

## Armadillo Construction Company ...young, progressive, innovative

By SHARON M. CURRINGTON  
Family Living Editor

Armadillo Construction Company is swinging into its fifth year as the leading housing construction firm in Laredo. Manned by six ambitious young owners, the firm places the welfare of Laredo first in their planning for the future.

Company owners are Ron Belshaw, Robert Gutierrez, David Morales, Melvin Starnes, Ernesto Urbano and Oscar Zuniga. Five of the six are between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-two.

The company was built out of the ambitious desires of the group to have a business of their own and not to have to always work for the other man. "We also wanted to set the example for the young people of Laredo that you can do things on your own with hard work," explains Ron Belshaw.

The company has sprouted from having built thirty homes in their first year to the building of one hundred and fifty a year at the present. The company does approximately 85-percent of the building in Laredo.

Belshaw sees good management and a talent for business as the major key to the success of the sextet. "By talent, I mean that you have to know how to finance a loan, plan for the future, collect money...all the things that go into the working of a business.

"It is really easy to start a business, but to make it successful, all the parts have to come together."

The firm seems to have the parts together well enough to make them the most innovative construction firm in the city. Within the framework of their ownership lies a deep well of talent.

Oscar Zuniga, the oldest member of the group, is a professional mechanical engineer, with years of on the job training. David Morales and Ernesto Urbano are college graduates with degrees in construction engineering. They work as associate engineers for the firm.

Robert Gutierrez, Melvin Starnes and Ron Belshaw all have extensive backgrounds in business, finance and sales.

A professional firm with a professional approach draws professional personnel, and Armadillo has on its team, a trio of architects, one a licensed architect from Mexico and one an A&M graduate in environmental design.

Finance specialist, Jack Mooney, is head of the sales staff.

"We attract the best carpenters, plumbers, roofers, and so on in the city because of our professionalism," comments David Morales. "We can provide our clientele the best professional help in building their home."

These young men believe in what they are doing, and have a great desire to further the growth of Laredo by the implementation of their fundamental policies. "We believe in honesty," says Belshaw. "If you do something wrong, it's eventually going to come back to

you."

They have built their business on the idea that what the customer wants is right. "People know they can come in here, relax and get what they want," Belshaw comments. "Confidence is a major factor."

"First of all we have confidence in ourselves, our business and our management. Our clients in turn have confidence in us...our capabilities and our reliability."

Attention is given to detail in an Armadillo home. Not only is the design up to the minute, and just the way the owner thinks, he wants it, but it is structurally sound. "We build a quality home," Belshaw adds.

"It is going to be sturdy, requiring less repair and maintenance, with lower operating costs and a higher resale value."

"Every design is unique," comments Morales. "Each house had a different floor plan, making each home different. They are modern, contemporary and functional. We add sloped ceilings, fireplaces, specialty walls, and such extras to a home to make it unique, to reflect the personality of the owner."

"You don't have ten owners that look alike or think alike or act alike, so why should they all have homes alike."

That the firm believes in adding a few frills is apparent upon entrance to their offices. "We realize that the first impression is important," comments Belshaw. "and we have to show our

clients that we do know how to dress up a home. We give our clients first class treatment."

A home today is more than just a major investment. It usually means a lifetime of house payments. Armadillo homes normally begin at \$50,000, a considerable sum more than the average person keeps in his banking account. "We realize the tremendous amount of cash outlay a home is, and we try our best to give our client whatever they want in their home," says Belshaw. "And we guarantee that they will like the finished product," adds Jack Mooney.

"We don't do anything halfway," says Belshaw. "When you walk in here, you know that you are going to be taken care of."

The firm boasts the ability to keep pace with the newest innovations in homes and to set a few trends on their own. "The whole town seems to have gotten smarter in the past four years," Belshaw grinningly comments. "We have to know what we are talking about and keep up to date on the newest trends and concepts."

The firm draws its clientele from all facets of Laredo life. The larger custom homes are being built for the older populace, while the middle class young people are buying the more modest homes. "The young people of today are smarter," says Belshaw, "they aren't satisfied with the old ways of doing things. They are on the move."

The firm is just recently gaining

recognition for the building of the larger, more expensive homes. They are expanding the direction of their building into the construction of town homes. "To develop an area you have to study it in terms of what is actually needed by the populace and discover the resources you can offer to your clients," comments Beto Gutierrez. "You have to take into consideration the water situation, the sewer, the streets and all facets of home life for the home owners."

