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A prodigal entrepreneur

Tony Ruiz' inventions have taken the Las Cruces native across the globe, but his latest venture brings him home

By Todd G. Dickson
Sun-News BUSINESS

At 61, Tony Ruiz isn't afraid to describe himself as a "crazy inventor-builder."

Finding different or better ways of building things is natural to the Las Cruces High School graduate — from the original building that's now a judicial complex, that is.

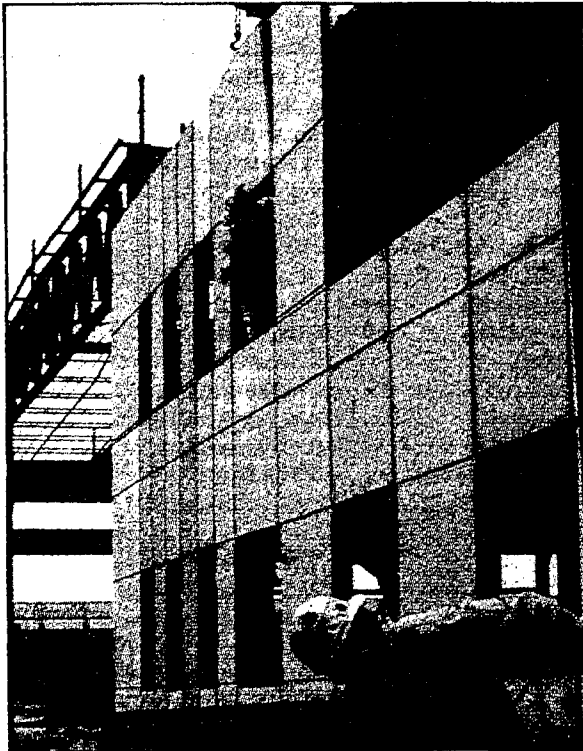
The son of a plumbing contractor, Ruiz said he often spent his time as a young man drawing pictures, which led to an interest in drafting and designing buildings as early as 13.

That eventually led him to quitting school in his senior year and taking off to California where he bluffed his way into a good-paying drafting job in Beverly Hills.

"They asked me if I had ever designed a five-story building before," Ruiz said. "I told them 'That's all we do in Las Cruces.' ... Eventually, the engineer said to me 'You've never done this before, have you son?' Well, he took me through it and that building is still standing."

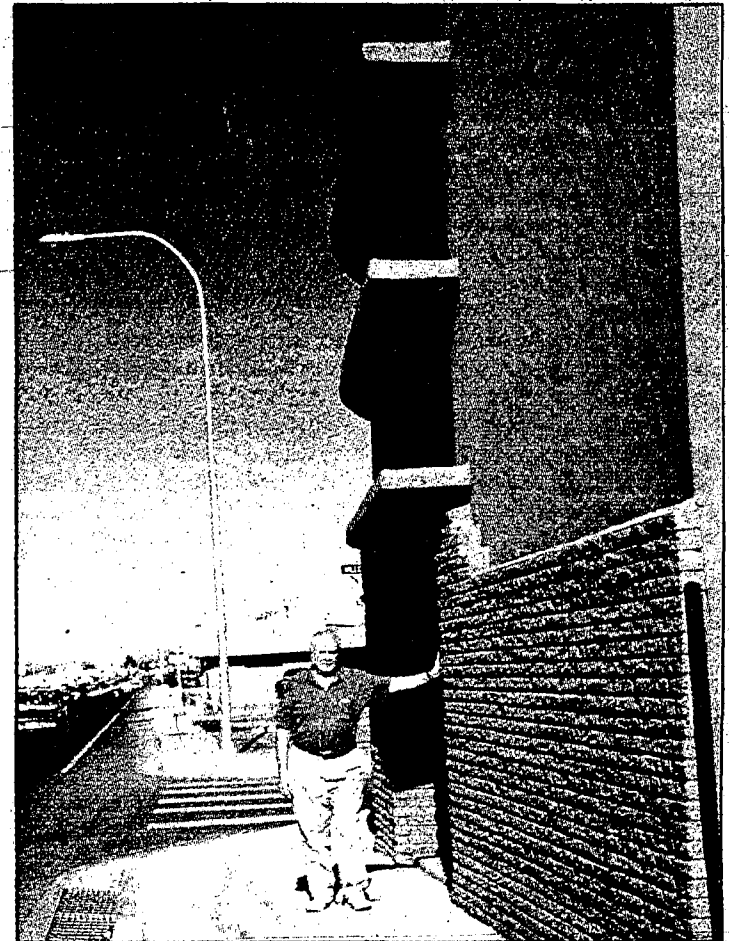
Ruiz did eventually return to Las Cruces to get his high school diploma in 1958. He was going to continue studying drafting, but was impatient to work in the real world and jumped at the chance to work for Frank Lloyd Wright in Arizona.

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Courtesy photo

One of Simple Building Systems' first major projects was this steel fabrication plant built last year near San Diego.



Sun-News BUSINESS photo by Todd Dickson

Tony Ruiz poses last month next to the first building he designed as teen in Las Cruces. The building on North Main Street is now home to a law office, but had originally belong to his father's business, A.R. Ruiz and Plumbing.

A familiar face,



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photo by Norm Dettlaff
The Oasis