

# Even in death David was able to give to others

My son's caregiver called Monday, March 10, at 9:30 p.m. "You need to go to Southern Hills Hospital. David is on his way by ambulance."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

With something akin to panic and terror in his voice, he repeated, "Go to Southern Hills!"

Quickly, my daughter, Deborah, and I got our things together and she, knowing the way, drove us there.

Fighting panic and tears, I told myself again and again, "I will not cry until it is time to cry."

The deliberate calm of the emergency room receptionist told me all I needed to know — this would be a time for crying. In a few moments, David's distraught caregiver arrived.

The head emergency room nurse and a doctor soon came to the waiting area and invited us to the chapel area,



## Family Matters

Commentary

Donna Reagan

and there we were given the news that in spite of all that the caregiver, the EMTs and the emergency room team had done, David had not revived. The cause of death: drowning — in only a few inches of bathtub water during a seizure.

Gently, the nurse asked about arrangements with a funeral home. A couple of years ago we had taken out

a pre-paid service which included cremation, I informed him. Then, the nurse asked about tissue donorship.

I was surprised by this. I had assumed that because David was a handicapped individual that this would not be possible. The doctor explained that it certainly was possible, and that he would very well be a good donor for skin grafting at a burn center as well as the corneas which would give sight to someone who is blind. It didn't take me a minute to give my initial consent. The nurse explained that someone from the mid-state's donor program would call later in the evening. I gave a time for that call to be made, and then we were invited to come back and be with David.

Though there was still a tube in his mouth, he looked remarkably like he always did when asleep. He was just

still and cool. I held his hand and stroked his hair, said a prayer and then held his caregiver. Deborah had opted not to go back with us.

The nurse escorted us back to the waiting area where he explained that there would be an autopsy after the tissue donation, and then the body would be released to the funeral home. He wasn't sure how many days everything would take, so we could only make initial plans for David's memorial.

Back home, I waited for the call from the donor organization. While I waited, I planned the memorial service. The Methodist Hymnal has a worship section with a guide, and I wanted to follow that guide with some changes. I also wrote up an obituary and made a list of everyone who needed to be called the next day.

Finally, at 11:30 p.m., the call came. The woman on the other end explained how tissue donation had the potential to help a lot of people: the torso skin for burn victims; the connective tissue and bone for orthopedic surgery; the disks in his spine for someone — or for several someones — who would have relief from debilitating pain; his heart valves could save a heart patient's life; all of his arteries could be used to replace arteries in bypass patients whose own arteries could not be used; not only the corneas, but the whites of David's eyes could be used to help someone see, and so two people could benefit from that gift; and the list went on.

I was amazed that so much good could come from this gift. I officially gave my permission for my son's tissue to be used to help others (it was

recorded) and then marveled that life could come from death.

Someone said that they didn't think they could make that kind of gift. If they can't, they can't. There is no wrong decision. Many theologians teach that the body must be whole and buried. My theology is that the body is a shell, an earthly home for the soul, and if someone else can use parts that would otherwise simply go to dust, then they should have that use.

That's why I have always signed the donor section of my driver's license. That's why, when the subject comes up, that I encourage others to do the same — if they can at all.

**Donna Reagan can be reached through Bellevue Branch Library, 650 Colice Jeanne Rd., Nashville, Tenn. 37221 or via e-mail at cbcupdates@hotmail.com.**

## Arc-roof house offers a rainbow of new design, building possibilities

An arc-roof house offers a rainbow of new design and building possibilities

The most interesting residence I've seen under construction recently in the Tennessee Valley happens to be in an old mill village in Huntsville, Ala.

It's a 1,400-square-foot house going up on the west edge of the historic Five Points neighborhood, a collection of modest houses currently undergoing a rapid value increase.

On March 26, I met the project manager, Anders Adelfang, a 1991 graduate of Auburn University's School of Architecture. He is one-half of a small firm called ARC, which bills itself as a "design/build" company, one of a number of such firms nationwide who aim to do things differently.

As an inveterate sidewalk superintendent for more than 25 years, I noticed this distinctive house several months ago but never followed up on calling the phone number on the sign in the yard until this week.