"When you develop an area," adds Belshaw, "that means that you also build the streets, put up the street signs, build playgrounds, plan for schools and churches, and such. When a developer goes into an area he has to consider every phase of living."

The firm has built homes in every segment of the city and in every subdivision. They see the future of the company getting bigger and better every year. "We want to do more...get into developing...we want Laredo to grow right, and we have to take the initiative to make it progress," said Belshaw.

"We plan in the future to go outside of Laredo," adds Gutierrez. And in fact, the company is currently building in Rock Port.

"I believe that construction is one of the major factors of the economy in this town," comments Belshaw.

Through the business of subcontracting and all the personnel within the framework of the firm, Armadillo supplies jobs for ap-

proximately 500 of the townspeople. "Through the nature of our business we are generating revenue for the whole town," adds Belshaw, "and the monies people receive from that generation stays in Laredo."

"We have seen that you can help stimulate the economy. The more we do for the area, the better off the whole town will be."

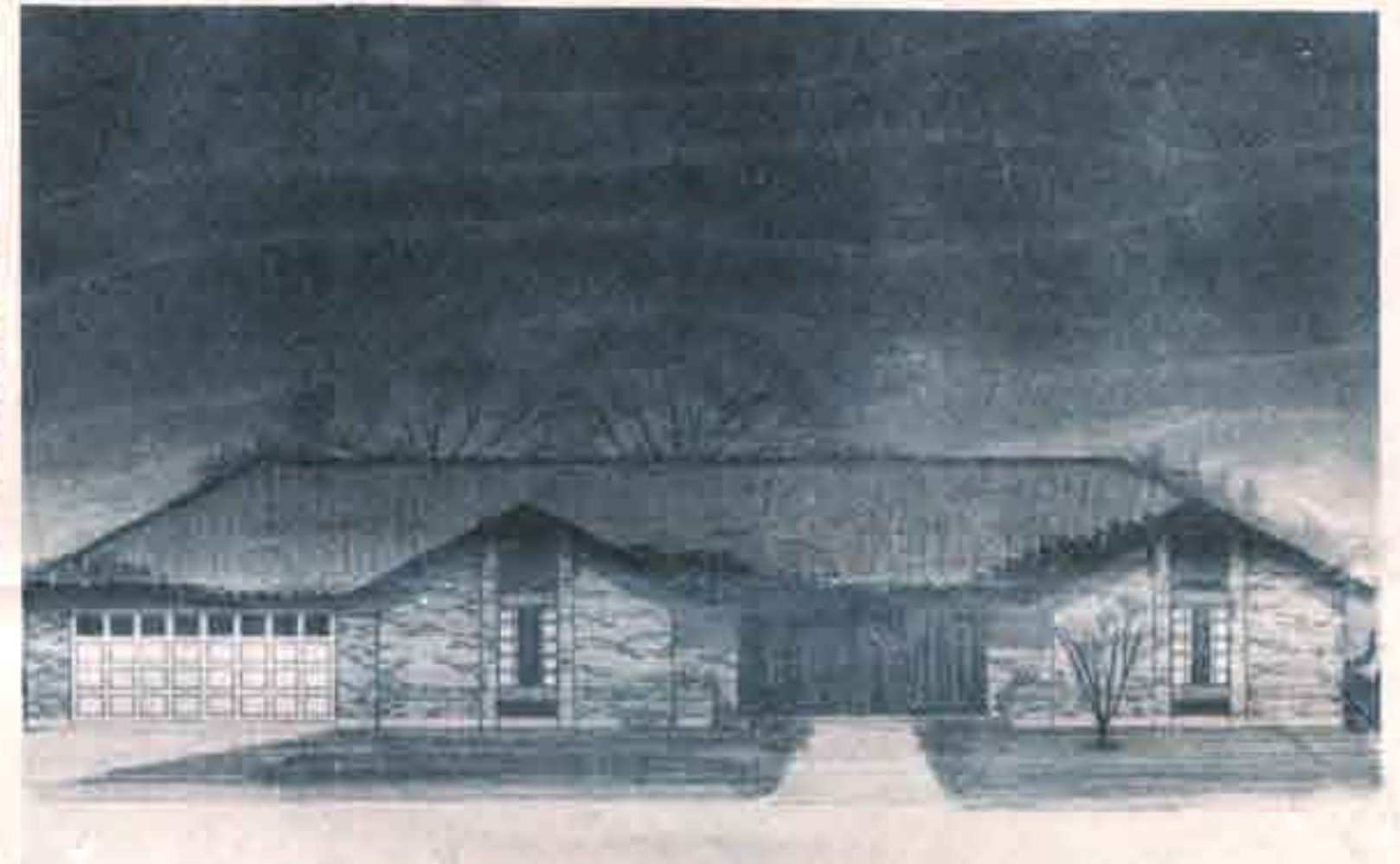
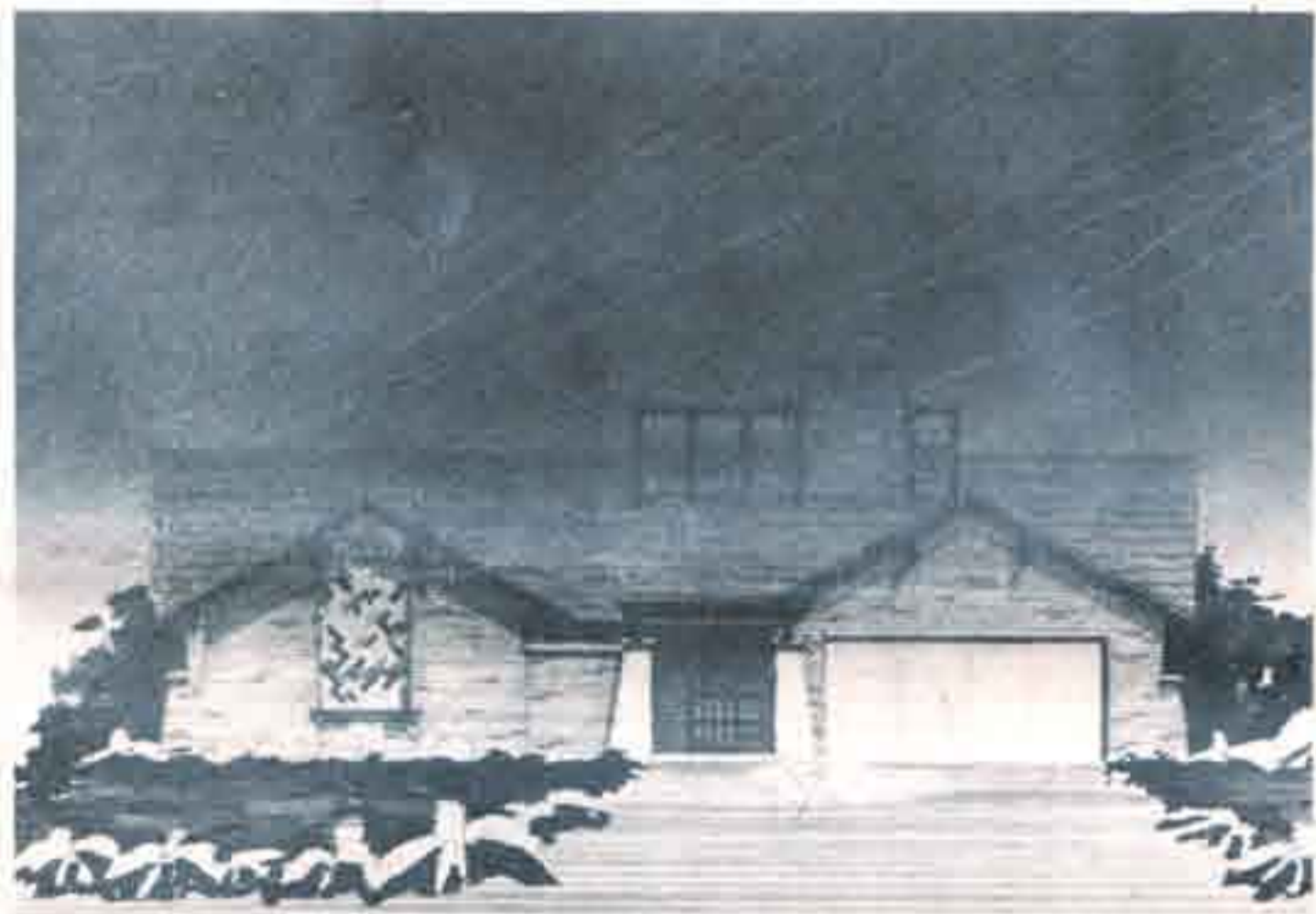
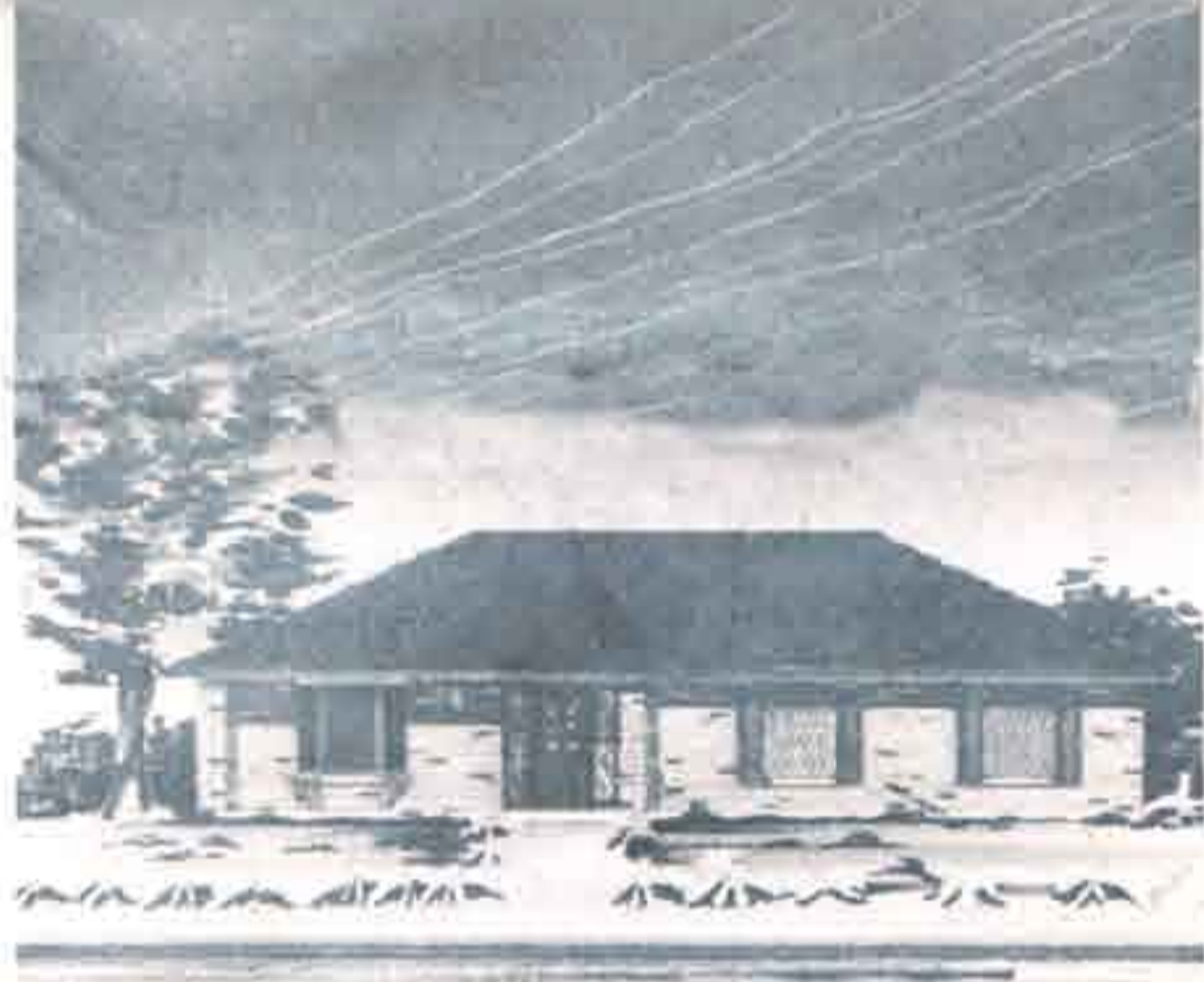
The firm has seen a spurt of growth in new directions since their inception five years ago. About three years ago, they formulated Laredo Steel. "We saw the need for better quality materials on the spot," says Belshaw. "Through Laredo Steel we can offer all aspects of building materials and we feel that we can do a better job for the client because of the availability of materials and the fact that we can offer better prices by buying in quantity."

Laredo Steel number two will open in South Laredo in about a month, to better serve those clients.

Mobile City is another offshoot of the first venture. "We felt that if we could help people in bettering the choice of their homes, we could do the same thing with the mobile home owner by offering a better quality of mobile home," explains Belshaw.

"We just want to do what's right for Laredo," Belshaw comments.

Armadillo Construction Company is certainly a trend setter for Laredo. They are a progressive, innovative, young company. David Morales wraps it up with "it's just us doing today what others will copy tomorrow."



RON BELSHAW



ROBERT GUTIERREZ



DAVID MORALES



MELVIN STARNES



ERNESTO URBANO



OSCAR ZUNIGA