

Backfill

A Carpenter's Home Is His Castle



As a union carpenter, T.J. Baker (left) works on large, complicated structures like baseball stadiums, computer-chip factories, and high-rise hotels. So what does he do in his spare time? The same thing most carpenters do: He remodels his house. But Baker's remodeling project is unique, to say the least. He's turning a 1952 Alamo, Calif., ranch house (top right) into a medieval castle, complete with notched parapet, tower, and moat.



The right side of the house is nearly complete. It has columns, crenelations, and a stucco finish that looks very much like cut stone (right and inset). It also has some features you're unlikely to find on other medieval castles — shear walls, upgraded insulation, and new vinyl windows. Behind the parapet is a conventional sloped roof with a built-in gutter that drains to downspouts concealed by columns.

On the left end of the house is a garage that Baker plans to demolish. In its place he's going to build a two-story addition with a tower; it'll connect to a new garage with overhead doors that look like drawbridges.

The moat will go in last, with the landscaping.

Baker started the remodel in 2004 and would like to finish in 2008. However, working only nights and week-



ends can make for slow going, and he concedes that he may not finish until 2010. Not that he's discouraged — the project is already paying dividends.

For instance, Baker says that directing visitors to his home is a breeze: He simply gives them the street name and tells them to “stop at the first castle.” — *David Frane*