The house presents a remarkable profile, with a roofline in the shape of a rainbow arc, which rises from

a one-story west wall to a two-story east wall.

Equally intriguing on first encounter are the blocks stacked in the yard. They are thicker than cement blocks — completely solid — and yet they are lighter in weight than such blocks.

Anders explains that they are a new product known as AAC, which stands for aerated autoclave concrete, and they come in several shapes and dimensions, but all have a high R-factor (thermal efficiency rating).

The house in fact uses 16-foot-long pre-cast AAC panels as its flooring. The panels are tied together with rebar, and these connecting slots are then filled with concrete.

The walls are laid up rather like ordinary cement block, except the mortar used is a product like Thinset, used to set ceramic tile, and it is applied with a rake-like tool that leaves almost no joint at all.

There are threaded rods that go in to each of the four wall corners, and in under the glue-laminated arc-shaped ceiling beams, presumably to increase the compressive strength of those key vertical spots in the

## Tennessee Rambling

Commentary

David Bowman



building.

There is also a "bond beam" that goes in horizontally, over the tops of the first floor windows and doors wrapping completely around the house.

Another surprise, particularly on first encounter, is the fact that the whole house rests on steel I-beam sills sitting on cylindrical concrete piers. Extensions of these beams cantilever out front and back for porch-decks.

Anders says that the house is located in a "flood fringe" area, according to flood insurance maps, so his design decided to take no chances, even though it would add to the ultimate project cost. He has created essentially

a 21st-century "raised cottage," something 18th- and 19th-century builders in places like New Orleans knew how to do quite well.

The placement of the house is also unusual. It has a bigger setback on the lot than its early 20th-century neighbors, but he plans to build a wall, where the row of houses on either side are, in order to try to recapture that feeling of being "in line" with the street. From a viewpoint of contextual friendliness to the neighboring houses; however, it seems better for this dramatically new-style house to hang back, about 30 feet, rather than thrust itself forward into the old-neighborhood streetscape.

The central design attraction visible so far is the three beautiful glue-laminated wood beams and two form-built concrete exterior beams, all on a 36-foot radius designed by ARC's computer. Above these five beams are light-steel-channel purlins, supporting a curved ceiling made up of three "poly-iso" sandwiched layers, each with an R-factor of 12. Underneath the corrugated "galv-alum" roof, now a shiny silver, is another new material used as a vapor barrier, looking like crinkly aluminum foil on one side and plastic bubble packing-material on the

other. The combined roof sandwich should therefore yield a nice insulative value of about R-40.

Not yet installed is the post-and-beam second floor, which will be six by six beams as the floor joists, with two by six tongue-and-groove flooring above it. And that's all: no sheetrock ceiling, no carpeting, nothing other than an expression of the wood members themselves.

The basic layout will be two bedrooms upstairs, with a bath between them, plus a living room, kitchen and bedroom downstairs, with possibly at least a half-bath beside it. The tall and dramatic space above the living room and kitchen (west half) will be day-lit by a ribbon skylight running the entire length of the ceiling.

The walls will be stucco — inside and out — and will probably not even be painted, Anders said.

Proceeding deliberately, as he and his small crew are, adding one element at a time, several issues have not been totally settled. One involves the ceiling finish, which may be a fabric, run up along a conduit, between the arc beams.

The large windows, also not yet installed, will be of wood, with aluminum cladding. Some window elements

will be fixed, and some operable, but all will be double pane, for better energy efficiency.

Another not-totally-settled issue involves the small "third floor" room, a bump-up above the center of the highest part of the house, which will house mostly the mechanical systems. Anders says he hopes there will also be a way to utilize this third-floor element as a "thermal chimney"; that is, as a way to draw summer heat out of the top part of the house, the way many antebellum houses in the South were able to do.

Before the project started, back in August 2002, Anders and his wife thought of this as a speculative house. As everyone got interested in the project, it was clear that the house ought to be for them to live in, particularly since their child would get the option of going to one of several good area elementary schools there.

I can't wait to see how the arc-house turns out. Partial to rainbows — like the new state license plate ("Art is a rainbow...") designed by 95-year-old Memphis artist Burton Callicott which I bought recently at the Giles County Courthouse — this sidewalk superintendent sees a rainbow of design/build possibilities.