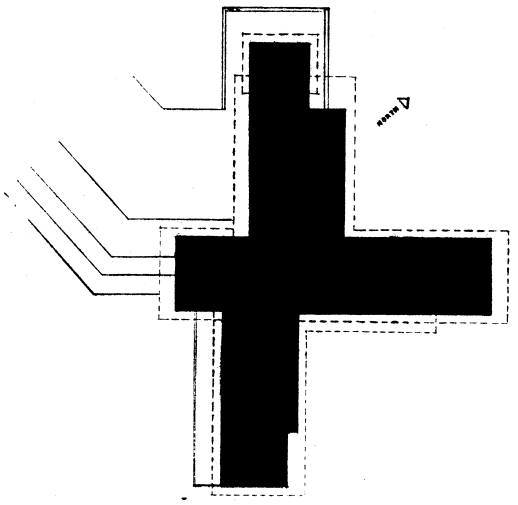
Diagonal placement of the house, in addition to avoiding any completely north exposure, making possible longer vistas from the windows than parallel placement on the lot would give, and putting only minimum corners of the house near the property lines, automatically zones the

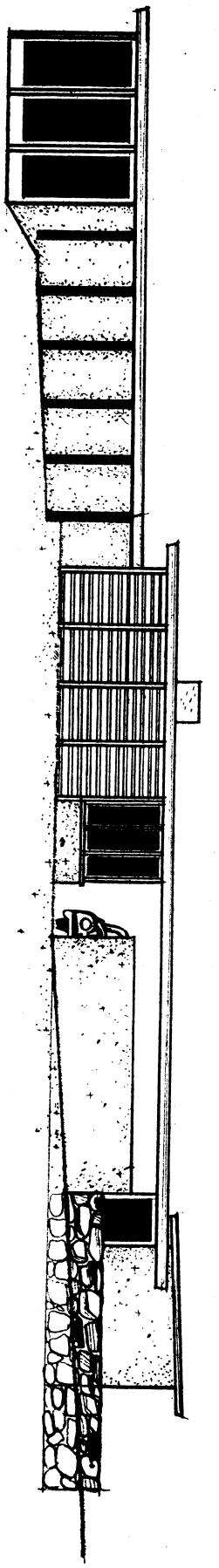


NORTHWEST



SOUTHWEST





NORTHEAST

outdoor area into courts or terraces related in function to the rooms they serve. For the sake of continuity with the surrounding land and interesting variation within the particular site, the natural slope of the lot was preserved. The resulting change in levels within the house is controlled in a way which further emphasizes the zoning: private rooms are a few steps down from the main living area. (Steps up to the lath house at the end of the multi-use room serve only to bring the plants nearer eye level and form a low back to the large open fire-place hearth.) Because it is somewhat optimistic to assume that the form which follows function as varied and complex as that of a residence is automatically good in terms of three-dimensional art, which is what architecture, in addition to all sociological considerations, must also be, careful attention was given to the continuity of the structural materials, the pattern of windows, the interplay of the mass and proportion of the light lath-house motif with the strong anchoring-to-earth rock and mortar retaining wall and the intermediary neutral background of plastered surface. The purpose was a house designed for both looks and living.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS:

concrete slab floor, integral color

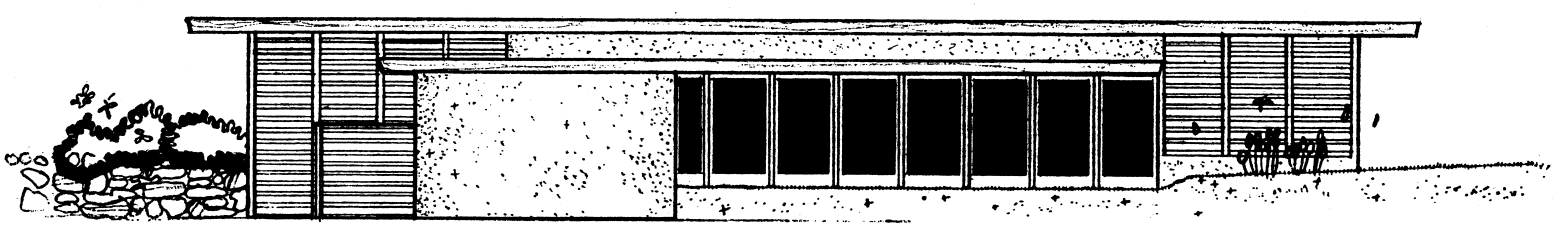
wood frame construction, plaster inside and out

rock and mortar retaining wall

horizontal laths on sun terrace fence and lath

house walls and roof

roofing, composition paper with tar and crushed ceramic



SOUTHEAST

LEGEND:

S lath house
A multi-use living room
B dining-area (movable table)
C cooking (including small bar for quick snacks)
D car port (with closed storage space)
E extra room
F bath dressing room
G private room
H toilet and lavatory
J bath room
K private room
M work and play terrace, drying yard
N forced air furnace
P refrigerator and frozen food
R laundry

(small numbers under letters indicate various levels)