In designing his family's home, Architect Greene (shown in his studio) attempted to reflect his understanding of nature in abstract forms.

Life in a Greene House

home can be more than a place to hang your hat

By CONNIE RUGGLES

THE Bavinger House has been Norman's No. 1 architectural attraction since its completion seven years ago. But now Bavinger has a neighbor to the west which promises to rival its predecessor in critical comment.

The Greene House is the home of its designer, an assistant professor of architecture at O.U., Herb Greene, '52arch, and his family. It looks like—well, it looks like as many different things as there are people to view it. Greene likens its shape to that of a gigantic wooden chicken. Others have compared it to a weathered, windblown barn or a prairie schooner. The varying interpretations don't bother Greene in the least, since he considers this a basic element in abstract architecture—and the Greene House is admittedly abstract.

There is nothing accidental about the appearance of the Greene House. The architect planned carefully to create a home which would fit the building site and fulfill the needs of his growing family. While living in Houston he had designed three other homes for his wife and two children, but the present Greene House is the first to be constructed.

"This house is entirely different from the others," Mrs. Greene explains. "Herb designed them for a different part of the country when our family was in a different phase of life."

The two-story design, dividing the house into two distinct units, evolved from a need for privacy—both for the children and from the children. The ground floor resembles a doughnut with the bedrooms, family room, kitchen and entry-dining area encircling a center storage and work area. The second floor follows a balcony design with the combined living room and art studio overlooking the entry way.

But the Greene House does more than simply satisfy the fam-

The Greene House at night is a startling sight with light streaming from its mushroom-shaped windows and accenting the corrugated aluminum.

ily's needs. Through the skillful use of curves and angles and the natural wood finish both inside and out, Greene has created a house which perfectly reflects its surroundings. Unlike the Bavinger House, the Greene House is not heavily landscaped to blend into the terrain. Standing tall and prominent against the flat, rolling prairie, the house is landscaped only by grass and native wild flowers. The exterior is accented by the grain characteristics of the lumber with a cascade of corrugated aluminum forming the penthouse on the top of the house and the car port in front. The penthouse forms a cone high up on the roof, projecting the house toward the sky.

The house seems to perch on the prairie grass. A swirled wooden skirt shields the under part of the house, which is used for storage and equipment space. The actual floor level is from 3½ to 5 feet above the ground.

Exterior finishing for the house presented a problem. Wood lacks durability, yet if the Greenes were to have the house they wanted and still stay within their means, wood seemed the only alternative. So, rather than try to arrest the weathering inherent in wood exteriors, they incorporated the weathered effect into the initial design.

The amount of exposed wall and floor surface inside the house has been kept to a minimum. The interior of the entire house has been unified by the use of cedar shingles on walls, ceilings and cabinets, lending a warmth to the interior as well as being economical. With the exception of a few areas of granite and cork flooring, the house is carpeted in a rust color, representing Oklahoma's peculiarly red clay.

Amid the spiraling curves of the basic structure, wide window
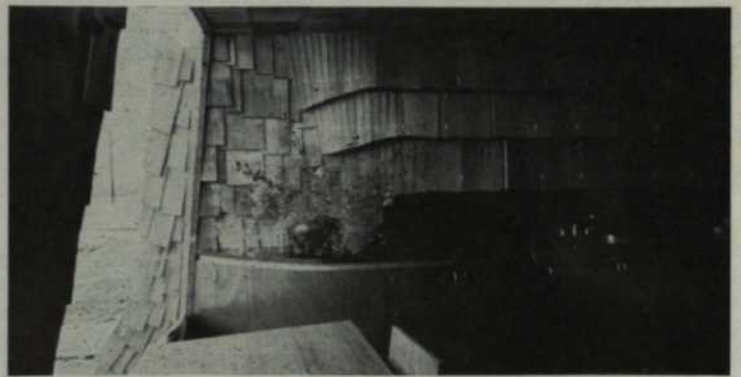
The kitchen design makes the most of the morning sun. Cupboards are of the same cedar shingles as walls and ceilings throughout the house.

The entry stairway (above) leads to the living room and extends to the roof. At left is the family room with a door leading to bedrooms.

areas have been designed to take full advantage of Oklahoma's colorful sunrises and sunsets. The kitchen faces east, and its large window lets in the early morning sun. The lines of this same window angle upward to the second floor studio to light Greene's work area.

At the extreme west end of the second floor living room, a giant arched window affording an expansive view of the sunset is fronted by a window seat measuring about 8 by 4½ feet. The corresponding first floor window lights the master bedroom.

The Greenes' two children, Tom, 3, and Lauren, 1½, share a first floor room which can be divided into two smaller rooms by a sliding door. Each half of the room has a tall, wide window on the north.

The curving half-wall of the balcony in the living room is formed by a hi-fi enclosure, book shelves and Greene's storage cabinet. The color scheme is dominated by the rust carpet and the soft wood tones of the walls. An array of Greene's paintings furnish the major color relief.

The stairs from the entry way to the living room take a sharp turn at the balcony and narrow to a short stairway leading to the small penthouse. Eventually the Greenes plan to add a screened roof-top porch and sun deck.

In its completed state, the house contains 2,100 square feet of floor space costing a little over $11 per square foot (including paving, porch and utilities).

For this young family, life in a Greene House is just what the architect ordered. Greene's design is an artist's attempt to paint an abstract picture of nature as only he understands it, to reflect many forms while imitating none. Basic to his interpretation of the abstract principle is the realization that no two people can experience the same emotion in the same way—and probably no one but Herb Greene could have created the Greene House.

Cedar shingles lend soft wood tones to the Greenes' living room. Bookcases at right form the balcony wall overlooking the entry way. Greene's paintings are lighted by small windows in the ceiling.