

The Washington Post Magazine



THE DO-IT-YOURSELF
DONE RIGHT

THE CUSTOM-BUILT
GRAND OPENING

THE ONE AND ONLY
MONOCLASTIC CONDO

FIRST HOMES

THE START FROM
SCRATCH — AGAIN

DRAMATIC OPENING
FOUR FIRST ROOMS

FIRST FURNITURE
FOR FOREVER

The House That Sweat Built

For Bob and Martha Wilkoff, it was a long, long way from their rented apartment to the house they built from scratch

BY ANDY LEON HARNEY



Five years ago, for their first anniversary, Bob Wilkoff gave his wife Martha a garbage disposal—not the most romantic gift, even for the wife of an architect. But for the Wilkoffs, it was a symbol of

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ABOUD DWECK



the house they hoped to build.

Martha Wilkoff had little use for an extra disposal in their Silver Spring apartment, but she tucked it away as the first in a series of spare parts that would soon take over every inch of their living space.

Like many Washington-area apartment dwellers, the Wilkoffs had the rug pulled out from under

them when their apartment project "went condo." The place they paid \$230 a month for was suddenly on the market for almost \$80,000 plus condo fees.

Convinced that they could do better elsewhere, they began looking at other condos and town houses, recognizing that their limited funds would not allow them to purchase a detached, single-family house. Like many first-time home buyers, they were quickly discouraged by the high prices of the so-so houses that were on the market.

"We decided that it was crazy," says architect Bob Wilkoff. "This is my business—I should be able to build a house for that price . . ." And although Bob had little

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BY MARGARET THOMAS



Right and below, the living and dining rooms are separated by only one partial wall, which serves as a backdrop for the living room's wood-burning stove.

BY ABOUD DWECK



Right, standing at the Wilkoff's front door, looking up, the spiral staircase "silo" is to the right, the three-grid windows which send light into the hallways are directly above.

